



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 22 October 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:35 P.M., 22 October 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Carbon Capture and Storage

Angus Brendan MacNeil:

[\[56903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has plans to restart carbon capture and storage projects in the UK.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Government's 'Ten point plan for a green industrial revolution' sets out an ambition to deploy CCUS at scale in 2 of the UK's industrial clusters by the mid-2020s, and a further 2 by 2030. Phase-1 of the cluster sequencing process looked to identify and sequence CCUS clusters which are suited to deployment in the mid-2020s. On 19th October the Government announced that Hynet and East Coast Cluster have been confirmed as Track-1 clusters for the mid-2020s and will be taken forward into negotiations. We also announced the Scottish Cluster as a reserve cluster.

Phase-2 of this process will determine which emitter projects within, or able to connect to, the chosen cluster locations will receive government support. The Government will continue to engage with the Scottish Cluster throughout Phase-2 of the sequencing process, to ensure it can continue its development and planning.

The Government has committed to supporting four clusters to deployment by 2030 at the latest, and have confirmed in the Net Zero Strategy that the Government will look to deploy 10Mt of annual CO₂ capture capacity through these additional 'Track-2' clusters, helping to achieve the Government's 2030 capture ambition of 20-30Mtpa.

■ Carbon Capture and Storage: Investment

Alex Cunningham:

[\[58389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the cost effectiveness of investing in carbon, capture, utilization and storage technology.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 21 October 2021]: For the UK to keep options open to accommodate the different potential outcomes in 2050, then by 2035 BEIS whole system modelling suggests that for any given level of the sixth carbon budget there should be deployment of low carbon hydrogen, CCS and greenhouse gas removal technologies at scale.[1] This assessment is supported by the Climate Change Committee (CCC) who in their Sixth Carbon Budget advice classified the use of carbon capture and storage (CCS) as a "critical and cost-effective means of meeting the UK's 2050 Net Zero target". [2]

[1] [Impact Assessment for the sixth carbon budget](#)

[2] [CCC \(2020\) The Sixth Carbon Budget - The UK's path to Net Zero, Chapter 2, page 90](#)

■ Carbon Emissions: Finance

Alex Cunningham:

[58388]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the funding required to meet the Government's carbon capture 2030 targets.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 21 October 2021]: In the Net Zero Strategy published on the 19 th October, the Government reaffirmed the commitment to supporting Carbon Capture Usage & Storage (CCUS) via the £1 billion CCUS Infrastructure Fund. This will provide industry with the certainty required to deploy CCUS at pace and at scale and will form part of a package of government support, which will also include the Industrial Decarbonisation and Hydrogen Revenue Support (IDHRS) scheme and the £240 million Net Zero Hydrogen Fund supporting both CCS-enabled 'blue' and electrolytic 'green' hydrogen.[1]

[1] [CCC \(2020\) The Sixth Carbon Budget - The UK's path to Net Zero, Chapter 2, page 126](#)

■ CF Fertilisers UK

Catherine West:

[53307]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the bailout of carbon dioxide supplier CF Fertiliser.

Lee Rowley:

This is commercially sensitive information that relates to a company's production costs and sales. It is not appropriate to provide estimated figures at this time. Details of our support will be published in the 2021-22 BEIS Annual Report and Accounts which will be available on gov.uk.

■ Copyright and Intellectual Property: Protection

Mark Pritchard:

[53200]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to support the music industry through (a) improving copyright and intellectual property protection and (b) making industry representations on matters including the Credits Due campaign.

George Freeman:

Government policy in this area has long been underpinned by the desire to maintain robust copyright and intellectual property protection. The copyright, and wider

intellectual property, frameworks are kept under constant review to ensure they remain fit for purpose and that any changes to these are driven by evidence.

For example, the Government recently responded to recommendations from the DCMS Select Committee following its inquiry into music streaming. The response sets out the imminent launch of a package of stakeholder engagement and research aimed at better understanding and resolving some of the issues identified within the music streaming environment. The IPO and DCMS will work closely with partners on the music industry's "Credits Due" initiative to develop options for a minimum data standard.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[58879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care's oral contribution of 14 September 2021, Official Report, c. 820, for what reason the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency would not approve the Valvena covid-19 vaccine.

George Freeman:

The response given by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to a question raised by the hon. Member for Livingston (Hannah Bardell) has been [amended](#) to make clear that Valneva's Covid-19 vaccine has not yet gained approval by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) here in the UK, and that the outcome of that approval process will be a matter for the MHRA once data from the trials has been submitted.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[58972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the statement by India's foreign secretary on 21 September 2021, how many doses of covid-19 vaccine the UK has purchased from India; and how many of those doses have been distributed.

George Freeman:

Earlier this year, the UK purchased some Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines manufactured at the Serum Institute of India, which form part of the UK's agreement for 100 million doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine.

■ Easter

Sir Greg Knight: [\[58740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to bring into force the provisions of the Easter Act 1928 to fix the date of Easter from 2023 onwards.

Paul Scully:

The Easter Act 1928 would set the date for Easter to fall between 9 and 15 April each year. The Easter Act 1928 remains on the Statute Book, but has not been brought

into force. Doing so would require an Order in Council with the approval of both Houses of Parliament. The Act also requires that, before the Order is made, "regard shall be had to any opinion officially expressed by any Church or other Christian Body." There is no indication that the Churches are keen to move to a fixed Easter.

■ Energy Supply: Costs

Hilary Benn: [\[56798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support people with paying their energy bills and insulating their homes during winter 2021.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Energy Price Cap will protect millions of customers this winter. The Government also provides a range of support to low-income, fuel poor and vulnerable households including:

- Warm Home Discount, providing eligible households with a one-off £140 discount on their energy bill for winter 2021 to 2022.
- Winter Fuel Payment, £200 for households with a member who has reached State Pension age and is under age 80; or £300 for households with a member aged 80 and over.
- Cold Weather Payment, a £25 payment for vulnerable households on qualifying benefits when the weather is, or is expected to be, unusually cold.

The Government's Heat and Buildings Strategy sets out the actions we will be taking to reduce emissions from buildings in the near term, including £3.9 billion of new funding.

■ Energy Supply: Imports

Dr Julian Lewis: [\[56713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the level of (a) economic and (b) political vulnerabilities caused to the UK by (i) direct and (ii) indirect dependence on supplies from (A) Russia and (B) continental European countries; and if he will publish a breakdown of the proportion of UK energy supplies sourced from overseas.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: Energy security is an absolute priority for this Government. We meet around half of our annual gas supply through domestic production and the vast majority of imports come from reliable suppliers such as Norway. Less than 3% of our gas was sourced from Russia in 2020. The UK is not dependant on Russian oil or gas.

The UK's exposure to volatile global gas prices underscores the importance of our plan to build a robust domestic renewable energy sector to further reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

The Government has published a full breakdown of where UK energy comes from at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/digest-of-uk-energy-statistics-dukes>.

■ Energy Supply: Older People

Neale Hanvey: [\[56392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing support to pensioners to avoid fuel poverty ahead of the energy bill increases expected in October 2021.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: This winter, the energy price cap will continue to protect around 15 million British households on default tariffs, saving them between £75 and £100 a year on dual fuel bills. A £500 million Household Support Fund has also been announced by the Department for Work and Pensions to help vulnerable people with essential household costs over this winter.

The Winter Fuel Payment provides pensioners with support for their energy bills over winter. The Government has committed to keeping the winter fuel payment and will continue to pay £200 to eligible households with those aged between state pension age and 79, and £300 to a household with those aged 80 or over.

The Warm Home Discount scheme, worth £354 million this year, further provides eligible low-income and vulnerable households with £140 off their fuel bill over winter. Around one million low-income pensioner households – in receipt of the Guarantee Credit element of the Pension Credit – will receive a rebate this winter. The scheme will be extended to 2026 and continue to support low-income pensioners with their energy bills.

■ Energy Supply: Prices

Charlotte Nichols: [\[53359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he plans to take to keep energy prices low for household consumers.

Greg Hands:

Energy prices are subject to commercial decisions made by individual suppliers and in competition with each others. In order to protect customers, the Government introduced the energy price cap in 2019, which saves 15 million households on default tariffs up to £100 a year on average. The level of the price cap is set by Ofgem, the independent regulator.

Alan Brown: [\[56216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to Ofgem's consultation on Access and Forward-looking Charges Significant Code Review, when Ofgem and the Government plan to publish further details of a proposed holistic review of wider transmission charges.

Alan Brown:

[\[56220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of SSEN Transmission's recent stakeholder survey on TNUoS, which found that 93 per cent of industry stakeholders would support reform of the current transmission charging regime.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: Transmission charging is a matter for Ofgem as the independent regulator. Having held discussions with industry parties, and received evidence including Scottish & Southern Energy Networks' Transmission Charging Stakeholder Survey Feedback Report, Ofgem published a call for evidence on possible transmission charging reforms on 1 October 2021. It is available at: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/tnuos-reform-call-evidence>.

The Government will continue to engage closely as Ofgem progresses this work, to understand how any decisions can help support delivery of a secure, net zero energy system at lowest cost to consumers.

Hilary Benn:

[\[56797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy that all energy suppliers must offer a no standing charge tariff to residential customers.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The setting of tariffs is a commercial decision for energy suppliers. Since 2016, suppliers have been able to offer a greater range of tariffs to accommodate different customer needs, including tariffs with a low or even zero standing charge.

The payment of a standing charge reflects the fixed costs of providing and maintaining supply, regardless of energy usage, including meter rental, meter readings, accounting and billing and maintenance of the energy network. Tariffs with a low or zero standing charge attract a much higher unit rate to ensure these fixed supply costs are met.

■ Energy: Prices

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[56861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what additional steps his Department is taking to support businesses and residents in Denton and Reddish constituency affected by the rise in energy prices.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The energy price cap will protect millions of domestic customers, including the residents of Denton and Reddish in the Northwest of England, this winter. The Government is also supporting low income and fuel poor households with their energy bills. The Warm Home Discount provides eligible households with a £140 rebate off their winter energy bills. The Winter Fuel and Cold

Weather payments will help ensure those most vulnerable are better able to heat their homes over the colder months.

The Government recognise the impact rising energy price will have on businesses of all sizes. The Government and Ofgem, the independent regulator are in regular contact with business groups and energy suppliers to understand the challenges they face and explore ways to protect businesses.

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[57434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of taking measures to control energy costs for people living in rural areas who rely on (a) oil, (b) LPG and (c) solid fuel.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: If residents are off the gas grid, but on a default tariff for their electricity only supply they will still be protected by the Energy Price Cap. Providing they are eligible, they will be able to access Warm Home Discount.

The Government believes it is essential that consumers get a fair deal. There are open markets for the supply of heating oil and LPG in the UK as we believe this provides the best long-term guarantee of competitive prices. These markets are subject to UK competition law to ensure they operate efficiently for the consumer.

Changes in the price of crude oil are the main drivers for the price of heating oil although other factors including more local supply and demand for the refined products can have an impact on prices. LPG used in the UK is produced primarily as a by-product from the refining of crude oil. The LPG price is therefore also influenced by the price of crude oil.

We consider energy efficiency upgrades to be the best way to tackle fuel poverty in the long term. Energy efficiency upgrades will contribute to reduced energy bills and a warmer, safer living environment.

We are supporting low income and vulnerable households in rural areas through the Home Upgrade Grant, which will support low-income households by upgrading the most energy inefficient off gas grid homes in England. On 19 October we announced additional funding of £950m for the Home Upgrade Grant.

Further, through the Energy Company Obligation, an obligation placed on larger energy suppliers, which requires them to reduce home heating costs by installing energy efficiency and heating measures to people's homes in England, Scotland and Wales. We recently consulted on the successor scheme from 2022 and proposed incentives for delivery in rural areas where additional grant funding is not available.

■ Fuel Poverty: Barnsley

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[53988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the (a) number and (b) proportion of households in Barnsley that will experience fuel poverty after the energy price cap raise has been enforced.

Greg Hands:

Under the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency fuel poverty metric, approximately 20,000 (18.6%) of households in the Barnsley Local Authority area are fuel poor, according to the latest data from 2019.

In order to tackle fuel poverty, the Government have committed £1.3 billion to improving the efficiency of fuel-poor and other low-income homes through stimulus schemes such as the Local Authority Delivery Scheme, the Social Housing Decarbonisation fund and the Home Upgrade Grant. The energy price cap is set by Ofgem, the independent energy regulator.

Green Deal Scheme: Appeals**Peter Grant:**[\[56668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many Green Deal appeal cases are still due to be processed as at 18 October 2021.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: As of 18 October 2021, there are 382 live Green Deal complaint cases referred to my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for review.

Heating: Housing**Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[56717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will provide an update on the progress of Electrification of Heat Demonstration Project.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: As part of the Department's £505 million Energy Innovation Programme, the Electrification of Heat Demonstration Project is showcasing the feasibility of installing heat pumps in a range of homes across the UK.

The installation phase for all the Project's heat pump systems will be completed shortly. The Project will continue to monitor performance data from the installed heat pumps over the winter period and further Project results and findings from that phase, including case studies, will be published.

Dr Alan Whitehead:[\[56719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to raise awareness among consumers of the potential benefits of installing a heat pump.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: Improving public awareness of the benefits of installing a heat pump will be a key enabler for the large-scale decarbonisation of heat. The Government are currently reviewing the provision of advice delivered through government-endorsed Simple Energy Advice Service, which offers impartial

and independent information to consumers on a range of low-carbon heating and energy efficiency solutions.

The Government is also improving our evidence base and considering the best tools to raise public awareness, through the forthcoming £60m Heat Pump Ready Programme, which aims to develop approaches and products to engage effectively with home owners and other key stakeholders who can help to deliver high-density heat pump deployment across the UK. Additionally, the outputs of the ongoing £14.6m Electrification of Heat Demonstration Project, including case studies, will be used to raise consumer awareness of heat pumps.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[56720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the steps people need to take to ensure that their home heating infrastructure can function with an air source heat pump.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: There will be no single policy or technology that cuts carbon emissions to virtually zero, but a diverse mix of technology, such as heat pumps and potentially heating appliances fuelled by hydrogen, alongside green projects like heat networks, that will combine to decarbonise heat in buildings over the next three decades.

Our analysis of off gas grid homes suggests that around 80% of homes have sufficient energy efficiency and electrical connections to accommodate a low temperature heat pump system. This potentially rises to around 90% with fabric upgrades including draught-proofing, cavity wall insulation, floor and loft insulation, and external wall insulation. For homes on the gas grid, our analysis shows that 90% of homes have sufficient energy efficiency and electrical connections, which could increase further with fabric upgrades. However, in both off and on gas grid homes, our analysis does not account for noise and space considerations.

In some cases, accommodating a heat pump may also require changes to the size or specification of pipework and radiators to ensure they can deliver the levels of thermal comfort required by consumers. A qualified installer will be able to advise on the specific measures that might be needed to prepare a home for a heat pump.

Through the Government's £14.6 million Electrification of Heat Demonstration Project and £60 million Heat Pump Ready Innovation Programme, we are exploring where innovation can help enable the deployment of heat pumps in a range of housing archetypes.

■ Housing: Carbon Emissions

Catherine West:

[\[56677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is planning to take to decarbonise domestic heating supply.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Heat and Buildings Strategy sets out how the Government is taking 'no-regrets' action now for decarbonising domestic heating supply, particularly on heat pumps, whilst supporting ongoing trials and other research and innovation on our future heating systems, including on hydrogen. The Government will make a decision on the potential role for hydrogen in heating buildings by 2026, learning from the Hydrogen Village pilot. Heat pump technology will play a key role in all scenarios, so for those who want to install them now, the government is supporting them to do so.

The Government want, to ensure that, in future, heat pumps are no more expensive to buy and run for consumers, the fossil fuel boilers. Households will benefit from £5,000 government grants through the £450 million Boiler Upgrade Scheme to help install low-carbon heating systems, part of more than £3.9 billion of new funding to decarbonise heat and buildings. With this transition taking place over the next 14 years, no-one will be forced to remove their existing fossil fuel boilers. This will enable homeowners to easily make green choices gradually and in an affordable, practical and fair way,

A £60m innovation fund has been launched to make clean heat systems smaller and easier to install and cheaper to run. This will support the Government's new target for all new heating systems installed in UK homes by 2035 to be either using low-carbon technologies, such as electric heat pumps, or supporting new technologies like hydrogen-ready boilers, where the government is confident it can supply clean, green fuel.

■ Housing: Heating**Dr Alan Whitehead:****[56718]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department plans to publish the results of the Electrification of Heat Demonstration Project.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: As part of the Department's £505 million Energy Innovation Programme, the Electrification of Heat Demonstration Project is showcasing the feasibility of installing heat pumps in a range of homes across the UK.

The installation phase of the Project is coming to a close and initial results, providing installation information, will be published later this year. The Project will continue to monitor performance data from the installed heat pumps over the winter period and further Project results and findings from that phase, including case studies, will be published.

■ Natural Gas: Carbon Emissions**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[57378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the increase in volume of natural gas required to decarbonise the UK supply system by substitution with natural gas-derived hydrogen.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: On 19th October, the Government published its Heat and Buildings Strategy, where it commits to a decision by 2026 on the potential role for hydrogen in the gas grid. Low carbon hydrogen can be produced in a variety of ways, and the Government intends to develop further detail on the role of different production technologies in our hydrogen production strategy by early 2022.

■ Paternity Leave**Zarah Sultana:**[\[59080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending paid paternity leave to new employees whose period in work is less than 26 weeks.

Paul Scully:

As set out in our Manifesto, we are committed to making it easier for fathers to take Paternity Leave. In 2019 the Government consulted on high-level options for reforming parental leave and pay, this consultation included Paternity Leave and Pay. We are currently analysing the responses to the consultation and will respond in due course.

■ Post Office: Herbert Smith Freehills**Chi Onwurah:**[\[58842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has had discussions with Herbert Smith Freehills LLP solicitors acting for the Post Office (a) prior to and (b) since the opening of the Post Office Interim Payment Scheme, on the fairness of the criteria which determines the outcome of applications for compensation; and what information his Department holds on complaints by formerly convicted postmasters about the professional conduct of that company.

Paul Scully:

Officials from BEIS and UKGI meet regularly with Post Office and their legal representatives to discuss Horizon related issues. These discussions have included issues related to interim compensation payments.

■ Renewable Energy: Community Development

Tim Loughton:

[\[56723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has plans to support the Local Electricity Bill to achieve its aim of unblocking the potential for community renewable energy generation.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Government agrees with the broad aims of the Local Electricity Bill but does not support it as the means to enable local energy supply. There are already mechanisms in the market to allow local supply. The current Ofgem regulatory regime allows for a company to supply a specific geographic area, and small-scale generators can also apply for a licence exemption in some cases to reduce the regulatory burdens of operating at a community level.

The Government are supporting community energy projects through the Rural Community Energy Fund and the Government will work with Ofgem to ensure that local communities can play their role in delivering Net Zero and a Green Recovery.

■ Renewable Energy: Microgeneration

Geraint Davies:

[\[56745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has to ensure that the Local Electricity Bill achieves its aim of unblocking the potential for community renewable energy generation.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Government agrees with the broad aims of the Local Electricity Bill but does not support it as the means to enable local energy supply. There are already mechanisms in the market to allow local supply. The current Ofgem regulatory regime allows for a company to supply a specific geographic area, and small-scale generators can also apply for a licence exemption in some cases to reduce the regulatory burdens of operating at a community level.

The Government are supporting community energy projects through the Rural Community Energy Fund and the Government will work with Ofgem to ensure that local communities can play their role in delivering Net Zero and a Green Recovery.

■ Small Businesses: Carbon Emissions

Mr William Wragg:

[\[56370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support SMEs operating in the UK to transition to net zero.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: This Department is taking many steps to encourage SMEs to transition to Net Zero and to support SMEs through the barriers which prevent the transition. These steps are detailed below.

Information and engagement

Ahead of COP26, BEIS has launched the Together for Our Planet Business Climate Leaders' campaign, which has encouraged over 1,900 small and micro businesses across the UK to join the Race to Zero by making the SME Climate Commitment.

Addressing energy efficiency

In order to help SMEs overcome barriers to investing in energy efficiency we launched the Boosting Access for SMEs to Energy Efficiency innovation competition. The competition offered up to £6m to fund the development of new, innovative market solutions that can provide businesses with tailored energy efficiency advice, as well as simplifying the energy efficiency investment processes through the creation of one-stop-shop platforms.

Access to Finance

I have recently given the British Business Bank a new mission to drive sustainable growth and prosperity across the UK, and to enable the transition to a net zero economy, by supporting access to finance for smaller businesses. Between 2014 and the third quarter of 2020 a total of £160m has been invested into clean technology businesses by equity funds backed by the British Business Bank.

Small businesses can access the government grants available for plug-in vehicles which help reduce the up-front purchase price of electric vehicles. Eligible cars, costing less than £35,000, can receive a grant of £2,500. Small vans can receive up to £3,000 and large vans up to £6,000.

■ Vectura: Philip Morris International**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[58883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason the Competition and Markets Authority did not investigate whether Philip Morris International's takeover of Vectura violated competition law.

Paul Scully:

Decisions on which mergers to investigate on competition grounds are a matter for the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), which is an independent non-ministerial department.

The CMA's role in respect of merger control was set out by Parliament in the Enterprise Act 2002. The Act set limits on the CMA's jurisdiction and the standard by which it must assess those transactions. In particular, the CMA must assess whether a transaction "Has resulted or may be expected to result, in a substantial lessening of competition within any market or markets in the UK for goods or services."

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme

Neale Hanvey:

[\[56398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions officials in his Department have had with representatives of energy companies on ensuring that the Warm Home Discount Scheme provided by those companies remains fit for purpose.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: In the summer, the Government consulted on extending, expanding, and reforming the Warm Home Discount scheme from 2022 until 2026 at least. The measures included expanding the overall spending envelope from around £350 million to £475 million (in 2020 prices) and increasing the value of the rebates to households to £150, which would mean 3 million low-income and vulnerable households each winter would receive a rebate. We also proposed reforming the scheme to better target those in fuel poverty and enabling the vast majority of households to receive their rebates automatically without having to apply, as around half of recipients currently do.

The consultation received responses from a large cross-section of stakeholders, including from energy suppliers. We will publish the Government's response to the consultation in the coming months.

In addition, officials from BEIS, the Department for Work and Pensions, and Ofgem continue to engage regularly with energy suppliers on the functioning of the scheme.

Neale Hanvey:

[\[56403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to increase the discounted sum available to eligible people through the Warm Home Discount Scheme provided by energy companies annually in line with inflation.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: When it was established in 2011, the Warm Home Discount scheme rebates were set at £120 per household. Since then, the rebates have been increased to £140, and this winter around 2.2 million low-income and vulnerable households will receive rebates off their electricity bills.

Over the summer, the Government consulted on extending and expanding the Warm Home Discount scheme from next year until 2026 at least. This included an expansion of the overall spending envelope from around £350 million to £475 million (in 2020 prices) and setting the rebates at £150. These proposals would mean around 3 million households every year would receive a rebate. The Government will publish its response to the consultation in the coming months.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[56716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure low income customers switched to a new energy

company under the supplier of last resort mechanism do not lose the financial support given to them under the warm home discount.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Warm Home Discount (WHD) scheme, introduced in 2011, places a legal obligation on medium and larger energy suppliers to deliver support to people living in fuel poverty or a fuel poverty risk group. Ofgem is the WHD scheme administrator.

All suppliers of last resort have agreed to provide Warm Home Discount rebates to the eligible customers of failing suppliers with over 150K domestic customer accounts, and the Government expects them to continue doing so.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Mr Steve Baker:

[R] [\[58837\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the report entitled Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, Covid-Status Certification: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report, published on 9 September 2021, if he will publish the equalities impact assessment that the Government conducted on covid-status certification.

Michael Ellis:

As set out in the Government's response to the Committee's report, the Government will provide the Equalities Impact Assessment conducted on COVID-status certification ahead of the introduction of any legislation that may be required, in the normal way.

Further inquiries on COVID-status certification should be directed to my colleagues at the Department of Health and Social Care.

■ NHS: Coronavirus

Mr Steve Baker:

[R] [\[58836\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan 2021, published on 14 September 2021, and the statement that in the event that the data suggests the NHS is likely to come under unsustainable pressure, the Government has prepared a Plan B for England, if he will define the data that would indicate that the NHS is likely to come under unsustainable pressure.

Michael Ellis:

If data suggests the NHS is likely to come under unsustainable pressure, the Government has prepared a Plan B for England. The Government hopes not to have to implement Plan B. However, given the uncertainty, the Government set out details

in the Autumn and Winter Plan 2021 so that the public and businesses know what to expect if further measures become necessary.

The Government will remain vigilant and monitor the data closely, using a wide range of evidence, as we have done throughout the pandemic. This includes case numbers, hospital admissions and occupancy, deaths, the ratio of cases to hospitalisations, the rate of growth in cases and hospital admissions - particularly in the over 65s.

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Dan Jarvis:

[\[58873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the impact of excluding dependents over the age of 18 as part of Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy on eligible family's wellbeing; and what support is being offered to families affected by that policy.

James Heappey:

Under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP), an eligible applicant can be accompanied by a spouse over the age of 18 and their dependent children under the age of 18, however we will always consider exceptionally compelling and compassionate circumstances for additional dependants on a case-by-case basis.

The ARAP Leave Outside The Rules (LOTR) scheme is enduring, and under this the ARAP team continue to consider and accept additional family members of ARAP eligible individuals for relocation where those family members are highly vulnerable, at risk and dependant on the primary applicant.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[58874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to reduce timescales in responding to Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy applicants; and what assessment he has made of the effect of current timescales on the risk to life for applicants.

James Heappey:

The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) team at PJHQ continues to be augmented with additional staff to conduct detailed casework on outstanding applications and make the most appropriate eligibility decisions on these applications. As at 19 October the ARAP team has 59 members of staff from across the MOD to assist with this work.

Work is ongoing to reform the workflows within the ARAP team, including the revision of how and when the team communicates with ARAP applicants. Changes to this process continue to be implemented to improve the efficiency of the ARAP application process and ensure the safety of eligible applicants.

■ Afghanistan: Security**John Healey:** [\[58731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral contribution of 21 September 2021, Official Report, column 151, whether he will offer a Privy Council briefing on the security situation on the ground in Afghanistan.

James Heapey:

The Secretary of State will offer a briefing on Privy Council terms and has asked officials to make the necessary arrangements.

■ Aircraft Carriers: Contracts**Gavin Robinson:** [\[58892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress has been made of the award of the tender for the Queen Elizabeth Class dry dock contract.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence is currently conducting a commercial competition for Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carrier dry-docking periods, with work ongoing to identify a preferred bidder. This process is expected to conclude in early 2022, with the first dry-docking period planned for 2023.

■ Ministry of Defence: Training**John Healey:** [\[58730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 18 October 2021 to Question 52414, how many and what proportion of his Department's staff have received their refresher training for information security.

Leo Docherty:

All Ministry of Defence (MOD) personnel are required to undertake initial and refresher training to ensure they can recognise threats to security and can respond appropriately. The mandated training is the Defence Information Management Passport (DIMP) online course, which must be retaken every three years, and annual attendance at a General Security Threat Brief (this covers all elements of protective security and includes information and cyber security).

In the period 1 February 2021 (when Version six was introduced) to 4 October 2021, a total of 81,306 MOD staff completed or refreshed their DIMP in accordance with the three-yearly cycle. Completion data is not held by grade within the Defence Learning Environment. Longer term training records will be held locally by business units, but collating this information would involve going out to all sites across MOD, and this would incur disproportionate cost.

General Security Threat Briefs are delivered locally, and no data regarding attendance is held centrally. Again, collating this information would involve going out to all sites across MOD, and this would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Shipping

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[58746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2021 to Question 41708, on Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Shipping, and his letter dated 29 September 2021, for all periods of planned maintenance on (a) Royal Navy and (b) Royal Fleet Auxiliary surface vessels between 2017 and 2021 that finished later than originally scheduled, what the average delay was to the completion of the maintenance period (a) in number of weeks and (b) as a proportion of the originally planned time.

Jeremy Quin:

Unfortunately, it will take some time to collate and analyse the information requested.

To ensure I can provide as much detail as possible, I will write to the Rt Hon. Member with the detail requested once it has been gathered and a copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[58747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2021 to Question 41708, on Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Shipping, and his letter dated 29 September, for all periods of planned maintenance on (a) Royal Navy and (b) Royal Fleet Auxiliary surface vessels between 2017 and 2021, if he will provide details of (a) which contractors undertook that maintenance and (b) the number of projects each contractor completed later than scheduled.

Jeremy Quin:

Unfortunately, it will take some time to collate and analyse the information requested.

To ensure I can provide as much detail as possible, I will write to the Rt Hon. Member with the detail requested once it has been collated and a copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Afzal Khan:

[\[56186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate his Department has been made of the number of Afghan nationals called forward for evacuation but unable to board flights who will be offered a place under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

James Heapey:

Regrettably we were not able to evacuate all individuals eligible for the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) prior to the conclusion of Operation Pitting on 28 August. Of the 311 ARAP eligible individuals who were not evacuated, 245 remain in Afghanistan and the MOD's commitment to them endures.

There will be no requirement to consider these individuals for the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) as the MOD is continuing to facilitate relocation to the UK for these individuals under the ARAP scheme.

Afzal Khan: [\[57315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 September 2021 to Question 51826 on Refugees: Afghanistan, how many dependants of British nationals were evacuated from Afghanistan during Operation Pitting.

James Heappey:

During Operation Pitting around 8,000 British Nationals and their families were evacuated. Records do not distinguish between British Nationals and dependants of British Nationals.

■ Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Caroline Lucas: [\[53863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, (a) how many and what proportion of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) for which the Ministry of Defence has management responsibility are in favourable condition and (b) what steps he plans to take to bring SSSIs in unfavourable condition into favourable condition.

Jeremy Quin:

The UK defence estate includes 174 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) covering 82,232 hectares. SSSIs are designated and assessed differently between all four nations.

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF SSSIS	TOTAL HECTARES COVERED
England	136	70,468
Wales	22	4,731
Scotland	14	5,944
Northern Ireland	2	1,089

In England 48.4% of the hectares are deemed by Natural England to be in Favourable condition.

In Wales, 41% of the hectares is deemed by Natural Resources Wales to be in Appropriate Conservation Management.

Scotland has 14 SSSIs covering 5,944 hectares, this includes 115 separate SSSI features with 93.9% deemed by NatureScot to be in Favourable condition.

Northern Ireland includes two Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) covering 1089 hectares. This includes 12 separate ASSI features, ten of which are deemed by Northern Ireland Environment Agency to be in a Favourable condition with 2 in an Unfavourable recovering condition

The MOD SSSI Condition Improvement Project has been in place for over ten years to deliver improvements in the condition of SSSIs across the defence estate. MOD is investing £1.2 million directly into managing MOD SSSIs in this financial year.

Currently in England 97% of sites are assessed as favourable or recovering condition.

■ Taliban: Social Media

Darren Jones: [\[58996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment the Government has made of the role of (a) Whatsapp, (b) Signal, (c) Telegram and (d) other social media messaging services in Taliban military command, control and communications in (i) totality and (ii) the summer 2021 advance on Kabul; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

It is not Ministry of Defence policy to comment on intelligence matters.

■ Type 23 Frigates

John Healey: [\[58732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, in which year each Royal Navy Type 23 frigate will be retired.

Jeremy Quin:

As the Rt Hon. Member is aware HMS Monmouth was decommissioned in June 2021, on current plans the remainder of the class will be incrementally retired before the last exit from service in 2035.

■ Warships: Procurement

John Healey: [\[58733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what year he estimates the (a) Type 26, (b) Type 31 and (c) Type 32 will enter service.

Jeremy Quin:

For details on Type 26 and Type 31, I refer the Rt Hon. Member to the answer given by my noble Friend, the Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence (Baroness Goldie), on 9 March 2021 to Question HL13634 in the House of Lords and the answer I gave to the Rt Hon. Member for North Durham on 5 March 2021 to Question 22374.

Type 32 remains in the conceptual phase, however on current projected plans, the expected in-service date is in the early 2030s.

Attachments:

1. Frigates [Hansards.docx]

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Alcoholic Drinks: Marketing****Ronnie Cowan:****[56541]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to protect children from alcohol marketing on TV and digital spaces.

Julia Lopez:

UK Government has measures in place to protect children and young people from alcohol advertising. Material in the Committee of Advertising Practice and Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice Codes (CAP and BCAP codes) relating to the advertising and marketing of alcohol products is exceptionally robust, recognising the social imperative of ensuring that alcohol advertising is responsible and in particular that children and young people are suitably protected. If new evidence emerges that clearly highlights major problems with the existing Codes, then the Advertising Standards Authority has a duty to revisit the Codes and take appropriate action.

The government also continues to work with the Portman Group, the social responsibility body and regulator for alcohol labelling, packaging and promotion in the UK. It operates its Codes of Practice to ensure that alcohol is marketed in a socially responsible way, only to those aged 18 and over, and in a way that does not appeal particularly to those who are vulnerable people. The Codes are widely supported by the industry, with over 150 Code signatories including producers, importers, wholesalers, retailers and trade associations.

Christian Wakeford:**[57500]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the self-regulatory approach used for alcohol marketing and its effectiveness of protecting children from exposure to alcohol marketing.

Julia Lopez:

UK Government has measures in place to protect children and young people from alcohol advertisements. Material in the Committee of Advertising Practice and Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice Codes (CAP and BCAP codes) relating to the advertising and marketing of alcohol products is exceptionally robust and to date, very effective.

The government, along with regulators, recognises the social imperative of ensuring that alcohol advertising is responsible and in particular that children and young people are suitably protected. If new evidence emerges that clearly highlights major problems with the existing Codes, then the Advertising Standards Authority has a duty to revisit the Codes and take appropriate action.

■ Broadband: Competition

Chris Grayling:

[\[56818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether British Telecom is permitted to offer full fibre broadband before other providers when it is installed in a geographic area; and what steps she plans to take to help ensure that no provider gains a competitive advantage after an installation.

Julia Lopez:

Ofcom, as the independent regulator for telecoms, is responsible for regulating market power in the telecoms sector. Ofcom imposes a “no undue discrimination” requirement - which means Openreach must offer equivalence between all providers using its infrastructure unless Openreach is able to demonstrate that this is not possible.

If Openreach is able to demonstrate this, any difference must not put network users at a disadvantage, particularly in terms of extra cost, time or uncertainty compared to Openreach. Therefore, British Telecom is not permitted to offer full fibre broadband before other providers and it is Ofcom’s responsibility to ensure no provider gains an unfair competitive advantage after an installation.

■ Broadband: Voucher Schemes

Ben Lake:

[\[57254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how her Department defines a rural area when determining the eligibility of premises for the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme.

Julia Lopez:

Project Gigabit, and therefore the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme, is designed to be responsive to the market so that we focus taxpayers' money on places that are too expensive to build on a commercial basis.

The voucher scheme is designed to target government subsidy towards those living and working in the hard to reach, commercially unavailable areas of the country and we are reliant upon independent sources of reference. In terms of the rural classification, this is defined using agreed standard measures according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) or equivalent.

For premises in England and Wales, rural is defined as those premises with the classifications D1-F2 inclusive as defined within the Office for National Statistics publication “The 2011 Rural-Urban Classification For Small Area Geographies”.

Rurality for premises in Northern Ireland are based on classifications E-H inclusive as defined by the “Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements”, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

For premises in Scotland, rurality is determined by classifications 3-8 inclusive, as defined within Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2013-2014.

■ Channel Four: Privatisation

Ben Lake: [\[56529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact that the privatisation of Channel 4 TV Corporation will have on the Channel's (a) recent steps to establish hubs outside London and (b) ability to commission more from production companies in the nations and regions.

Ben Lake: [\[56530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact that the privatisation of Channel 4 TV Corporation will have on its investment in training schemes, including the Factual Fast Track scheme and the Production Training Scheme.

Ben Lake: [\[56531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact that the privatisation of Channel 4 TV Corporation will have on its aim of promoting cultural identity in the UK nations and regions.

Julia Lopez:

Channel 4's network of relationships across the whole of the UK, and its strong representation of the entire nation on screen are attributes to be celebrated and maintained into its future, and that is not at odds with private investment. In fact, Channel 4's access to networks out of London and its ability to speak to such a diverse range of audiences are likely to be an attractive asset to nurture and develop for any potential buyer. Whatever decision is made about Channel 4's ownership, we are clear that any changes will not compromise our commitment to the independent production sector or the wider creative economy, including our creative powerhouses across the UK. The government has also been clear that, whatever decision is made about Channel 4, we want it to remain a public service broadcaster, with public service obligations.

Channel 4 is one of this country's greatest assets but we must think long-term about the challenges ahead and make sure it has the capital it needs to continue to contribute to the UK's success in public service broadcasting for years to come.

We have consulted on the best ownership model to support this aim, and we are in the process of examining all the evidence we have received.

John Nicolson: [\[57075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the evidential basis is for the privatisation of Channel 4 (a) supporting levelling up by boosting business growth for independent producers outside of London, (b) protecting the high value jobs supported by those companies across the UK and (c) sustaining growth in the broader creative economy beyond the M25.

Julia Lopez:

Channel 4's network of relationships across the whole of the UK, and its strong representation of the entire nation on screen are attributes to be celebrated and maintained into its future, and that is not at odds with private investment. In fact, Channel 4's access to networks outside of London and its ability to speak to such a diverse range of audiences, are likely to be an attractive asset to nurture and develop for any potential buyer. Whatever decision is made about Channel 4's ownership, we are clear that any changes will not compromise our commitment to the independent production sector or the wider creative economy, including our creative powerhouses across the UK. The government has stated that, whatever decision is made about Channel 4, we want it to remain a public service broadcaster, with public service obligations.

Channel 4 is one of this country's greatest assets but we must think long-term about the challenges ahead and make sure it has the capital it needs to continue to contribute to the UK's success in public service broadcasting for years to come.

We have consulted on the best ownership model to support this aim, and we are in the process of examining all the evidence we have received.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Mr Steve Baker:****[R] [58834]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the report entitled Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, Covid-Status Certification: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report, published on 9 September 2021, and the statements that (a) the Events Research Programme concluded that, where possible, certification should be introduced rather than more economically restrictive measures and (b) published findings will be made available in due course, if she will make those findings from the Events Research Programme publicly available immediately.

Nigel Huddleston:

[The Autumn/Winter plan](#) published on 14 September sets out the potential next steps for certification. The analysis for the final phase of events, which finished at the end of July, is underway. DCMS continues to work closely with other government departments and expects to be able to publish the final Events Research Programme findings shortly.

■ Culture: Exports**Mark Pritchard:****[56135]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department plans to establish a cultural export office.

Julia Lopez:

This government recognises the importance of the UK's creative and cultural industries, not only to the economy and international reputation of the United

Kingdom, but also to the wellbeing and enrichment of its people. We support our world leading creative industries across the UK through a range of export support programmes, including the successful Music Export Growth Scheme and International Showcase Fund.

Creative SMEs in England can also access the Internationalisation Fund which provides matching grants for export support including attendance at trade shows. The Department of International Trade is setting up new trade and investment hubs in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the North-East to boost trade and investment and level up the country. The offices will include teams of export and investment specialists who can provide businesses with expert support and advice.

The Department for International Trade has also set up a new [Export Support Service](#) where UK businesses can get answers to practical questions about exporting to Europe by accessing cross-government information and support all in one place.

All of this support is featured in the new [Creative Industries Export Campaign](#). This was launched on 20 September, and will encourage both new exporters and companies wanting to look at new export markets to take advantage of the new opportunities available to the UK as an independent trading nation.

DCMS continue to work closely with the Department of International Trade, the Creative Industries Trade and Investment Board (CITIB) and sector representatives to consider what more can be done to help the creative and cultural industries adapt to new arrangements in the EU and take advantage of the opportunities that the UK's new global position offers.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus

Mr Steve Baker:

[R] [\[58835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to publish the findings of Phase II and Phase III of the Events Research Programme.

Nigel Huddleston:

The analysis for the final phase of events, which finished at the end of July, is underway. DCMS continues to work closely with other government departments and expects to be able to publish the final Events Research Programme findings shortly.

■ Fossil Fuels: Advertising

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[56427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps is she taking to ensure that fossil fuel advertisements are properly regulated.

Julia Lopez:

Advertising in the UK is regulated through the Advertising Standards Association (ASA) and Ofcom. There are two main codes of practice for advertisers to uphold in the UK, these are the Committee of Advertising Practice and Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice Codes (CAP and BCAP codes).

The most relevant sections of the code(s) are social responsibility, misleading advertising and offence. Section 11 of the CAP code covers Environmental Claims and cites rules around making sure communications are clear, quantifiable and substantive.

■ **Internet: Children**

Chris Elmore:

[\[56225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to set standards for age-assurance technologies to protect children from harmful or age-inappropriate content to meet legislative objectives set out in the draft Online Safety Bill; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

Age assurance technologies are an important child safety tool. Their use will be essential for supporting compliance with the draft Online Safety Bill's higher protection for children. It is important that these technologies are robust, effective, secure and inclusive. This is needed to ensure children are appropriately protected online and so that the public has trust in these solutions. DCMS is leading a detailed programme of work on age assurance technologies. This includes working with the British Standards Institute and the International Organization for Standardization to develop relevant standards, including an international standard that will set consistent expectations on key considerations including user privacy, confidence levels, security, and inclusion.

■ **Musicians: EU Countries**

Christine Jardine:

[\[54001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had on progressing an EU wide visa waiver for touring musicians.

Julia Lopez:

This government has spoken to every EU Member State about the importance of touring. From these discussions, 20 out of 27 Member States have confirmed that UK musicians and performers do not need visas or work permits for some short-term tours.

We are now actively engaging with the remaining Member States that do not allow any visa or permit free touring, to encourage them to more closely align requirements with the UK's generous rules, which allow creative professionals to tour easily here. Discussions are ongoing at ministerial and official level across these target countries, and we are working with the sector to amplify each other's lobbying efforts.

■ **National Lottery: Internet**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[56208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential harms to people and communities of the National

Lottery's shift towards online-based games and away from traditional draw-based games; and whether her Department holds information on the potential causal link between people using the National Lottery mobile app and using other forms of mobile gambling.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[57472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to Public Health England's research and analysis entitled Gambling-related harms evidence review, updated on 30 September 2021, what assessment her Department has made of the potential (a) economic and (b) social effects on people and communities of the National Lottery's shift towards online-based games and away from traditional draw-based games.

Chris Philp:

The Department and the Gambling Commission as the independent regulator share three statutory duties in relation to the National Lottery - to ensure that the National Lottery is run with all due propriety, that the interests of every participant are protected, and - subject to those duties - that returns to good causes are maximised. The National Lottery is regulated under a separate framework from commercial gambling, with additional requirements regarding the protection of players.

'Instants games' have been part of the National Lottery portfolio for the majority of the time since the National Lottery was launched in 1994. Scratchcards were introduced in 1995 and online Interactive Instant Win Games in 2003. A broad portfolio ensures the National Lottery continues to appeal to a wide range of people and can provide substantial contributions for good causes every week.

All games, including instants games, are licensed by the Gambling Commission. In determining whether to licence games, the Commission will consider the potential impact on players and the player protection mechanisms which are in place to protect players from harm.

The current National Lottery operator has a range of online player protection tools for players (for example self-exclusion tools, spend and play limits, and the option to set lower limits) and has developed an online algorithm for identifying at risk and problem play which alerts players to help encourage healthy play habits.

Evidence from the latest (2018) Health Survey for England shows that National Lottery games were associated with the lowest rates of problem gambling of all gambling products considered. Problem gambling rates for National Lottery draw-based games were 0.9% while the figure for Scratchcards was 1.4%.

■ Sexual Offences: Rents

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[56593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps is she taking to prevent the posting of sex for rent advertisements on social media websites.

Julia Lopez:

The government is clear that 'sex for rent' arrangements are illegal and breach the Sex Offences Act (2003). The Crown Prosecution Service detail that these arrangements can lead to the exploitation of highly vulnerable persons who are struggling to obtain accommodation. The provision of accommodation in return for sex is capable of being caught by the following legislation: Sexual Offences (causing prostitution for gain) and an advertisement would also be unlawful in accordance with section 52 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Advertising in the UK is regulated through the Advertising Standards Association (ASA) and Ofcom. There are two main codes of practice for advertisers to uphold in the UK. These are the Committee of Advertising Practice and Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice Codes, CAP and BCAP codes. DCMS will be examining the regulatory model for online advertising through its upcoming Online Advertising Programme (OAP). This government wants to ensure that online advertising is regulated by a robust, well-funded and strong regulatory body who can minimise harms for consumers, businesses and society as a whole, we will consult on the OAP later this year.

■ Telecommunications: Infrastructure**Dr Luke Evans:**[\[56293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what progress her Department has made on responding to the consultation on further legislative changes to the Electronic Communications Code.

Julia Lopez:

Since the consultation on the Electronic Communications Code closed on 24 March 2021, officials have been analysing the responses received. The government's response will be published once this process is completed.

Paul Girvan:[\[57264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will publish details of (a) planned changes to the Communications Code; and whether that will include mitigations to help ensure that telecoms companies cannot demand rent reductions from landowners for mast infrastructure.

Julia Lopez:

Our consultation on Electronic Communications Code closed on 24 March 2021, and we are analysing the responses received. The government's response will be published once this process is completed.

The consultation made clear that the government continues to believe the valuation regime introduced in 2017 strikes the right balance between the public need for digital communications and the rights of landowners to receive fair payments for allowing their land to be used. The valuation regime is therefore not being revisited, but the consultation did ask whether changes were needed to support more collaborative negotiations and help disagreements to be dealt with more quickly and cheaply.

■ Third Sector: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[53288]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of the financial state of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

Nigel Huddleston:

DCMS is regularly gathering intelligence from departments across the government and partners in the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to understand risks and issues relating to critical services provided and how these are being addressed.

A number of established surveys are providing a picture of the nuanced impact of the pandemic on financial outlook, workforce and levels of service delivery. These include the Covid-19 Voluntary Sector Impact Barometer from Nottingham Trent and Sheffield Hallam Universities, and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

The government will continue to monitor the health and resilience of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, and will explore ways to strengthen the evidence available to support our assessment.

EDUCATION

■ Adult Education: Finance

Sarah Olney:

[58472]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much Government funding has been allocated to adult education in each region in each year since 2019.

Will Quince:

The government supports adult education, outside of apprenticeships, through the Adult Education Budget (AEB), National Skills Fund, European Social Fund (ESF) and Advanced Learner Loans.

A complete regional breakdown of funding allocations across these funding streams is not available. However, the government does publish the following online at GOV.UK:

- The amount of AEB devolved to Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Greater London Authority, figures are available from 2019-20 onwards.
- Figures for 2019-20: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-education-budget-s31-grant-determination-letters>.
- Figures for 2020-21 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-education-budget-s31-grant-determination-letters-2020-to-2021>
- Figures for 2021-22 are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-education-budget-devolved->

[grant-determination-letters-2021](#). This includes ring fenced budgets for the adult level 3 offer.

The amount of AEB allocated by the Education and Skills Funding Agency to providers is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/19-funding-allocations#supporting-documents> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-allocations-to-training-providers-2021-to-2022>.

The figures from 2019/20 onwards, following AEB devolution, are in respect of funding allocated to providers for learners resident in non-devolved areas.

Starting this year, the government is investing £2.5 billion in the National Skills Fund. This is a new investment, which includes £375 million in the financial year 2021-22, exclusive of Barnett. This is broken down as follows:

- £138 million to deliver on my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister's skills speech (£95 million for Free Courses for Jobs offer and £43 million for Skills Bootcamps)
- £127 million for measures announced in the Plan for Jobs (including apprenticeships, traineeships, and Sector-based Work Academy Programmes)
- £110 million (including £50 million capital) for piloting skills reforms

ESF contract values from 2014 to 2020, covering rounds one and two, for contracts starting in 2016 and 2019 respectively, are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esf-2014-to-2020-programme-list-of-contracts>.

The Department forecasts demand for Advanced Learner Loans with HM Treasury annually. These tuition fee loans are for provision across England in all areas. The total value of loans approved by the Student Loans Company in the 2021/20 academic year was £182.4 million.

The Department also publishes adult learner data, which includes a breakdown of how many learners are supported by region: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/further-education-and-skills>.

■ Apprentices

Stephen Timms:

[56755]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to (a) increase flexibility in the apprenticeship system and (b) extend access to workers on temporary contracts.

Alex Burghart:

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

complete an apprenticeship more quickly. Additionally, we are making it easier for large employers to transfer levy funds to support new starts in small businesses, or in a certain sector or region. On 13 September 2021, we launched a new online service to allow levy paying employers to advertise funding pledges, enabling a much wider range of businesses to browse and apply for available funds.

We recognise that some sectors with flexible employment patterns and short-term roles, including creative, digital, adult social care, transport, and manufacturing have found it challenging to benefit from the high-quality apprenticeships available. In August, to help these sectors, we launched our new flexi-job apprenticeship offer. We have invited sector bodies, groups of employers, and other interested organisations to register as flexi-job apprenticeship agencies, giving them access to a £7 million fund to support new agencies with their start-up costs. These agencies will enable apprentices to work across multiple short-term projects with different employers and allow them to benefit from the high-quality long-term training that an apprenticeship provides.

■ Apprentices: Taxation

Emma Hardy:

[\[56548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of private companies sharing their apprenticeship levy funds with public bodies.

Alex Burghart:

We are committed to supporting more employers to use apprenticeships to develop the skilled workforces they need, and to support more people, from all backgrounds, to benefit from the high quality training that apprenticeships offer.

To help large employers make full use of their levy funds, we are making it easier for them to transfer their unused funds and support new starters in other businesses, sectors or regions. In September, we launched a new online service to allow levy paying employers to advertise funding pledges, and to enable other businesses to browse and apply for these funds. Private sector companies are able to transfer levy funds to employers in the public sector.

It is encouraging to see that companies, including DPD, Mace Group, and Amazon UK, have already begun to take advantage of this opportunity and pledge funds for transfer.

Emma Hardy:

[\[57286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has plans to review the effectiveness of the Apprenticeship Levy.

Emma Hardy:

[\[57290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the flexibility in how employers can spend Apprenticeship Levy funds; and whether he has plans to reform existing restrictions.

Alex Burghart:

The apprenticeship levy is an important part of our reforms supporting employers of all sizes to invest in high-quality apprenticeship training.

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

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

We are also making it easier for large employers to make full use of their levy funds by transferring them to support new starts in small businesses, or in a certain sector or region. In September, we launched a new online service to allow levy-paying employers to pledge funds for transfer, making it easier for large and small employers alike to make better use of transfers.

We currently have no plans to review the apprenticeship levy, including how employers' levy funds are used. The levy was created to support the uptake and delivery of high-quality apprenticeships and has been set at a level to fund this employer demand. It funds apprenticeships for employers of all sizes, including for smaller employers who do not have their own levy funds to use.

■ Holiday Activities and Food Programme**Kate Green:**[\[58384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much of the funding allocated to the Holiday Activities and Food Programme has been spent on activities for children during the (a) Easter and (b) summer 2021 holidays.

Kate Green:[\[58385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, how many local authorities submitted a report detailing their summer activities and a delivery plan for the Christmas holidays by 15 October 2021.

Kate Green:[\[58386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which organisation has been appointed to carry out the evaluation of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme; and when the evaluation report will be published.

Kate Green:

[\[58387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children in receipt of free school meals accessed provision through the Holiday Activities and Food Programme during the (a) Easter holiday and (b) summer holiday in 2021, by local authority.

Will Quince:

Local authorities were asked to send reports to the department by 15 October 2021, including detailed information on their delivery of the programme to date. 131 delivery reports were received by 15 October 2021, and we have been in contact with local authorities directly to ensure the outstanding 20 are received promptly. The department is now examining these detailed individual reports and may need to clarify information with local authorities in some cases. The department will then consider the best way to share information on the programme.

In addition, as part of the financial assurance process, local authorities will complete a certificate of expenditure which will cover the 2021-22 financial year. As indicated in the grant determination letter, this will be commissioned after the upcoming Christmas school holidays and therefore this information is not currently available.

The department commissioned Ecorys UK to conduct an external evaluation of the programme. Fieldwork has taken place during and shortly after this year's summer holidays, and we expect to publish findings in the New Year.

■ Mathematics: Students

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[56343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to increase the number of mathematics (a) undergraduates and (b) postgraduates.

Michelle Donelan:

The department funds the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme, which aims to increase participation and attainment in level 3 mathematics through targeted support, ensuring students in all 16-19 state funded schools and colleges can access AS and A level maths and AS and A level further mathematics, and helping them to study these subjects to a higher level.

We are working with universities and academy trusts to establish a specialist maths school in each region, and a total of 11 nationally. This aims to prepare more of our most mathematically able students to succeed in maths disciplines at top universities. They also deliver outreach work with teachers and students in schools in their surrounding areas to increase maths A level participation and attainment.

We strongly believe effective careers guidance and advice is key to supporting young people in their education and career choices, to undertake learning and develop skills in the areas employers are looking for. The government's Careers Strategy sets out a long-term plan to build a world class careers system to achieve this ambition. We are increasing the information available to students to ensure they can make informed choices about what and where to study. The delivery of the Careers Strategy also

ensures that science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) encounters, such as with employers and apprenticeships, are built into school career programmes.

The government also supports around 25% of the total PhD population in the UK through grants awarded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). Since January 2020, UKRI has awarded £104 million of additional funding into Mathematical Sciences, over and above the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council's (EPSRC) core Mathematical Sciences Theme budget. The additional funding has funded institutes, small and large research grants, fellowships, doctoral studentships and postdoctoral awards.

■ Overseas Students

Emily Thornberry: [\[56439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when the Government last conducted an evaluation of international higher education students' contribution to the UK economy.

Emily Thornberry: [\[56440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what methodology his Department uses to evaluate the contribution of higher education-related exports to the UK economy.

Michelle Donelan:

The department publishes annual experimental statistics on UK revenue from education related exports and transnational education activity.

The latest release, published in December 2020, estimated total UK revenue from education related exports and transnational activity in 2018 to be £23.3 billion, of which £16 billion (69%) of the total value came from higher education activity.

The statistical release, along with the technical note detailing the methodology and data sources used can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-revenue-from-education-related-exports-and-transnational-education-activity-2018>.

Through the government's International Education Strategy, and the 2021 update to the Strategy, we have committed to providing a clearer picture of Education Exports data. The department continues to work closely with the Department for International Trade on this matter and as set out in the 2021 Update, a roadmap is being developed focusing on short/medium/long-term steps to improve data. The update can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-education-strategy-2021-update/international-education-strategy-2021-update-supporting-recovery-driving-growth>.

■ Sixth Form Education: Finance

Caroline Lucas: [\[56950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to raise the rate of funding for sixth form education to at least £4,760 per student in the upcoming Spending Review; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Burghart:

We have invested an extra £291 million in 16-19 education in the 2021-22 financial year. This is in addition to the £400 million awarded in the 2019 Spending Review, which was the biggest injection of new money into 16-19 education in a single year since 2010. This has allowed us to raise the base rate of funding for all providers of 16-19 education, including school sixth forms and sixth-form colleges, from £4,000 in the 2019/20 academic year to £4,188 in the 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic years, as well as to make further funding increases targeted on high value and high cost programmes.

As a result, the average total programme funding per 16-19 student has increased by nearly 10% from £4,516 in 2019/20 published allocations, to £4,958 in 2020/21 published allocations^[1]. We will need to consider the outcome of the 2021 spending review and what this will mean for funding rates beyond the 2021/22 academic year.

[1] This calculation only includes institutions that have students receiving total programme funding. Some institutions receive only high needs funding, their students are not included in this calculation. In addition, the Condition of Funding adjustment for English and maths and the Advanced Maths Premium have been incorporated in total programme funding in 2019/20 to make this consistent with the definition in 2020/21.

■ Students: Finance

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[58971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress his Department has made on introducing alternative student finance options for Muslim students.

Gill Furniss: [\[58980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to introduce an alternative student finance model for higher education students.

Michelle Donelan:

I refer the hon. Members for Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough, and Ealing Central and Acton to the answer I gave on 18 October 2021 to Question [53884](#).

■ Students: Loans

Charlotte Nichols: [\[56521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to lower the student loan repayment threshold from £27,000 to £23,000.

Michelle Donelan:

We are committed to a sustainable funding model for our higher education system that supports high value provision, meets the skills needs of the country and maintains the world-class reputation of UK higher education.

The government is considering its response to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding carefully, including a range of options to ensure that student finance

continues to deliver value for money for both students and the taxpayer, and will set out a full conclusion in due course.

■ Universities Superannuation Scheme

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[56658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the financial sustainability of the Universities Superannuation Scheme.

Michelle Donelan:

The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) is a private pension scheme. Higher education providers that offer the USS are responsible for the pension provision offered to their staff. Like other defined benefit schemes, the USS is regulated by The Pensions Regulator.

The Pensions Regulator is currently working with the USS, Universities UK and a range of other stakeholders as they work to find a long-term solution to the funding challenges faced by the USS.

■ Universities: Counter-terrorism

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[58710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will list (a) any powers he has to prevent investment in UK universities by hostile states and (b) the legal basis for each of those powers.

Michelle Donelan:

We are recognised across the world for our higher education system and we encourage the sector to collaborate with international partners. However, to be open, we must also be secure, and we will not accept collaborations which compromise our national security.

On the 29 April 2021, the National Security and Investment (NSI) Act was passed. The NSI Act enables the UK Government to protect all sectors, including research and Higher Education Institutions from hostile foreign interference through mandating notification and requiring approval of investments and other acquisitions in key areas. It also extends the UK Government's screening powers to include acquisitions of control over assets such as intellectual and tangible property. Universities and other research organisations should have regard to the NSI Act when collaborating with other parties to acquire, sell or develop entities and assets.

In addition, I commissioned Universities UK to produce comprehensive security guidelines to advise universities on engaging in secure international collaborations published in October 2020, 'Managing risks in internationalisation: security-related issues'. Among the recommendations in the guidelines were that due diligence be conducted on all international partnerships.

■ Vocational Education: North West**Conor McGinn:** [\[58433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many people aged (a) 16 to 18 years old and (b) over 19 years old studied for a level 3 BTEC in (a) St Helens Metropolitan Borough and (b) Liverpool City Region in each year since 2010.

Alex Burghart:

The data in the attached table covers level 3 learning aim enrolments that have BTEC in the title.

The data is broken down by St Helens and Liverpool City Region (Halton, Liverpool, Sefton, Knowsley, St Helens and Wirral) and by age groups of under 19 years and those over 19 years old.

Attachments:

1. 58433_table [58433_level3_enrolment_table_v2.xlsx]

Conor McGinn: [\[58434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect on levels of inequality in the North West region of the withdrawal of funding for certain BTEC qualifications.

Alex Burghart:

We set out the qualifications we intend to fund alongside A levels and T Levels at level 3 in July 2021. We will continue to fund some BTECs and other Applied General qualifications (AGQs) in future, and these qualifications will continue to play an important role for 16 to 19 year olds and adults as they do now.

Whilst we want clearer, simpler choices for students, we are not moving towards a binary system of just A levels and T Levels. Students will continue to be able to study BTECs and other AGQs as part of mixed programmes alongside A levels, where they meet new quality standards and support progression to higher education, for example in areas such as engineering, applied science and IT. Students will also be able to study qualifications like BTECs as their full programme of study where there is no A level or T Level, in areas such as performing and creative arts and sports science.

T Levels are challenging qualifications developed with 250 leading employers, have significantly longer teaching hours and include a meaningful nine-week industry placement that sets them apart from many current vocational qualifications. We believe that it is the right thing to do to remove funding for technical qualifications that overlap with T Levels when they become nationally available. However, whilst we want clearer, simpler choices for students, we are not creating a binary system of just A levels and T Levels and will continue to fund qualifications such as BTECs and other AGQs in a number of areas. These include performing and creative arts, sport, health, and STEM subjects such as engineering, applied science, and IT.

The impact assessment published alongside our final plans in July recognised that at a national level some students may find it more difficult to achieve level 3 in future,

but we expect these changes to have a generally positive impact. We are clear that students taking qualifications that are no longer funded in future will have the most to gain from these changes because they are more likely to be taking qualifications that do not deliver the skills employers need. These students will have access to higher quality qualifications in the future, including new T Levels, putting them in a stronger position to progress onto further study or skilled employment.

Alongside our reforms to level 3 qualifications, we want to improve study at level 2 and below, which has been neglected for too long. Getting level 2 and below right is key to making sure that every student has a clear progression route, whether that is to high quality level 3 qualifications, apprenticeships, traineeships, or directly into skilled employment at level 2. We are considering feedback to the call for evidence which ran from 10 November 2020 to 14 February 2021 and will consult on proposals for reform later this year.

Conor McGinn:

[\[58435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with representatives of FE colleges and providers in (a) St Helens North constituency and (b) the North West on the withdrawal of Government funding for certain BTEC qualifications.

Alex Burghart:

We set out the qualifications we intend to fund alongside A levels and T Levels at level 3 in July 2021. We will continue to fund some BTECs and other Applied General qualifications (AGQs) in future, and these qualifications will continue to play an important role for 16 to 19 year olds and adults as they do now.

Whilst we want clearer, simpler choices for students, we are not moving towards a binary system of just A levels and T Levels. Students will continue to be able to study BTECs and other AGQs as part of mixed programmes alongside A levels, where they meet new quality standards and support progression to higher education, for example in areas such as engineering, applied science and IT. Students will also be able to study qualifications like BTECs as their full programme of study where there is no A level or T Level, in areas such as performing and creative arts and sports science.

T Levels are challenging qualifications developed with 250 leading employers, have significantly longer teaching hours and include a meaningful nine-week industry placement that sets them apart from many current vocational qualifications. We believe that it is the right thing to do to remove funding for technical qualifications that overlap with T Levels when they become nationally available.

The North West regional delivery team are in regular dialogue with St Helen's College and through this discuss their curriculum and strategy. As part of the Annual Strategic Conversations, they are having with all FE Colleges, they pick up any key strategic risks and issues, as well as opportunities and strengths. These have not yet been held with St Helen's or Carmel Colleges, but both are likely to take place early in 2022.

■ Warwickshire College: Closures

Harriett Baldwin: [\[53234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the Board of Warwickshire College Group on their policy on site closures.

Alex Burghart:

The Board of Warwickshire College Group (trading as WCG) has a legal duty as charitable trustees to act in the best interest of the corporation and maximise the value of surplus assets. Decisions made by the board are expected to be in line with their Estates Strategy and Space Management Policy. The Education and Skills Funding Agency nor the Department for Education have the powers to influence the board's decision on individual site closures.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Aluminium: Prices

Luke Pollard: [\[59037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on increases in aluminium prices and the effect of those increases on the food industry.

Victoria Prentis:

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

Additionally, David Lewis has been appointed to co-chair the new Supply Chain Advisory Group and the new Industry Taskforce, providing a link between business and government to identify causes of supply chain issues and pre-empt future issues. He has been appointed until the end of the year.

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain, as demonstrated throughout the Covid-19 response. Our high degree of food security is built on access to a range of sources, including robust supply chains domestically, and from a diverse range of other stable countries.

■ Animals: Imports

Dr Neil Hudson: [\[53366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to reintroduce the requirement for small animals to be treated for ticks before entering the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

Tick surveillance has shown that tick distribution and abundance is changing throughout the UK for many reasons, including habitat and climate change. Small numbers of localised infestations with non-native tick species have been reported in recent years. For these reasons, Defra strongly encourages pet owners to treat their pets to safeguard their animals against ticks and tick-transmitted diseases when travelling abroad.

Defra has no immediate plans to amend the tick controls for dogs, cats or ferrets entering into Great Britain. However, we remain aware of the concerns around ticks and tick-borne disease, and future policy will be guided by risk assessment.

There are no plans to introduce tick treatment to imports of other small animals.

Dr Neil Hudson:[\[53367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward proposals to reintroduce the requirement for small animals to be treated for tapeworm before entering the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra has no immediate plans to amend the tapeworm requirements for dogs, cats and ferrets entering Great Britain. However, we remain aware of the concerns around tapeworm and our future policy will be guided by risk assessment.

There are no plans to introduce tapeworm treatment to imports of other small animals.

■ Dogs**Luke Pollard:**[\[59038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what representations his Department has received on the maximum number of dogs that a professional dog walker should walk at any one time.

Jo Churchill:

Professional dog walkers should comply with all relevant legislation, including the Animal Welfare Act 2006, Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and others. They should also comply with any relevant local authority requirements, not walk more dogs at any one time than their insurance policy allows, and ensure that the dogs are kept under control at all times.

The Canine and Feline Sector Group, which includes in its members the UK's most significant animal welfare organisations, has published guidance to assist professional dog walkers in ensuring the welfare of animals in their care. Their guidance has formed the basis for guidance owned and issued by several local authorities and recommends that no more than four dogs are walked at any one time.

■ Food

Conor McGinn: [\[58929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support national food redistribution charities to (a) tackle food insecurity and (b) prevent surplus food waste.

Conor McGinn: [\[58930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reason he has not extended his Department's Food Waste Fund to help charities redistribute surplus food to communities and prevent it going to waste.

Jo Churchill:

The safe and speedy redistribution of surplus food is a priority, be it from retail, manufacture or the hospitality and food service sector, which all may have their own issues and challenges in their supply chains. Defra supports a range of action to overcome these challenges, reduce food waste and help get more surplus food to charities.

Since 2017 Defra has made a series of grants available to help the redistribution sector. In total nearly £12 million has been awarded to more than 250 large and small redistribution organisations across the country for the provision of, for example, warehousing, vehicles, fridges and freezers that will support the sector for months and years to come.

We continue to support the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and the Courtauld 2030 redistribution working group that seeks to overcome barriers to redistribution. The most recent outputs from the group are the publication of new guidance on storing surplus food, best practice on redistributing own brand products and the tool *framework for effective redistribution*.

We remain committed to the WRAP-led food waste reduction roadmap which supports business to target, measure and specifically act on reducing food waste, for instance by making sure food surplus is redistributed.

The amount of surplus food redistributed in 2020, over 92,000 tonnes, was worth £280 million and was the equivalent of 220 million meals. Since UK-level data was first reported in 2015, overall levels of redistribution have increased three-fold.

Defra delivered a comprehensive package of support for vulnerable individuals to provide additional support for children and families during the winter period 2020/21. This package included £16 million of funding to FareShare to work with local charities across England to provide food for those struggling financially due to the impacts of the pandemic.

■ Landfill: Hydrogen Sulphide

Aaron Bell:

[\[59111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the World Health Organization air quality guidelines on (a) odorous annoyance and (b) health in respect of hydrogen sulphide emissions from landfill sites.

Jo Churchill:

The World Health Organization (WHO) air quality guidelines are internationally recognised guidelines. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has adopted the WHO air quality guidelines with respect to hydrogen sulphide for assessing odour and short-term exposure in their risk assessment for Walleys Quarry Landfill, available here: https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/west-midlands/walleys-quarry-landfill-sliverdale/user_uploads/walley-s-ea-aq-monitoring-health-risk--assessment-august-final.pdf.

The WHO guideline value of 7 µg/m³ (5 ppb) over a 30-minute averaging period is protective of odour annoyance. The WHO guideline value of 150 µg/m³ (107 ppb) as a 24-hour (average) to protect against eye irritation.

■ Pollinators

Drew Hendry:

[\[58931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent analysis his Department has undertaken on the long term impacts of historical pesticide usage on (a) bee and (b) wild pollinator numbers.

Victoria Prentis:

Linking pesticide usage directly to changes in pollinator numbers remains challenging because of the range of pressures which affect pollinators. In 2019, alongside leading academics, we published evidence statements on what is known, and not known, about the status and responses to pressures and management of pollinators, including in relation to pesticide use. We are currently funding research looking at how we could develop our monitoring to better understand the effects of pesticides on pollinators, as well as routes of exposure.

Defra is developing a Pesticide Load Indicator which takes account of both the chemical properties of pesticides used and the weight applied. This uses pesticide usage data, ecotoxicity and environmental data to better understand how the pressure from pesticides on the environment, including bees, has changed over time. Much of this research will be published in 2022.

We also publish an indicator of the status of pollinating insects, which measures how widespread each of almost 400 species is in each year since 1980. It shows long-term decline, but little change over the short term. Although not yet definitive, there are encouraging signs of improvement, for example the average distribution of wild

bees has shown some stability over recent years. We are keeping these trends under review.

■ **Veterinary Medicine: Drugs**

Stephen Farry: [\[54034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the indefinite extension of the grace period in respect of medicines announced on 6 September 2021 covers veterinary medicines.

Victoria Prentis:

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate can confirm that the announcement regarding the extension to the grace period for medicines, does include veterinary medicines.

■ **Walley's Quarry Landfill**

Aaron Bell: [\[59110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to scrutinise the Environment Agency's strategy in respect of Walley's Quarry landfill.

Jo Churchill:

Following my recent discussion with the hon. Member, I have taken a close interest in the issue of Walley's Quarry. I am regularly updated by officials and the Environment Agency about air quality near the site, and the agency's plans to improve it. The latest reports show a continuing reduction in hydrogen sulphide, which hopefully will improve further still as a result of the ongoing work at the site.

■ **Walley's Quarry Landfill: Hydrogen Sulphide**

Aaron Bell: [\[56443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Regulation of Walleys Quarry landfill site, Plan to reduce hydrogen sulphide emissions, published by the Environment Agency in October 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The Environment Agency's plan to reduce hydrogen sulphide emissions arising from Walleys Quarry builds on the work it has done to require the operator to contain, capture, and destroy increasing volumes of hydrogen sulphide. This strategy has seen concentrations decrease at all monitoring stations over recent months, although I recognise there remains significant concern in the local community. In due course, the new capping material installed at the site, and the extra gas wells being dug should further improve the situation.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Academic Technology Approval Scheme****Apsana Begum:**[\[57406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the average time taken by his Department to issue Academic Technology Approval Scheme certificates; and what steps his Department is taking to reduce the backlog in the issuing of those certificates.

Amanda Milling:

The Government has increased Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) processing and assessment capacity in the past 12 months. This has helped manage the unprecedented surge in ATAS applications - in part due to course deferrals from 2020 - and ensured that the vast majority of applications are processed within advertised timeframes.

■ Afghanistan: Refugees**Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[58975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of people who have contacted her Department through the (a) public hotline and (b) emergency email address for vulnerable Afghans have received a reply; and what was the nature of the information conveyed to them.

James Cleverly:

The FCDO received around 50,000 calls on our consular emergency lines between 11 August - 26 September, many on behalf of Afghans rather than British Nationals. Since 20 August, the average wait time was less than one minute. Since the Afghanistan crisis began, the FCDO alone have received 240,000 emails, sent to a number of our email addresses. FCDO along with the Home Office and the MOD, are working to assess cases raised in them as quickly as possible. We have processed the 30,000 emails from MPs sent on Afghanistan, including information about cases, that were received before 11 September and replied to all 650 Members so that we can focus on repatriation. We are replying to Members' correspondence after 12 September in the usual way. Of the remaining 210,000 emails, after much analysis and deduplication, we have identified more than 60,000 individual email originators and sent a response to all of them, including how to find information and support.

Liz Saville Roberts:[\[58976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will publish an update on the steps her Department is taking to facilitate the safe passage for vulnerable Afghans from Afghanistan to the UK through the Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme.

James Cleverly:

In its first year, the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme will welcome up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK who have been forced to flee the country, with up to a

total of 20,000 over a five-year period. The Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme (ACRS) will provide protection for people at risk identified as in need. We will work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to identify those we should help. The scheme is not yet open and further details will be announced in due course by the Home Office. For further information on the scheme can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>.

■ **Armenia: Prisoners of War**

Catherine West: [\[58978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations she has made to her Azerbaijani counterpart on the need to release Armenian prisoners of war.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government continues to raise the importance of the return of all prisoners of war and we welcome the most recent return on 19 October. During visits to Armenia and Azerbaijan in February, I urged both parties to work with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to expedite the return of all prisoners of war. In my most recent conversations with the Azerbaijani and Armenian Foreign Ministers, on 14 June and 6 September respectively, I raised the importance of the return of all prisoners of war and detainees.

■ **Azerbaijan: Cultural Heritage**

Catherine West: [\[58979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with the Government of Azerbaijan on the protection of historical and cultural sites in occupied and contested territories.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government continues to raise the importance of the protection of all cultural heritage sites with both the Governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan and is deeply concerned by reports that both parties have destroyed cultural heritage.

■ **Bangladesh: Hinduism**

Navendu Mishra: [\[59091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations her Department has made to the Bangladeshi government following recent violence against the Hindu community.

Amanda Milling:

The UK Government is concerned about the recent violence directed against Hindu Durga Puja celebrations across various districts in Bangladesh. We engage with the Government of Bangladesh on the importance of freedom of religion or belief, which remains a priority for the UK Government. The British High Commissioner to Bangladesh has publicly expressed his condolences to the victims of the violence

and the UK's support for those working for religious tolerance and harmony in Bangladesh and around the world.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[59006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department has (a) vaccine donation targets to the World Health Organisation's COVAX scheme and (b) timescales for when those targets should be achieved.

Wendy Morton:

At the G7 Leaders' Summit in June 2021, the PM announced that the UK would donate 100 million Covid-19 vaccine doses to the world by June 2022. Of this pledge, at least 80% will be donated through COVAX. This is part of a wider commitment by G7 leaders to provide one billion doses to help vaccinate the world by the end of 2022. We will donate 30 million doses by the end of 2021.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[59007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate she has made of the number of vaccines that were unable to be administered as a result of (a) inadequate storage conditions or (b) other logistical implications of the 5.1 million covid-19 vaccine doses the UK donated to COVAX.

Wendy Morton:

The UK will provide £548m to COVAX to finance vaccines for developing countries, in addition the UK has committed to donate 80 million vaccines from the UK supply through COVAX by June 2022. To date, the UK has donated 6.2 million doses through COVAX, which have been delivered to 14 different countries, including Ethiopia, Uganda and Pakistan. To date, COVAX has successfully delivered over 380 million vaccine doses to 144 participants. COVAX works with governments to ensure robust and transparent distribution and reporting plans are in place to monitor equitable distribution and allocation to priority groups in line with National Deployment and Vaccination Plans.

■ **Developing Countries: Coronavirus**

Owen Thompson:

[\[57178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when the Government plans to donate 100 million surplus coronavirus vaccine doses to the world within the next year.

Wendy Morton:

The Prime Minister committed the UK to donate 100 million doses by June 2022. To date, we have donated 10.5m doses. At the United Nations General Assembly in September 2021 the Prime Minister announced that we will be donating a further 20 million doses of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine before the end of the year in order to meet our 30 million target. 80% of all our donations will go through COVAX.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[58371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information she holds on the proportion of the population of low-income countries that have received (a) one dose and (b) two doses of a covid-19 vaccine; and if she will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

According to Our World in Data, 2.8% of people in low-income countries have so far received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. World Health Organization advises that 26 African countries receiving COVID-19 vaccines have administered two doses to 2% of their populations. The UK is committed to equitable, global access and is working with international partners to increase global supply, including to low-income countries. This includes our £548 million support for COVAX's Advance Market Commitment, which will aim to supply up to 1.8 billion doses to up to 92 low and middle income countries by early 2022. The UK has also committed to share 100 million doses by mid-2022. Over 10 million of these doses have been donated so far.

■ **Developing Countries: Nutrition**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[58360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make it her policy to (a) increase funding for UK funded nutrition programmes ahead of the Nutrition for Growth Summit in December 2021 in Tokyo and (b) renew the commitment to reach over 50 million children, women, and adolescent girls with nutrition relevant programmes by 2025; and if she will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

The Government is actively considering its approach to the N4G summit, including any new nutrition commitment, and will update the house following the conclusion of the Spending Review.

■ **Israel: Palestinians**

Mr David Jones:

[\[58757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the humanitarian impact of prolonged internal displacement of Palestinians in Gaza whose homes were damaged during the conflict of May 2021.

Mr David Jones:

[\[58758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to support reconstruction of homes and essential infrastructure in Gaza following the conflict of May 2021.

Mr David Jones:

[\[58759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to tackle mental health needs in Gaza following the conflict of May 2021.

James Cleverly:

We have made clear our concern about the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza, including significant damage and destruction of civilian infrastructure following the escalation in violence in May 2021. The UK continues to urge Israel to ensure humanitarian access into and out of Gaza, including for essential health services. The UK remains a longstanding supporter to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) which provides core services, including health and education to Palestinian refugees in Gaza.

■ **Nepal: Religious Freedom**

Ms Marie Rimmer:

[\[58137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 3 June 2021 to Question 7204 on Nepal: Christianity, what steps the British Embassy takes to engage with members of faith and belief groups and civil society in Nepal; and what trends the British Embassy has identified on religious and belief tolerance in Nepal.

Amanda Milling:

The British Embassy in Kathmandu regularly engages with civil society to discuss a wide range of policy priorities, including human rights, climate change, girls' education, and media freedom. The embassy also meets with representatives of faith and belief groups to hear their priorities and any concerns, and is the Chair of the Human Rights Core Group, a network of like-minded diplomatic missions, which discusses concerns related to freedom of religion or belief to drive collective action.

The UK's assessment of the trends on religious and belief tolerance is that there have not been significant recent shifts in intra-community persecution or closure of civil society space. This is due to Nepal's Constitution and legal framework forming part of the peace settlement to bring marginalised communities into Nepal's institutions, related laws being largely upheld by the courts and relevant human rights commissions, and COVID-19 related lockdowns not discriminating between different faiths or beliefs.

■ **Syria: Overseas Aid and Sanctions**

Mr Nicholas Brown:

[\[58739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for his policies of the impact of (a) sanctions and (b) reduction in official overseas development aid for civilians living in Syria.

James Cleverly:

UK Syria sanctions carefully target the Assad regime and its cronies, not the civilian population. Sanctions are imposed for specific purposes. They play an indispensable role in countering breaches of international law, proliferation, staunching the flow of arms into war zones, combatting human rights abuses, and targeting spoilers of peace processes. The UK does not sanction medicine, medical equipment or medical assistance, and items required to fight the COVID-19 pandemic are not subject to direct restrictions on export, supply, financing or use in Syria. To further guard against unintentional humanitarian impact, UK sanctions provide for a range of exceptions, in order not to obstruct humanitarian activity, or export of medicines or other humanitarian goods.

As the third largest bilateral donor to the Syria Crisis, the UK is at the forefront of the international response, helping those most in need and encouraging the wider international humanitarian response to do the same. To date, the UK has committed over £3.7 billion in response to the regional Syria Crisis, our largest humanitarian response. In financial year 2020/21, UK Aid helped deliver 11,077 food rations, 552,496 people with clean drinking water, 202,004 vaccines, 133,367 relief packages, 1,350,048 medical consultations and 244,739 pupils with access to formal education, inside Syria. The UK remains a force for good at times of crisis, and we will continue to support the Syrian people.

Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[58973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the potential barriers to international travel experienced by fully vaccinated UK citizens as a result of the institution and country in which their covid-19 vaccine was produced, including at the Serum Institute for India; and what discussions she has had with (a) the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and (b) international counterparts on that matter.

Amanda Milling:

All doses used in the UK have been subject to rigorous safety and quality checks, including individual batch testing and physical site inspections, by the medicines regulator, the MHRA. 5 million doses of AstraZeneca/Vaxzevria deployed in the UK were manufactured by the Serum Institute of India. There have been incorrect reports that this is Covishield. This is untrue. No Covishield vaccines have been administered in the UK. All AstraZeneca/Vaxzevria deployed in the UK - regardless of site of manufacture - is the same product and appears on the NHS COVID Pass as Vaxzevria. The European Medicines Agency has authorised this vaccine and we are confident travel should not be affected.

Where there have been isolated instances of confusion about what vaccines have been deployed in the UK, officials have worked closely with other departments and international partners to clarify what vaccines have been deployed in the UK.

■ UK Delegations

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[56845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans she has to introduce guidelines for future delegation selection criteria for all Conferences of Parties within the UN treaty system in response to UK delegations no longer being bound by an EU common position.

Amanda Milling:

There are numerous international Conferences of the Parties (COPs) organised on a range of issues (e.g. Biodiversity COP, Desertification, Chemical Weapons).

The UK's engagement with COPs depends on the specifics of each. The Government has no plans to introduce a set of guidelines for selection criteria for UK delegations. The UK's departure from the EU does not affect that view.

■ UNRWA

Mr David Jones:

[\[58760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans her Department has to renew its multi-year commitment to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), which is due to end in March 2022, so as to ensure the stability and predictability of UNRWA's service provision to Palestinian refugees.

James Cleverly:

The UK is a long-term supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). We recognise UNRWA's unique mandate from the UN General Assembly, to provide protection and core services to Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. Our future spending allocations will be set in the next Spending Review. Full budgets will be published in due course, including in our regular Statistics on International Development website and in the FCDO Annual Report and Accounts.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund

Steve Reed:

[\[58407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of entries made by adult social care providers in the Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund Capacity Tracker.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 21 October 2021]: Since May 2020, the Government has made funding available through the Infection Control Fund and its successors to support adult social care providers to take measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission. Local authorities are required to report to the Department on how this funding has been

used by providers in their geographical area. The Department reviews the information provided and may request that providers make their financial records available.

Providers in receipt of funding are also required to complete the Capacity Tracker, which collects daily and weekly data on the workforce, infection prevention and control measures such as personal protective equipment, designated setting vacancies and vaccination uptake for COVID-19 and flu by staff and residents. Data anomalies or areas of concern are followed up, including with individual providers, as necessary.

Steve Reed: [\[58408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that funds made available to care home providers under the Infection Control Fund are being used to ensure that care home workers receive their normal wages in full in the event that they need to self-isolate.

Steve Reed: [\[58409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional resources have been made available to local government to (a) administer the Infection Control Fund and (b) ensure that care providers accessing that fund are using it to ensure that care workers have financial support to self-isolate.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 21 October 2021]: Since May 2020, the Government has made funding available through the Infection Control Fund and its successors to support adult social care providers to take measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission. Providers can use the funding to ensure that staff who are isolating in line with the Government's guidance are paid as normal and do not lose income while doing so. The Department has written to local authorities and care providers to remind them of the importance of paying staff normal wages when self-isolating.

Since April 2021, local authorities may use a small amount of this funding capped at 1% of their total infection prevention and control allocation for reasonable administrative costs associated with distribution and reporting. Local authorities are also required to put in place sufficient processes to assure that the fund is correctly spent by providers.

■ Ambulance Services

Nadia Whittome: [\[57480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the current waiting time is for emergency ambulance response.

Nadia Whittome: [\[57481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for emergency ambulance response.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: Ambulance performance is measured against six response time standards across four call categories. The category of call reflects the severity of the incident as follows: Category 1: life threatening; Category 2: emergency; Category 3: urgent; Category 4: less urgent.

The following table shows ambulance performance data in September 2021 by category.

AMBULANCE CATEGORY	STANDARD	CURRENT
1 mean average	7 minutes	9:01 minutes
1 90th centile	15 minutes	15:56 minutes
2 mean average	18 minutes	45:30 minutes
2 90th centile	40 minutes	1 hour 38 minutes
3 90th centile	2 hours	6 hours 23 minutes
4 90th centile	3 hours	6 hours 58 minutes

Trusts are being supported by NHS England and NHS Improvement to improve response times. This includes continuous monitoring and support through the National Ambulance Coordination Centre and the investment of an extra £55 million for ambulance trusts to increase staff numbers ahead of the winter.

■ Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder: Children

Holly Lynch:[\[56375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is planning to take to help improve the diagnostic rates of children with Avoidant restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID).

Holly Lynch:[\[57165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve referral pathways for children with avoidant restrictive food intake disorder.

Gillian Keegan:

In 2019/20, NHS England and NHS Improvement funded seven community eating disorder teams in each region in England for children and young people in a pilot programme to improve access, assessment and treatment for children presenting with Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID). The pilots included training to support the adaption of each service's existing care pathways, assessments and treatment interventions for children and young people with ARFID. The training from these pilots is now available for local areas to commission community children and young people's eating disorder services. In 2021, NHS England and NHS

Improvement also commissioned ARFID training for staff delivering treatment in inpatient children and young people's mental health services.

■ Blood: Donors

Florence Eshalomi: [\[56519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, from what date the question on sexual activity of partners in parts of the world with high HIV rates will be removed from the blood donor safety check form.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 21 October 2021]: Following the Government's announcement on 11 October, this change will be implemented by the end of 2021 at the latest. NHS Blood and Transplant is currently implementing the safe removal of the question from the blood donor safety check and providing training to staff.

Florence Eshalomi: [\[57493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what outcomes will be reviewed under his Department's plan for a 12-month post-implementation review of the removal of the question on sexual activity of partners in parts of the world with high HIV rates from the blood safety check form; what timescales are planned for completing that review; and who will be involved in conducting the review.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 21 October 2021]: The overall impact of the change will be reviewed by the 'For Assessment of Individualised Risk steering group and the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs one year after implementation. Both groups will review any changes in the number of people coming forward to donate blood and the type of infections identified when all donations are screened for possible infections before being used. In addition, NHS Blood and Transplant will review the risk factors associated with markers of infection on a weekly basis, as well as reviewing the numbers and rates of new and past infections and current trends.

■ Breast Cancer

Daisy Cooper: [\[57362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many women have been diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer since January 2021.

Maria Caulfield:

The data requested is not held centrally.

■ Breast Cancer: Health Services

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[56788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that women with triple-negative breast cancer are provided with the medical support that they need.

Edward Argar:

Trodely (sacituzumab govitecan), which can help women with triple-negative breast cancer, has received marketing authorisation from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency through the regulator's participation in Project Orbis, which accelerates licensing of some cancer medicines.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is currently developing guidance for NHS England and NHS Improvement on whether sacituzumab govitecan represents a clinically and cost-effective use of resources. NICE is expected to publish draft guidance in spring 2022. Since May 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement have also funded atezolizumab with nab-paclitaxel for treating PD-L1-positive, triple-negative, advanced breast cancer.

■ Chronic Illnesses: Mental Health Services

Rachael Maskell:

[\[52533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of The Improving Access to Psychological Therapies pathway for People with Long-term Physical Health Conditions and Medically Unexplained Symptoms including for Parkinson's.

Gillian Keegan:

An evaluation was carried out on the integrated Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services for people with long term health conditions and medically unexplained symptoms pilot, which ran from 2016 to 2018. This showed that improving mental health treatment for people with long term conditions such as diabetes or cardiovascular disease leads to better outcomes for patients and reduced costs for the National Health Service.

However, no assessment has been made of this pathway specifically for patients with Parkinson's.

■ Coronavirus: Bereavement Counselling

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[57110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding is being provided for bereavement support for people whose family members have died from covid-19.

Gillian Keegan:

Since March 2020, the Government has given over £10.2 million to mental health charities, including bereavement support charities, to support adults and children struggling with their mental wellbeing due to the impact of COVID-19. We continue to

take a cross-Government approach to assess what is needed to provide support to bereaved individuals during this incredibly difficult time, whether they have been bereaved due to COVID-19 or other causes.

■ **Coronavirus: Protective Clothing**

John McNally: [\[56359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Health and Social Care, whether the Government undertook a modern slavery impact assessment before procuring PPE overseas in the context of evidence of modern slavery in PPE supply chains in Malaysia and China.

Edward Argar:

The Government uses standard contracts, which include clauses on modern slavery. Labour standards are a part of the NHS Supply Chain Coordination Limited framework suppliers contract award process.

■ **Dementia**

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[57045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of (a) ambulance use and (b) presentations at A and E by patients suffering with symptoms of dementia each month in (i) 2018-19, (ii) 2019-20 and (iii) 2020-21.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: No such estimate has been made.

■ **Diagnosis**

John Redwood: [\[56709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the property costs are of the new NHS community diagnostic centres announced by the Government on 1 October 2021.

Edward Argar:

The property cost of the new National Health Service community diagnostic centres is approximately £55 million. This figure represents the capital costs for a number of property-related costs including refurbishments, enabling works and pads for mobile units.

■ **Disability: Children**

Helen Hayes: [\[53297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with the Treasury on health recovery funding for disabled children.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 18 October 2021]: The Department regularly discusses a range of issues with HM Treasury.

To tackle the elective backlog, in September 2021 the Government agreed an additional £1 billion this year and £8 billion over the next three years, which will deliver an additional nine million checks, scans and operations to reducing waiting times, including for disabled children. We are also working with the Department for Education and NHS England and NHS Improvement to improve the provision of health services for disabled children.

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[56494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Scope and the Disabled Children's Partnership's report 'The gap widens', published in October 2021, which found that there is a £1.5 billion funding gap in disabled children's NHS spending, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to ensure that the NHS has adequate resources to provide disabled children and young people with the health care services they need.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: On 6 September 2021 the Government announced an additional £5.4 billion for the National Health Service to support the COVID-19 response over the next six months, bringing the total Government support for health services to over £34 billion in 2021/22. This includes £2 billion to reduce waiting times for patients, including disabled children. The forthcoming Spending Review will set out the Government's spending plans for health and social care for future years.

Grahame Morris:

[\[56977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the finding of Scope and the Disabled Children's Partnership's report, The gap widens, published September 2021, that there is a £1.5 billion funding gap in disabled children's NHS spending, what estimate his Department has made of the funding gap in disabled children's health services.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: While a specific estimate has not been made, we are working with the Department for Education and NHS England and NHS Improvement to improve the provision of health and care services for disabled children.

The forthcoming Spending Review will set out the Government's spending plans for health and social care for future years. On 6 September 2021 the Government announced an additional £5.4 billion for the National Health Service to support the COVID-19 response over the next six months, bringing the total Government support to more than £34 billion in 2021/22. This includes £2 billion to reduce waiting times for patients, including disabled children.

Marion Fellows:

[\[57121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the finding of the Disabled Children's Partnership's report entitled Then There Was Silence, published

on 10 September 2021, that nearly three quarters of disabled children had seen their progress managing their condition regress, what fiscal steps he is taking to help disabled children recover from delays to health and therapy services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: On 6 September 2021 the Government announced an additional £5.4 billion for the National Health Service to support the COVID-19 response over the next six months, bringing the total Government support for health services to over £34 billion in 2021/22. This includes £2 billion to reduce waiting times for patients, including disabled children. The forthcoming Spending Review will set out the Government's spending plans for health and social care for future years.

■ **Disability: Health Services**

Marion Fellows:

[\[57122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what fiscal steps he is taking to help ensure that the necessary (a) health services, (b) therapies and (c) physical equipment is in place for disabled children and their families.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The forthcoming Spending Review will set out the Government's spending plans for health and social care for future years. On 6 September 2021 we announced an additional £5.4 billion for the National Health Service to support the COVID-19 response over the next six months, bringing the total Government support for health services to over £34 billion in 2021/22. This includes £2 billion to reduce waiting times for patients, including disabled children.

We are working with the Department for Education and NHS England and NHS Improvement to improve the provision of health and care services for disabled children, including access to therapies and equipment. In 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement published guidance making clear that restoration of essential community services must be prioritised for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities aged up to 25 years old and who have an Education Health and Care Plan in place or are going through an assessment.

■ **DNACPR Decisions**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[57361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 28 September to Question 51861 on DNACPR Decisions: Coronavirus, if he will make it his policy to collate data on (a) investigations and (b) prosecutions relating to Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation decisions.

Maria Caulfield:

There are no plans to do so. Concerns about individual Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) decisions should be raised with the health or care provider involved in the first instance. NHS England and NHS Improvement

have also published patient-facing information if individuals or their families are concerned about a DNACPR.

■ Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva: Health Services

Sir Mike Penning: [\[56255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) funding and (b) other support his Department provides to help improve the lives of people with fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva.

Sir Mike Penning: [\[56489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what practical support his Department provides to help improve the lives of people with fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva.

Sir Mike Penning: [\[56878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve patient outcomes for people with fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva.

Maria Caulfield:

The United Kingdom Rare Diseases Framework outlines key priorities to improve the lives of those living with rare diseases, such as Fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva (FOP). These include faster diagnosis, increasing awareness of rare diseases among healthcare professionals, better coordination of care, improving access to specialist care, treatment and drugs and pioneering research. Each of the four UK nations will publish action plans outlining how these priorities will be addressed to improve patient outcomes within two years.

Children with FOP are cared for in the National Health Service by paediatric rheumatologists and/or geneticists with input from other clinicians as required. In the past five years, the Department has provided funding to support eight studies into FOP through the National Institute for Health Research. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is also developing highly specialised technologies guidance on 'Palovarotene for preventing heterotopic ossification associated with fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva'.

■ General Practitioners

Justin Madders: [\[56251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many GPs per 100,000 people there are in (a) the UK, (b) England, (c) Wales, (d) Scotland and (e) Northern Ireland.

Maria Caulfield:

As of June 2021, there were 57 full time equivalent doctors per 100,000 registered patients in general practice in England. The information requested for the United Kingdom, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is not collected centrally as this is a devolved matter.

■ General Practitioners: Coronavirus**Zarah Sultana:**[\[59082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Royal College of General Practitioners' publication, entitled General Practice in crisis: An action plan for recovery, whether he plans to take steps to implement that plan.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The Royal College of General Practitioners has asked for action in five priority areas, including: more doctors in general practice; reducing unnecessary workload, fit-for-purpose infrastructure; and general practice representation in integrated care systems (ICSs). We are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement to implement the related actions in the NHS Long Term Plan and expand general practice by recruiting 26,000 additional primary care staff by 2024.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are reviewing of levels of bureaucracy in general practice as part of the 2020/21 GP Contract agreement, working closely with stakeholders including the Royal College of General Practitioners and the British Medical Association.

Since 2016 we have invested £800 million in improving primary care estate and technology. Further infrastructure funding will be confirmed after the forthcoming Spending Review. We are clear that primary care should be represented and involved in decision-making at all levels of ICSs, including strategic decision-making forums.

■ General Practitioners: Ellesmere Port and Neston**Justin Madders:**[\[57089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many GPs there are in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency.

Maria Caulfield:

The information is not collected centrally in the format requested.

■ General Practitioners: Stockport**Navendu Mishra:**[\[58543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support and resources are available to help GP surgeries in Stockport constituency to clear patient backlogs and increasing workloads.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 21 October 2021]: On 14 October we announced a package of measures to support general practice manage increasing workloads, catch up on the backlog of care and improve access. In addition, Greater Manchester and Stockport Clinical Commissioning Group is supporting general practice in Stockport by focussing on increasing workforce capacity to reduce demand on individual general

practitioners (GPs). Local commissioners and providers are utilising extra volunteer and paid staff to deliver the COVID-19 and flu vaccination programmes and the urgent treatment centre is relieving urgent demand on GPs. GPs in Stockport are making full use of additional roles, such as physiotherapists and medicine co-ordinators, and providing training for receptionists to signpost patients to the most appropriate member of the practice team.

■ Health and Care Bill

Caroline Lucas: [\[56956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2021 to Question 33196 on Health and Care Bill, on what date drafts of regulations relating to the Health and Care Bill will be shared with hon. Members.

Edward Argar:

Although specific dates have not yet been confirmed, regulations will be shared with hon. Members as the Bill progresses.

■ Health Professions: Pay

John Redwood: [\[56363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much and what proportion of the £36 billion announced by the Government to tackle waiting lists as a result of the covid19 outbreak will be spent on the salaries of additional medical staff.

John Redwood: [\[56708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many additional nurses and doctors he plans to recruit for his Department's waiting list initiatives.

Edward Argar:

The Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement to develop a plan for how that funding will be used, including the recruitment and salaries of additional medical staff.

■ Health Professions: Training

Steve McCabe: [\[56769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Chancellor's announcement in September 2019, what progress has been made on introducing a £1,000 personal development budget for existing health professionals in the NHS.

Edward Argar:

A £1,000 personal development budget has been made available to every nurse, midwife and allied health professional working in the National Health Service to support their personal learning and development needs over three years. The first year of the scheme started 1 April 2020 with the scheme due to end on 31 March 2023. Health Education England is working with NHS employers to review the impact of this investment.

■ Health Services: Females

Sarah Champion: [\[53240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to ensure the forthcoming Women's Health Strategy includes provisions for menstrual wellbeing.

Maria Caulfield:

We are currently analysing the call for evidence for the Women's Health Strategy, which gathered information on menstrual health and gynaecological conditions. This attracted over 112,000 responses from individual women, clinicians and carers and approximately 500 written submissions. We aim to publish the Strategy later this year.

Stephen Morgan: [\[57301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to respond to the call for evidence for the Women's Health Strategy.

Stephen Morgan: [\[57302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish the Women's Health Strategy.

Maria Caulfield:

We are currently analysing the responses to the call for evidence which will inform the priorities, content and actions of the new Strategy. We aim to publish the Strategy in due course.

■ Home Care Services: Older People

Stuart Anderson: [\[56602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support elderly residents with the cost of domiciliary care.

Gillian Keegan:

From October 2023 the Government will be introducing a far more generous means testing regime which will allow more people to be eligible for some state support towards the cost of their domiciliary care. In addition, there will be a new £86,000 cap on the amount required to pay towards the cost of care.

■ Hospitals: Construction

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[57043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made against the Government's commitment to build 40 new hospitals by 2030.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: In October 2020, we announced details of 40 schemes supported by an initial £3.7 billion for the first four years of the 10-year programme. This confirmed 32 schemes and an open process to determine a further

eight new hospitals was launched in July. In addition, eight previously announced schemes have also been brought into the programme, which will result in 48 hospitals by 2030. At present, six of the 48 hospitals are now in construction, with one now completed.

■ Hospitals: Death

Robert Halfon:

[\[56978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that critically ill patients do not die alone in the hospital.

Edward Argar:

Since the end of the national restrictions, hospital visiting is subject to local discretion by trusts and other National Health Service bodies. Organisations should use their own risk-based assessment to decide to what extent more relaxed visiting arrangements can be facilitated for those at the end of life. Families should be reassured that if they are not present when their loved one dies, staff will always be with and comfort the patient.

■ Hyperactivity: Mental Health Services

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[56800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for adults waiting for an NHS referral for ADHD treatment.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: Clinical commissioning groups and National Health Service trusts should have due regard to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guideline 'Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: diagnosis and management'. This guideline aims to improve the diagnosis of ADH and the quality of care and support that adults receive, including access to medication. The guideline does not recommend a maximum waiting time for adults to receive ADHD treatment.

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[56801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of waiting times for children's ADHD treatment within the NHS.

Gillian Keegan:

No specific assessment has been made. There is not a single, established dataset that can be used to monitor referrals for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) assessments and treatments nationally or the provision of wider ADHD services. Clinical commissioning groups and National Health Service trusts should have due regard to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guideline 'Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: diagnosis and management'. This guideline aims to improve the diagnosis of ADHD, the quality of care and support that children receive, including access to medication. The guideline does not recommend a maximum waiting time for children to receive ADHD treatment within the NHS.

■ Medical Treatments

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[56868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the impact on transparency of data redaction in technology appraisals and highly specialised technology evaluations issued by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[56869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to improve transparency of the data that underpins NICE's conclusions, in response to the findings in BMJ Open (Vol 11, Issue 10, Osipenko) that documents supporting NICE TA and HST recommendations remain redacted leading to clinical and economic data of importance to patients, clinicians and researchers being concealed.

Edward Argar:

The Department has made no such assessment. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is an independent body responsible for developing guidance in line with its established methods and processes. NICE is committed to ensuring its processes for health technology evaluation are as transparent as possible and considers it essential that evidence on which its committees' decisions are based is made available to stakeholders and the public. To ensure faster access to treatments for patients, NICE's appraisals are conducted in parallel with the regulatory process wherever possible. NICE's approach to handling confidential information for health technology evaluation is set out in its guide to the processes of technology appraisal.

■ Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency: Redundancy

Feryal Clark: [\[57439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had on potential redundancies with executive officers at the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency.

Feryal Clark: [\[57440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of redundancies at the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency on its day-to-day functions.

Edward Argar:

The Department regularly meets with officials at the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to discuss a range of issues, including its transformation plans.

The Department has not made a specific assessment of the potential effect of redundancies at the MHRA. The MHRA continues to involve trades unions and employees through formal consultation as well as continuing opportunities for engagement with senior leaders.

Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper: [\[56705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 16 July 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire regarding the covid-19 vaccine yellow card data, reference ZA57087.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 17 August 2021.

Rosie Cooper: [\[56887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 2 July 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire regarding diabetes care and prevention, reference ZA56901.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 19 October 2021.

Rosie Cooper: [\[56888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 14 July 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire regarding intra-operative radiation therapy for breast cancer, reference ZA56966.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 7 October 2021.

Rosie Cooper: [\[56891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 28 July 2021 from the hon. member for West Lancashire on the Health and Care Bill, reference ZA57202.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member's letter on 29 September 2021.

Rosie Cooper: [\[56896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 26 July 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, regarding PCR testing in Lancashire, reference ZA57161.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 20 October 2021.

Mental Health Services: Coronavirus

Gavin Robinson: [\[56473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to progress the Government's Mental Health recovery plan announced in March 2021.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Department has worked with NHS England and NHS Improvement, Public Health England, Health Education England and other delivery organisations to allocate £500 million of additional funding in 2021-22 to nationally-led programmes and local authority areas. The funding is enabling prevention and promotion activities in local authorities, expanding capacity across specialist mental health services, and training and developing the mental health workforce, in line with the commitments made in the recovery plan.

These programmes are being monitored through a Mental Health Recovery Board established to complement the existing governance of the NHS Long Term Plan commitments for mental health. The cross-Government actions in the recovery plan are monitored through the Mental Health Independent Advisory Oversight Group and the Ministerial Mental Health and Wellbeing Task and Finish Group on a quarterly basis.

■ Mental Health: Research

Theresa Villiers:[\[56278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to increase funding for research into mental health conditions.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Departmental National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is the largest funder of mental health research in the United Kingdom. We are increasing year on year spend in mental health research and invested £93 million in 2019/2020. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including mental health. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made based on the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality. As is common with other research funders, it is not usual practice for the NIHR to ring-fence a proportion of its budget for research into particular topics or conditions. The following table shows the NIHR's spend on mental health research in each year from 2015-16. Information for 2020/21 is not yet available.

YEAR	FUNDING
2015/16	£73,055,090
2016/17	£76,627,407
2017/18	£80,318,055
2018/19	£93,377,813
2019/20	£93,411,275

■ Midwives: Recruitment

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[56993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to increase the number of midwives working in the NHS.

Edward Argar:

We have committed to expand midwifery training places by 3,650 over a four-year period to 2022/23 and Health Education England is on track to achieve this. To support student midwives in training, the Government has made available a non-repayable, training grant of at least £5,000 per academic year for eligible midwifery students.

■ Midwives: Training

Mr Nicholas Brown: [\[56378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many individuals graduated from pre-registration midwifery training courses as qualified midwives in each of the last five academic years for which figures are available.

Edward Argar:

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

■ Myeloma: Research

Matt Vickers: [\[41389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what research his Department (a) commissioned and (b) evaluated on myeloma in 2018-19; at what cost to the public purse; and what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of research on myeloma in each of the next three financial years.

Edward Argar:

The Department invests in health research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The following table shows research commissioned by the NIHR into myeloma cancer in 2018-19.

AWARD TITLE	TOTAL AWARD BUDGET
Improving the monitoring and treatment of multiple myeloma patients by comparing cellular and serological markers of minimal residual disease	£211,519

A research evaluation into myeloma cancer in 2018-19 is not available in the format requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. The following table shows estimated costs for research projects into myeloma in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

YEAR	2021/22	2022/23
Total expenditure	£251,547	£89,254

The estimates for 2023/24 onwards are not currently available as forecast spend is based on payments for contracted project awards. We expect to receive fundable applications within the next two years. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including myeloma. As with other Government funders of health research, the NIHR do not allocate funding for specific disease areas.

■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges

Julian Sturdy: [\[56344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will revise the current dispensing fee scale and changes to dispensing fees effective from 1 October 2021 to ensure that dispensing GP practices' finances and resources are not reduced as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Julian Sturdy: [\[57011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the impact on GPs' dispensing practices since changes to dispensing fees were brought in on 1 October 2021; and if he will set out what steps he is planning to take to tackle the impact of the change in fee rate.

Maria Caulfield:

Dispensing funding for the 12 months commencing 1 April 2021 represents a 0.1% decrease on the envelope for the 12 months commencing 1 April 2020. Therefore, NHS England and NHS Improvement do not expect there to be a significant change in total dispensing fees received. Under the agreed methodology, if there is any over or underspend in the 12 months commencing 1 April 2021, this will be taken into account when calculating funding from 1 April 2022.

■ Rare Diseases: Health Services

Sir Mike Penning: [\[58783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set up a national network of rare-disease centres.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: NHS England commissions over 70 highly specialised services for patients with rare diseases delivered and coordinated

nationally through a small number of expert centres to ensure expertise and experience. The United Kingdom Rare Diseases Framework, was published in 2021, outlined a vision to improve the lives of those living with rare diseases over the next five years. Each of the four UK nations will publish action plans outlining how the Framework will improve patient outcomes, within two years of its publication. NHS England and NHS Improvement are working closely with the Department to develop an action plan for England.

■ Social Services

Dr James Davies: [\[50724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the value of (a) care and (b) housing-with-care provision within the health and social care system.

Dr James Davies: [\[50725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase housing-with-care provision across the UK.

Gillian Keegan:

Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities are required to shape their local markets, and ensure that people have a range of high-quality, sustainable and person-centred care and support options available to them. As of 1 September 2021, the Care Quality Commission rated 85% of all social care organisations as good/outstanding.

Health, social care and housing are devolved matters. In England, the Government's plan for health and social care, announced on 7 September, recognised the important role of housing in providing care and support to people in the community. An independent pre-evaluation scoping exercise commissioned by the Department has found good evidence for the benefits of extra care housing for older people. The Government will invest in supported housing, including housing-with-care, as well as exploring other innovative housing solutions to allow more people to live independently at home for longer, with personalised care and support. We will continue to work closely with the sector, including as part of the white paper on adult social care which will be published later this year.

HOME OFFICE

■ Animal Experiments: Chemicals

Caroline Lucas: [\[53862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether private consultation with (a) industry and (b) other stakeholders has (i) taken place and (ii) is planned prior to publication of an updated policy and guidance on the regulation of animal testing for regulatory purposes for compliance with UK REACH; if she will make it her policy to publish all consultation undertaken on that matter; and if she will make a statement.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Department has not needed to undertake consultation on policy and guidance on the regulation of animal testing for regulatory purposes for compliance with UK REACH.

Under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA) one of the permissible purposes for which animals can be used in research is the development, manufacture or testing of the quality, effectiveness and safety of drugs, foodstuffs and feed-stuffs or any other substances or products. This includes requirements under UK chemicals legislation (REACH). This is often termed 'regulatory testing' as the work fulfils a regulatory requirement.

The requirements for regulatory testing are set by regulators other than the Home Office Regulator, whose remit is solely to ensure compliance with protections afforded to animals used in science under ASPA.

All UK regulations and regulators abide by the principles of the 3Rs (the replacement, reduction, and refinement of animal use) and therefore only require animal testing where there are no alternatives and only to the degree needed to meet the scientific requirements of the regulations.

■ Antisocial Behaviour and Crime**Stuart Anderson:****[54011]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance she has provided to local authorities on effectively tackling (a) anti-social behaviour and (b) other low-level crimes.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is committed to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour (ASB) and crime. We know the serious impact that anti-social and criminal behaviour has on both individuals and communities.

We have provided the police, local authorities and other local agencies with a range of tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to all forms of ASB through the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. These powers are deliberately local in nature, and it is for local agencies to determine whether their use is appropriate in the specific circumstances.

In January of this year we updated the statutory guidance to support local agencies to make effective use of these powers and take the multi-agency approach that is needed to tackle and prevent anti-social behaviour, in a way that takes account of the needs of the victim and the community. The revised guidance can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/956143/ASB_Statutory_Guidance.pdf

The Beating Crime Plan published on 27 July laid out the Government's plan for tackling crime and its commitment to working with local agencies and partners to drive down anti-social behaviour using the full range of powers and tools in the 2014

Act. It can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1015382/Crime-plan-v10.pdf

■ Crimes Against the Person: Crime Prevention

Gareth Thomas: [56524]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on allocating specific funding to local authorities to (a) improve lighting and (b) implement other security measures to increase people's safety, in particular for women and girls; and if she will make statement.

Kit Malthouse:

The Safer Streets Fund enables Police and Crime Commissioners and Local Authorities across England and Wales to support interventions such as improved CCTV and streetlighting in areas experiencing high rates of neighbourhood crimes, such as burglary and robbery. In total, £70 million has been invested and the third, £25 million, round, announced on 15 March following the tragic death of Sarah Everard, aims to increase the safety of public spaces for all, with a particular focus on helping to combat violence against women and girls.

All rounds of the Safer Streets Fund are being independently evaluated to ensure we develop the evidence base for crime prevention to inform future investment.

■ Marriage Certificates: Fraud

Richard Fuller: [53858]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department took to reduce the likelihood of fraud in marriage registration changes prior to the implementation of the Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration etc.) Act 2019; and what steps her Department (a) has taken and (b) is taking to monitor that issue since the implementation of that Act.

Kevin Foster:

Provisions within the Act ensure there are controls in place by the registrar to check the authenticity of a marriage schedule or marriage document before a marriage is registered.

If unusual activity is identified the registration service and the General Register Office will investigate.

■ Marriage Certificates: ICT

Richard Fuller: [53857]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the implementation of the issuing of electronic marriage certificates under the Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration etc.) Act 2019.

Kevin Foster:

While the implementation of the Act provides for marriages to be registered in a central electronic register, marriage certificates continue to be issued in paper format only.

These new provisions have successfully enabled the modernisation of marriage registration in England and Wales, which includes the recording of the details of both parents in the entry, rather than just the father.

Members: Correspondence**Afzal Khan:** [\[56192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to provide a substantive response to the correspondence sent by the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton on 18 August 2021 regarding Mr Mohamed Elborae.

Afzal Khan: [\[56194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to provide a substantive response to the correspondence sent by the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton on 24 August 2021 regarding Adebukola Adewumi.

Afzal Khan: [\[56196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to provide a substantive response to the correspondence sent by the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton on 17 August 2021 regarding Asad Aqeel.

Afzal Khan: [\[56428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to provide a substantive response to the correspondence sent by the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton on 10 September 2021, regarding Dr Jahanbeen Jahangir.

Afzal Khan: [\[57313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to provide a substantive response to the correspondence sent by the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton on 20 August 2021 regarding Mr Wasim Abbas.

Afzal Khan: [\[57318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to provide a substantive response to the correspondence sent by the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton on 3 September 2021 regarding Shams Sherzad.

Kevin Foster:

PQ 03518 – MPAM/0184552/21 – I apologise for the delay. UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded on 18 October 2021.

PQ 03600 – MPAM/0182609/21 - I apologise for the delay. UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded on 18 October 2021.

PQ 03590 – MPAM/0179849/21 - I apologise for the delay. UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded on 19 October 2021.

PQ 03604 – MPAM/0171774/21 - I apologise for the delay. UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded on 19 October 2021.

PQ 03603 – MPAM/0177314/21 - I apologise for the delay. UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded on 20 October 2021.

PQ 03591 – There was no trace of this correspondence being received. A copy of the correspondence was received on 18th October and was closed off on 19 October through your surgery call with the MP Engagement team.

UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team is pursuing enquiries on the following case and aims to respond as below:

PQ 03503 – MPAM/0182754/21 Further enquiries are being made and a substantive response will be issued to the MP by Friday 29 October 2021. UKVI MP Engagement team will contact you if it is not possible to provide full responses within this timeframe.

■ Passports

Jessica Morden:

[\[53846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department has sent to people who have passports with an expiry date over ten years after the issue date to inform them of changes to passport validity requirements.

Kevin Foster:

A cross-government campaign has run since November 2018, and has been updated three times, the most recent iteration was on 8 September 2020, which was to inform citizens of changes as a result of the end of the transition period following the UK's exit from the European Union.

This campaign promoted the new passport validity rules for travel to most countries in Europe, as well as promoting Her Majesty's Passport Office's online passport checker, where customers can enter their details to see if HM Passport Office recommend they renew their passport to meet these new rules. This checker can be found at the following website:

www.gov.uk/check-a-passport-travel-europe

HM Passport Office has been directing customers to the checker using SMS and email, subject to the customer's details being held from the previous application. For over-16s, these messages are sent to customers whose passport was issued over nine and a half years previously.

■ Refugees

Helen Hayes: [\[56174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to introduce safe and legal routes for refugees arriving to the UK.

Kevin Foster:

As set out in the New Plan for Immigration, we will strengthen our safe and legal routes to the UK for refugees in need of protection.

The UK has a proud history of providing protection to those most in need. Overall, since 2015, we have resettled more than 25,000 refugees through safe and legal routes direct from regions of conflict and instability - around half of whom were children.

On 18 August 2021, the Prime Minister announced the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme will see up to 20,000 people at risk resettled to the UK, with 5,000 in the first year.

The UK will maintain its long-term commitment to continue to resettle refugees from around the globe as capacity allows, alongside a fair but firm asylum system.

■ Social Services: Vacancies

Barbara Keeley: [\[53853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will add social care workers to the shortage occupation list in response to workforce shortages across the care sector.

Kevin Foster:

Several occupations within the social care sector are currently on the shortage occupation list including senior care workers.

The introduction of the Health and Care visa in August 2020 made it quicker and easier for regulated health and care professionals – including Senior Care Workers - and their dependants to secure their visa.

We have commissioned the MAC to look further at the issues surrounding the ending of free movement on the social care sector and we look forward to receiving their report next year.

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

Our Plan for Jobs is helping people across the country retrain, build new skills and get back into work. The Government encourages all sectors to make employment more attractive to UK domestic workers through offering training, careers options,

and improve terms and conditions, including ensuring care workers are offered the rewarding packages they deserve and which are common in other sectors, rather than turning to immigration policy for an alternative to doing so.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ **Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[58795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the terms of (a) Article III of GATT, (b) The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement and (c) the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement on Trans-Pacific Partnership allow HM Treasury to apply lower excise duties to UK manufactured alcoholic beverages than are applied to the equivalent alcoholic beverages imported from one of the other contracting parties to those agreements.

Penny Mordaunt:

The UK champions rules-based multilateral trade at the WTO. The National Treatment rule under GATT Article III sets out the principle that imported products should not be subject to higher internal taxes than similar domestic products. The UK-EU TCA and CPTPP agreements reiterate this GATT Article III commitment on National Treatment. Measures such as setting excise duties on alcoholic beverages are consistent with the UK's WTO rights and obligations, including GATT Article III commitments.

■ **Environment Protection: Foreign Investment in UK**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[58789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the statistics release published on her Department's website on 14 October 2021, entitled Net zero related inward investment in the UK: 18 November 2020 to 24 September 2021, if she will publish a breakdown by (a) location, (b) sector and (c) project of the 2,296 jobs referenced in that release.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Due to the commercial sensitivities, the figures released on 14th October 2021 were published in aggregate form. There were 46 individual investments included in the publication and, if they were broken down by characteristics such as location or sector, the small numbers would risk disclosure of the commercial sensitivity.

■ **Trade Fairs: Finance**

Tony Lloyd:

[\[58303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how the Government plans to decide which trade shows are eligible for grant funding in its successor to the Trade Show Access Programme.

Tony Lloyd: [\[58304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will ensure that grant money for businesses in the music industry is provided in time to allow their representation at the National Association of Music Merchants show, Music China and Musikmesse Frankfurt.

Mike Freer:

The successor to the Tradeshow Access Programme, when launched, is designed to address market failures whilst aligning to the Department for International Trade's (DIT) Export Strategy. Supported shows are identified through departmental business planning, and prioritised collaboratively by DIT's Campaigns, Sectors and Events Team.

National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) and Musikmesse Frankfurt take place in 2022-23 and will be prioritised through business planning for the coming financial year. Music China was not selected as a priority show for 2021-22.

JUSTICE

■ CAFCASS: Administrative Delays

Ellie Reeves: [\[53316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the level of the backlog of cases in the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service as at 22 September 2021; and what steps he is taking to tackle that backlog.

Ellie Reeves: [\[53317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the impact of the backlog of cases in the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service on vulnerable children and families.

James Cartlidge:

The protection of children, particularly those who are most vulnerable, is a priority for this government. We recognise the additional pressures that the family justice system has faced since the Covid-19 pandemic, and the impact this has had on children and families who use the family courts. Since the start of the pandemic the number of new cases issued to Cafcass (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) has exceeded the number of cases closed for Cafcass. As at 1 September, Cafcass caseload is 20% higher than March 2020.

The Ministry of Justice has worked closely with Cafcass to manage these pressures and mitigate the impact on its services. Earlier this year £6million in additional funding was agreed to enable Cafcass to increase staff capacity to meet the increased open caseload.

Cafcass has also put in place a protocol to, where necessary, prioritise cases in local service areas so it can continue to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children and families. The approach involves courts working with Cafcass to triage and

allocate cases in private law proceedings on the basis of risk and capacity. The Ministry of Justice has agreed an additional £491k to support this work until the end of this financial year.

Cafcass' prioritisation protocol only applies to private law applications. All public law work continues to be allocated in the normal way and within established timescales. Urgent public law children cases are still being prioritised by the courts, to help safeguard the welfare of the most vulnerable children.

■ Community Policing

Jess Phillips:

[\[58414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the Government plans to consult on a statutory duty on public bodies to commission specialist community based (a) domestic abuse and (b) sexual violence provision as set out by the Lord Chancellor in a letter to Police and Crime Commissioners dated March 2021.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government is committed to using the Victims' Bill consultation to explore the need for legislation relating to provision of community-based victim support services.

The March letter to Police and Crime Commissioners said that to do this we would consult on "the provision of community-based domestic abuse services", including considering a "duty". This commitment was made during the passage of the Domestic Abuse Bill and was extended to cover consultation on sexual violence services within the End-to End Rape Review Action Plan. We will launch the consultation in due course.

■ Council Tax: Non-payment

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[53187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department holds annual data on the rates of committal proceedings, committal orders and days spent in prison with regard to unpaid Council Tax for the period of 2018-2021.

James Cartlidge:

The department does not hold information on how many proceedings have been started.

Data on the number of committals to prison for Council Tax non-payment since 2018 can be found in the attached table.

On average (mean) civil prisoners received into custody for non-payment of Council Tax from 2018-2020 spent 25 days in custody.

Attachments:

1. Table [2021-10-22 Table for PQ 53187 Council Tax - Committal Orders - 2018 to Jun 21.xlsx]

■ Crimes of Violence and Sexual Offences: Victims**Sir Edward Leigh:** [\[53182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Chapter 12 of the Equal Treatment Bench Book, what assessment he has made of the effect on victims of violent and sexual assault of instances where those victims are instructed to use preferred pronouns instead of referring to their alleged attacker as a member of the sex that they experienced them to be.

Sir Edward Leigh: [\[53183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to page 330 in Chapter 12 of the Equal Treatment Bench Book, what evidence exists to support the claim that it is important to be alive to the fact that the gender history of a person may be something an opponent litigant may seek to use in order to place pressure on them.

Sir Edward Leigh: [\[53184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the new edition of the Equal Treatment Bench Book, published in February 2021 and the Answer of 29 June 2021 to Question 19486, what legal advice was used to inform the information and guidance provided in Chapter 12 on Transgender People.

James Cartlidge:

No assessment of the effect of the Equal Treatment Bench Book is made by the Ministry of Justice. To preserve the independence of the judiciary, the Lord Chief Justice (LCJ), the Senior President of the Tribunals, and the Chief Coroner have statutory responsibility for judicial training. These responsibilities are exercised through the Judicial College, which also produces the Equal Treatment Bench Book.

Fair treatment is a fundamental principle embedded in the judicial oath and the Equal Treatment Bench Book is compiled by the judiciary to provide general guidelines for judicial office holders to apply as appropriate in any particular case. It is reviewed by a judicial editorial panel, with content from judicial experts and information from subject experts. The identities of the principal contributors appear in the Acknowledgments. The external documentary sources relied upon by the editors of the Bench Book are set out in full in the footnotes.

■ Domestic Abuse: Community Development**Jess Phillips:** [\[58415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much funding the Government has allocated for the provision of community-based domestic abuse services for (a) adult victims, (b) child victims and (c) perpetrators of domestic abuse in 2020-21.

Jess Phillips: [\[58416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has made an estimate of the funding required to meet the needs of (a) adult and (b) child victims of domestic abuse annually in England and Wales.

Victoria Atkins:

For 2020/21, the Ministry of Justice allocated £69m of 'core' funding to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to commission and provide victim support services for all victims of crime. It is for PCCs to assess local demand and allocate this funding accordingly.

A further £32 million was granted in emergency funding to over 540 charities to help domestic abuse and sexual violence community based services meet demand.

The Home Office also provided funding for both national and community-based domestic violence victim support services and funding to tackle and better manage perpetrators of domestic violence.

Family Courts and Probation: Staff**Ellie Reeves:**[\[53318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to adjust pay levels to assist with the recruitment and retention of staff in (a) probation services and (b) family courts.

Kit Malthouse:

My Department is committed to ensuring a fair and enduring reward package for all staff in the Probation Service, building on previous pay reform work to ensure we can recruit and retain necessary levels of staff.

Staff in family courts are covered by the recently agreed MOJ pay deal.

Low Newton Prison: Mental Health Services**Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[58503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the 2021 Independent Monitoring Board Report for HMP/YOI Low Newton, what steps he plans to take to (a) ensure that women with severe mental health issues are fast tracked to secure hospitals and (b) reduce the number of women with severe mental health issues in prison.

Victoria Atkins:

We have a responsibility to ensure those in prison receive appropriate care in the right setting, at the right time. Transfer from prison to hospital for those with severe mental health issues can take too long – we acknowledged this in the Government response to the independent review of the Mental Health Act. Since then, NHS England has published guidance to speed up transfers and we have committed to legislate and enshrine a 28-day limit on such transfers in statute. Where a request is received for a transfer to hospital, and the prisoner meets the statutory criteria, a warrant for their transfer should be issued within 7 days.

We are also looking to introduce an independent role to oversee such transfers as part of our reforms to the Mental Health Act.

We have acknowledged that prison should not be used as a 'place of safety', where the court can send a person to be temporarily held on the grounds of mental health

for their own or others' protection whilst awaiting an assessment or transfer, and have committed to ending this by amending the Mental Health Act, and putting the necessary operational reforms in place.

More widely, it is essential to ensure that individuals with vulnerabilities are identified early in the criminal justice system. Last year, NHS England secured full coverage of Liaison and Diversion Services in all courts, including women's pathways to address women's specific needs. Currently, NHS England is working to enhance these women's pathways, and a specific women's lead has been appointed in each service, to work on developing the pathway and appropriately address the needs of female offenders.

We have also invested £9.5m through our Female Offender Strategy to support women's community services, which provide holistic support to women in contact with the justice system, and those at risk of offending.

■ Prisons: Telephone Services

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[53201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Stafford, published on 21 September 2021, whether the free 0800 phone number used for Independent Monitoring Board applications will be continued.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[53202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisons in England and Wales will have access to the free 0800 phone number used for Independent Monitoring Board applications in future.

Victoria Atkins:

Introduced as part of the response to the pandemic, the free 0800 phone number has made Independent Monitoring Boards (IMBs) more accessible to prisoners. The IMB Management Board agreed in September 2021 to extend the use of the free 0800 phone number for a further 12 months.

This phone line has been enabled in all prisons in England and Wales and they are open six days a week. Calls are answered by IMB members.

The overall use of the phone line varies between establishments depending on the extent of publicity and promotion by local IMB boards. The service was a key part of the IMBs response to the COVID-19 pandemic and is actively used by over fifty prisons in England and Wales in any month. Since inception over 12,000 calls have been received and over 100 volunteers have taken calls.

■ Probation: Databases

Ellie Reeves: [\[53314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the impact of the implementation of the new ViSOR database on the workload of staff in the probation service.

Kit Malthouse:

ViSOR is a multi-agency database used for storing and sharing risk related information and intelligence for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) qualifying offenders and some other high-risk groups. It has been used by Police since 2005, and the Probation and Prison Service since 2007. Having access to ViSOR on probation service devices means that offender managers can access up-to-date information and essential risk related intelligence directly. Prior to having direct access to ViSOR, Offender Managers would have to contact colleagues in other agencies for this information which led to delays in accessing the relevant intelligence. The direct access we are now offering Probation Offender Managers will improve the quality and effectiveness of our risk management plans and the speed in which they are constructed.

■ Probation: Finance

Ellie Reeves: [\[53313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what funding is being provided to the probation service to help ensure that those services can be stabilised while the Unified Model is being implemented.

Kit Malthouse:

The unification of the Probation Service has been supported by an additional £155m of funding this year (2021-22) and last year (2020-21), which represents a 17% uplift on 2019-20. This additional resource will in itself support the stabilisation and improvement of how probation services are delivered, for example by increasing the number of probation officers and funding the 110 contracts awarded for Commissioned Rehabilitation Services.

In addition, a further £30m in funding has been made available for 2021-22, to assist in meeting transition costs that arise from bringing together previous probation providers into one unified Probation Service.

■ Probation: Staff

Ellie Reeves: [\[53315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he is taking steps to (a) create and (b) implement a tool to measure the workload of staff in the probation service.

Kit Malthouse:

The Probation Service uses a Workload Measurement Tool (WMT) which monitors the workloads of case holding Probation Practitioners. We are also building an in-

house WMT which will eventually replace the existing one and by using internal digital capability, we will be able to swiftly make necessary changes, iterations to improve it and have the potential to include a capacity measure for other roles and functions in the service.

■ Public Sector: Pay

Ellie Reeves: [\[53312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the impact of the public sector pay freeze on the recruitment and retention of staff in the (a) probation service and (b) family courts.

Kit Malthouse:

My Department is currently engaging with our recognised Trade Unions on the 2021 pay award for the Probation Service. The pay award will comply with the temporary pause on pay rises for most public sector workforces in 2021/22, including the Civil Service.

Staff in family courts are covered by the temporary pay pause.

■ Reoffenders

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[53205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 22 September 2021 to Question 49080 on Reoffenders, what proportion of offenders included within the fines disposal type category for the purposes of the adult proven reoffending by disposal statistics were given a fine (a) using the Single Justice Procedure and (b) in open court; and what the reoffending rate was of those offenders after receipt of a (i) Single Justice Procedure fine and (ii) fine given in open court.

Kit Malthouse:

Although the 'fines' disposal type category presented in the Proven Reoffending Statistics publications does include fines given using both the Single Justice Procedure and in open court, it is not possible to differentiate between the two based on the data we have.

As a result we cannot provide any information with regards to the proportions of offenders corresponding to categories (a) and (b) or their associated proven reoffending rates.

■ Youth Custody: Children

Anna McMorrin: [\[58479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what his Department's policy is on the length of time children in secure custody should spend in their cells per day.

Victoria Atkins:

Children's experiences in custody should be rehabilitative, aiming to prevent and reduce future offending and crime. They should spend as long as possible out of their

rooms engaged in purposeful activities, such as education, training and physical activity for this reason. This must be balanced with managing the risks to safety and good order and, most recently, the significant challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

■ UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly: UK Delegations

Hilary Benn:

[\[58734\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, when he expects the House to consider arrangements for establishing the UK delegation to the European Parliamentary Partnership Assembly.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

Good progress is being made on establishing the European Parliamentary Partnership Assembly and we expect the House to consider arrangements later this year. The House of Commons Finance Committee has endorsed funding arrangements to support the UK delegation, should the House agree to establish one. The next stage is for the Commission to make a decision on those arrangements. The House of Lords Commission is expected to consider the same proposals in November. The House of Commons will then be asked to agree to the establishment of the Assembly and the participation of 35 members as a delegation from the UK Parliament. Members of the delegation will be announced in the usual way through a Written Ministerial Statement, after consultation with political parties.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Buildings: Insulation

Neil Coyle:

[\[58895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when the Government plans to finalise and publish the full details of the loan scheme for leaseholders affected by cladding related issues.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The Secretary of State is looking closely at this issue to make sure everything is being done to support leaseholders. We will continue to examine what more can be done to protect and support leaseholders and further detail on the support offer for leaseholders will be released when all options have been fully considered.

■ Buildings: Insurance**Shabana Mahmood:** [\[53212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the difficulties experienced by the construction industry in securing professional indemnity insurance for fire safety and remediation work.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government understands that those involved in the construction industry are struggling to obtain adequate professional indemnity insurance (PII) for fire safety and remediation work.

The issue is a complex one with multiple causes, and the Government understands that insurance premiums have risen substantially since 2018 for construction professionals.

We continue to engage with industry experts to establish methods to restore confidence in building safety and improve coverage in the construction sector, in particular to ensure that the Government can continue to progress the remediation of unsafe cladding systems.

Shabana Mahmood: [\[53213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department plans take to help ensure that professional indemnity requirements are not halting essential fire safety and remediation work.

Christopher Pincher:

The Building Safety Bill will ensure that those responsible for occupied higher-risk buildings will be required to actively manage building safety risks, evidencing this through the safety case regime overseen by the Building Safety Regulator. This will ensure major fire and structural hazards are effectively and proportionately managed, mitigated and remedied and that effective steps are taken, which take into account safety and cost.

We have been clear that building owners and industry should make buildings safe without passing on costs to leaseholders and where they have not stepped up, we have stepped in. The Government has announced a globally unprecedented investment of £5 billion in building safety and hundreds of thousands of leaseholders will be protected from the cost of remediating unsafe cladding from their homes.

■ Construction: Insurance**Shabana Mahmood:** [\[53211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent progress has been made on the industry survey developed with the Construction Leadership Council on the construction professional indemnity insurance market.

Christopher Pincher:

Working closely with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, last year the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities encouraged the Construction Leadership Council to conduct an industry survey on the professional indemnity insurance constraints faced by construction professionals.

The largest professional indemnity insurance survey of its kind in construction, the survey highlighted the significant premium increases faced by many professionals across the construction sector.

The survey has been used to support evidence provided by the Construction Leadership Council to the upcoming Industry Safety Steering Group annual report, which sets out industry's progress on culture change over the last year.

It has also been used to consider industry actions that could produce a more proportionate approach to PII premium pricing and fire safety exclusions, in particular to ensure that the Government can continue to progress the remediation of unsafe cladding systems. The data has also informed our work on EWS1 professional indemnity insurance cover.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Costs**Steve Reed:**[\[58887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the estimated cost to the public purse was of changing the name of his Department.

Eddie Hughes:

Any necessary changes will be done in a cost-efficient way with expenditure being kept to a minimum.

■ Derelict Land: Property Development**Ruth Cadbury:**[\[58915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will publish which local authorities applied for funding under the Brown Land Release fund.

Ruth Cadbury:[\[58916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many local authorities were rejected for funding under the Brown Land Release Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

We received bids from 79 councils across England, of whom 53 have so far received BLRF funding to deliver 110 projects. We will be making further allocations shortly.

■ Housing: Construction**Daisy Cooper:**[\[54018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will issue guidance on what constitutes an exceptional circumstance by which the standard method

for housing can be revised down, specifically as it relates to (a) local authority areas that are comprised almost exclusively of greenbelt and (b) local authorities seeking to establish Nature Recovery Areas.

Christopher Pincher:

The standard method is only the starting point in the process of planning for new homes and does not provide a target. Local housing need is used by councils as a guide when they develop their local plans taking account of local constraints (such as Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) that prevent local authorities from allocating enough sites to meet need. Local authorities are responsible for defining a target in their plan which they must submit to the Planning Inspectorate for examination.

While there is an expectation that the standard method will be used as a starting point, local authorities can put forward their own approach if they wish but a different method should only be used in exceptional circumstances and there should be a strong justification for doing so. Authorities can expect their method to be scrutinised closely at examination. What constitutes exceptional circumstances is a matter of planning judgement.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[54020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his policy is on the principles that local authorities should use to balance housing targets set by central Government with protecting greenbelt land.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government does not set local housing targets. The standard method for calculating local housing need is the starting point in the process of planning for the right number of homes, but it is not the housing requirement. Housing requirements are decided by local authorities when they write their local plan, taking account of constraints they face locally such as the Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Our policy on Green Belt land remains clear we will continue to protect and enhance the Green Belt. Only in exceptional circumstances can a local authority alter a Green Belt boundary through the plan-making process and authorities are expected to demonstrate they have examined every other option to meet their need. Each plan is subject to a public examination in front of an independent Inspector, who plays an important role in examining plans impartially to ensure that they are legally compliant and sound.

■ **Housing: Investment**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[53280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on housing of homes purchased for investment rather than accommodation.

Christopher Pincher:

Whilst the Government is committed to helping people to own their own home, a healthy housing market is built upon the co-existence of a range of tenures, including the private rented sector (PRS), to meet individual needs and requirements.

The Build to Rent (BtR) sector is one example that has attracted significant institutional investment over recent years. BtR boosts housing supply, diversifies the private rental sector and increases quality and choice for renters in cities and towns across England. We have revised the National Planning Policy Framework and issued a new chapter of planning guidance to support the delivery of more BtR homes, including affordable rental homes. Our Build to Rent Fund provided over £630 million of development finance for the supply of new homes built specifically for private rent. We are also providing support to the sector through the £3.5 billion PRS Guarantee Scheme.

This Government is committed to supporting the supply of new homes. We have made strong progress towards our aim of building 300,000 homes a year by the mid-2020s - delivering around 244,000 last year, the highest in over 30 years. This is backed by nearly £20 billion in investment: initial funding of £7.1 billion for the National House Building Fund over the next four years to unlock up to 860,000 homes over the lifetime of the projects.

■ Housing: Older People**Ben Everitt:**[\[53362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment has the Government made of the future housing needs for the ageing population.

Christopher Pincher:

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

We are investing over £12 billion in affordable housing over 5 years, the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade. This includes the new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme, where 10 per cent of delivery over the course of the programme will be used to increase the supply of much needed specialist or supported housing, including retirement housing. The Department of Health and

Social Care are also continuing to subsidise new supply of specialist housing for older and disabled people through the Care and Support Specialised Housing (CASSH) Fund.

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

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

■ Local Government

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:

[53319]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, for what reason local government has been removed from his Department's name; and what assessment he has made of the effect of that change to his Department's title on the Government's plans to tackle the challenges faced by local authorities.

Eddie Hughes:

As a new Department with the unique and defining purpose of levelling up communities across the entirety of the UK the new Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has a broad and ambitious set of objectives, working to provide equal opportunity across the UK so that the talent and ambition match the opportunities people can access. To do this, DLUHC leads the Levelling Up agenda across government, working with other departments and in partnership with local government

The change of name of the Department reflect the enhanced focus the Government is placing on its intention to deliver improvement across the whole of the United Kingdom. With its newly expanded remit, the Department will be even better placed to support the Government in its plans to tackle the challenges faced by local authorities.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:

[54002]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Government's press release, Ambitious plans to drive levelling up agenda, published on 19 September 2021, whether the removal of local government from his Department's name reflects a change in the priority of local government in Government policy.

Eddie Hughes:

No.

■ Local Government Services

Rachael Maskell: [\[53273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he plans to take to help ensure that all statutory provision, in particular for children and adult social care, will be met by local authorities from April 2022 in addition to other services.

Kemi Badenoch:

Funding for local government will be agreed as part of the Spending Review. This process is well underway, and the overall level of Local Government funding will be determined in the round, including for children's and adult's social care.

■ Local Government: Food Poverty

Rachael Maskell: [\[53286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the role of local authorities in addressing food poverty in localities.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Department for Work and Pensions lead cross-government action on tackling poverty, including with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and other departments specifically on food poverty. Officials have been working closely with DEFRA and other departments to deliver a number of key cross-cutting outcomes, including addressing poverty through enabling progression into work and increasing financial resilience.

■ Sheltered Housing

Paul Girvan: [\[53997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the Government is taking steps to increase the (a) amount and (b) availability of housing-with-care for older people.

Paul Girvan: [\[53998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the Government is taking steps to define the role of (a) extra care and (b) retirement villages in the social care system.

Paul Girvan: [\[53999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment the Government has made of the implications for its policies of proposals from the housing-with-care sector and their trade body ARCO to set up a cross-government task force to accelerate the growth of the housing-with-care sector.

Christopher Pincher:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 27 September to Question UIN [51650](#).

SCOTLAND**■ Freeports: Scotland**

John Lamont: [\[57235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what comparative assessment he has made of the impact on the Scottish economy of Scotland having (a) one and (b) two freeports.

Mr Alister Jack:

Freeports will create hubs of global trade, support thousands of jobs, regenerate communities and turbocharge Britain's post-Brexit growth, and is all part of the UK Government's commitment to boost economic activity, levelling up towns, cities and regions across the UK.

The UK Government remains committed to establishing its freeport programme in Scotland as soon as possible and are confident our model embraces the highest employment and environmental standards.

TRANSPORT**■ Cycleways**

Stuart Anderson: [\[57342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much his Department has spent on the development of local cycle lane networks in the last five years.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

At the time of the February 2020 report to Parliament on the delivery of the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS), published at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/936926/cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy-report-to-parliament-document.pdf, a total of around £2.4 billion of investment in cycling and walking was projected over the five years from 2016/17 to 2020/21. Over half of this funding has gone into providing better infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians. A further £250 million of active travel funding was provided in 2020/21 at the start of the pandemic. The details of how the funding was allocated over the years 2019/20 and 2020/21 will be set out in the next CWIS report to Parliament in due course.

■ Cycling: Disability

Caroline Lucas: [\[56952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to page 58 section 8.48 of the 2018 Inclusive Transport Strategy, and the commitment to explore by 2020 the feasibility

of amending legislation to recognise the use of cycles as a mobility aid to increase the number of disabled people cycling, what steps he has taken to fulfil that commitment; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

A feasibility review has now been completed and the Department is taking forward a number of actions. These include a planned trial of permit schemes in some local authority areas as part of an Active Travel Social Prescription Pilot which the Department will be rolling out shortly; further policy and data analysis to understand the scale of the problem for disabled cyclists; and exploring options for amending legislation. Further advice will be sought from relevant stakeholders as part of the development of the Active Travel Social Prescription Pilot.

■ **Driving Licences**

Anna McMorrin:

[\[58997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the impact of the DVLA casework backlog on the return of licences revoked on medical grounds; and what steps he is taking to improve the efficiency of DVLA.

Anna McMorrin:

[\[58998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average length of time is between receiving documentation of a medical decision to restore a driver's licence and retuning the licence to the driver; and what steps he is taking to improve correspondence in that process.

Anna McMorrin:

[\[59000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve the timeliness of correspondence (a) with non-UK citizens applying for a driving or provisional driving licence and (b) to return additional documentation provided by those applicants.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) receives around 60,000 items of mail every day and industrial action by members of the Public and Commercial Services union has led to delays for customers. The DVLA has also been working with a significantly reduced number of staff on site to ensure social distancing in line with Welsh Government requirements. The current increased demand for the DVLA's services has also contributed to delays with paper applications.

The DVLA has introduced additional online services and recruited more staff. The DVLA is urgently securing extra office space to house more staff to help reduce waiting times while providing future resilience and business continuity.

The DVLA understands the impact that delays can have on people's everyday lives and is working as quickly as possible to process paper applications and return people's documentation to them.

The DVLA recognises the effect that the delays are having on drivers who have been revoked on medical grounds and additional resource is being utilised to process cases as quickly as possible.

However, DVLA is often reliant on receiving information from medical professionals to ensure drivers can meet the required medical standards which can add to delays.

The DVLA deals with around 750,000 medical driver licensing cases each year. The length of time taken to deal with an application depends on the medical condition(s) involved and whether further information is required from medical professionals. Although doctors play an important role in the driver licensing process, the DVLA is responsible for considering the medical information supplied in the context of safe driving and deciding whether a licence can be issued.

When a decision has been taken to issue a driving licence, the DVLA writes to the applicant to inform them that they should receive the licence within ten working days.

■ Driving Tests

Layla Moran:

[59020]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help support learner drivers who have passed their theory tests and have been unable to book a practical test before the expiry of their theory test certificate.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has a number of measures in place to increase the availability of practical driving tests. These include offering a national recovery allowance and annual leave buy back to examiners, asking all those qualified to conduct tests, but who do not do so as part of their current day job, to return to conducting tests, and conducting out of hours testing (such as on public holidays and weekends).

The DVSA has also started a recruitment campaign to increase the number of examiners. To support this campaign, the agency is exploring options to temporarily employ experienced driving assessors from other road safety organisations to become driving examiners.

Returning to seven tests a day per examiner in June allowed the DVSA to increase capacity across the national network by an average of 15,000 to 20,000 tests per month. The aim was to increase testing capacity as quickly as possible, whilst maintaining a COVID-secure service for customers and examiners.

The DVSA has also published and promoted the top 10 reasons for failing the driving test, giving tips to candidates and instructors on how to avoid these faults. The DVSA is asking instructors to encourage their pupils to rearrange their test for a later date if they regularly make these mistakes during their lessons or private practice. The DVSA is also encouraging learners to practise driving on a variety of roads and in different conditions, so they are better prepared for their test. Helping learners to be

fully prepared will give them a better chance of passing, meaning they could potentially avoid their theory test expiring.

■ Electric Vehicles

Geraint Davies:

[56752]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to improve (a) access and (b) incentives for people of all ages to take up riding a powered two or three wheeled vehicle.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Grants are available from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles towards the purchase cost of a number of zero-emission motorcycles and mopeds, with the grant paying for 20% of the purchase price, up to a maximum of £1,500. Details are available via www.gov.uk/plug-in-car-van-grants/overview .

The Department is running trials of rental e-scooters to assess their safety and wider impacts. This is part of the Government's Future of Transport regulatory review which will decide whether e-scooters and similar vehicles should be allowed on the road and, if so, what rules should apply to them.

The Government has also taken a number of steps to support the use of e-cargo bikes and other e-bikes. It has provided over £2 million to support the roll-out of e-cargo bikes, with grants covering up to 40% of the total cost of an ecargo bike, up to a maximum of £2,500 for two-wheel models and £4,500 for three-wheel models. Further details of a new national e-cycle support programme will be announced shortly. The Government is also supporting a number of English local authorities with trials of e-cycles in their areas, and e-cycles are also within the scope of the Cycle to Work scheme allowing employees to access them at a discount.

■ Electric Vehicles: Grants

Sarah Olney:

[58983]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many plug-in car grants were given in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021 to date.

Trudy Harrison:

There were 39287 approved orders for the Plug-in Car Grant (PiCG) in 2019 and 92879 approved orders for the PiCG in 2020. We are unable to provide detailed information for 2021 to date because orders for the PiCG are allowed 9 or 12 months to complete and are not counted as approved until the car is registered, delivered to the customer and the grant subsequently paid.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[59004]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department has taken to help ensure that the entirety of HS2 is delivered in a cost-effective manner.

Andrew Stephenson:

We remain committed to focussing on cost control measures across the HS2 project. My Department has introduced new governance arrangements, including increased Ministerial oversight and accountability for this critical infrastructure project. We have this week released our third Parliamentary report, which sets out progress on the project, confirms that we remain within budget and schedule, and clearly demonstrates our commitment to transparently reporting progress against budgets.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Buckinghamshire**Sarah Green:**[\[59129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to help prevent (a) decline and (b) extinction of the Barbastelle Bat at (i) Leather Lane, (ii) Bowood Lane and (iii) Jones Hill Wood.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Secretary of State and HS2 Ltd take the preservation and enhancement of all bat species and populations associated with the project very seriously.

HS2 Ltd's strategy for the preservation and enhancement of bats in this area adopts a precautionary approach as to the presence of a Barbastelle population at these locations. That strategy, overseen by experienced ecologists, is to enhance linkages between woodlands and other habitats to provide connectivity and additional foraging areas for bats.

Works will include new species-rich woodland planting, hedgerow creation, the strengthening of existing hedgerows, and the translocation and reuse of ancient woodland soils. Planting will also be placed alongside the top of the cutting associated with this area to direct bat flight lines towards crossing points at Wendover Dean Viaduct. Prior to works, mitigation measures include the erection of bat boxes ahead of tree felling to ensure there is continuous availability of roosting features.

The provision of habitat and the creation of links at this scale will significantly increase the amount of foraging and commuting habitat available to local bat communities in this area.

The landscape and ecological design for this stretch of route is still being developed. When finalised, the proposals will be submitted to Buckinghamshire Council to support the local planning application for this area under Schedule 17 of the Phase One Act.

■ High Speed Two: Environment Protection**Sarah Green:**[\[59128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to ensure that HS2 Limited is adhering to its Environmental Statement.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Secretary of State for Transport has established a framework to control the environmental impacts of the HS2 project which includes the relevant Act(s), associated Environmental Statement(s) and a suite of documents that together form the project's Environmental Minimum Requirements (EMRs).

HS2 Ltd is required to comply with the Acts and the EMRs, with the aim of ensuring that the environmental effects reported in the relevant Environmental Statement are not exceeded. The EMRs include documents such as the Code of Construction Practice, which sets out processes and practices to control the works on-site.

Further approvals and controls of designs are given through the planning regime established by the Act. HS2 Ltd and its contractors are also required to comply with commitments given to Parliament, and with Undertakings and Assurances given directly to other affected parties.

The Department for Transport monitors HS2 Ltd's performance and compliance against all of its objectives, including environmental obligations, via its Development Agreement with the company, and has established supporting governance arrangements and management information streams to ensure that compliance is monitored and maintained.

HS2 Ltd is working towards the publication of its first Environmental Sustainability Performance Report which is planned to be published later this autumn. This will provide a clear and up-to-date account of HS2's environmental impacts and the important work that is being deployed to mitigate any adverse effects from the scheme.

Large Goods Vehicles: Hazardous Substances**Drew Hendry:**[\[58933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions his Department has had with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency on increasing the availability of heavy vehicle ADR tests.

Trudy Harrison:

ADR examinations are delivered by third-party organisations who hold approval from the Secretary of State, so this provision does not use any of the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency testing resource. Those providers advise they have capacity to meet the demands for the examinations nationally, including in your constituency and there is no significant backlog of drivers wishing to qualify.

To provide support for fuel deliveries, the Government has granted an extension of ADR validity for those drivers whose certification would expire between 27 September 2021 and 31 December 2021 until 31 January 2022. This is one of a package of measures we have introduced to address vocational driver shortages.

The Government has also enlisted military tanker drivers to assist with fuel deliveries and extended the provision of remote training delivery to help support both ADR drivers and providers in the future.

■ Low Ashyard Railway Viaduct

Alan Brown: [\[57152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what structural assessment has been made of the (a) condition and (b) integrity of Low Ashyard Railway viaduct; what work has been undertaken on that viaduct to date; and what future works are required.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Low Ashyard Bridge is listed on the National Highways (NH) website as being on hold as it falls within the pause across the Historical Railways Estate. However, National Highways intend to strengthen this structure to maintain access – the route under the bridge is currently used for active travel (the Chris Hoy Cycleway).

In 2010, due to issues with the strength of the bridge, the local highway authority imposed a 7.5 tonne weight limit on the road over the bridge. The bridge is inspected annually by the Historical Railways Estate team.

In December 2019 a detailed examination of the structure found that the timber bearings had failed. As a result, temporary props were installed in 2020 to ensure the routes over and through the bridge remained open and safe to use.

National Highways is in discussions with Ayrshire Roads Alliance about the future of this bridge. The plan is to design a strengthening solution, delivered next financial year, that keeps the cycleway open.

■ Railways: Electricity

Ian Mearns: [\[56987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Government took steps to prevent Network Rail from increasing the electricity prices it charges Freight Operating Companies and Train Operating Companies to operate electric train services.

Ian Mearns: [\[56988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the duration of the increase Network Rail has made to its charges for electricity to Freight Operating Companies and Train Operating Companies; and what his most recent estimate is of the anticipated length of time it will take for those electricity prices to stabilise.

Ian Mearns: [\[56989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what impact assessment his Department has made of Network Rail's increase in electricity charges on (a) the running of passenger rail services and (b) the financial resilience of Train Operating Companies to absorb those increased costs.

Ian Mearns:

[\[56991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the price increases to operate electric freight and passenger train services is (a) restricted to the UK or (b) has been seen to affect other European countries.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The recent increase in electricity prices is part of a wider trend that has affected a number of European countries and industry sectors. It is too early to predict when prices will stabilise.

The Government does not intervene in setting the price Network Rail (NR) charges train and freight operating companies for electricity and NR does not set traction electricity charges for train operators. NR procures traction electricity on behalf of the rail industry, which is then charged to operators at the price that NR pays. This means that Network Rail does not set the price or make a profit or loss in this process. If market electricity prices change, the risk or benefit rests with train and freight operators. For the vast majority of operators, the price has risen 6% for this winter compared to last winter.

Each train and freight operator is responsible for determining its own strategy for locking into future traction electricity prices. These strategies are then enacted by Network Rail according to the Traction Electricity Rules referenced in Track Access contracts. The process replicates what operators would need to do if they bought directly from an energy supplier. The Department now operates a business planning process with train operators agreeing annual business plan budgets which will also include the planned costs of electricity used by relevant operators. Any emerging increases in NR electricity charges will be considered by operators themselves and absorbed as part of their agreed overall business plan outputs and budget available. The Department does not currently consider this a material financial risk to currently agreed budgets.

■ Union Connectivity Review

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[58743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of when he will receive the outcome of the Union Connectivity Review by Sir Peter Hendy CBE.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Union Connectivity Review final report is due to be published by the end of the year and the Secretary of State will respond to Sir Peter's recommendations after that point

TREASURY■ **Air Passenger Duty****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[58744\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to announce the outcome of the effect of Air Passenger Duty on regional air routes in the aviation tax reform proposals.

Helen Whately:

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

The consultation sought evidence on the potential impacts of these proposals, including on regional air routes, and closed on 15 June. The Government will update on next steps in due course.

■ **Banks: Enfield North****Feryal Clark:**[\[56651\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to Answer of 15 September to Question 45291, how many (a) high-street bank and (b) building society branches that were in operation in Enfield North for each of the past 10 years.

John Glen:

The Government recognises the continued importance of access to over-the-counter financial services. However, HM Treasury does not make direct assessments of banks' or building societies' branch networks.

Decisions on opening and closing branches are a commercial issue for banks and building societies, but firms are expected to engage closely with the Financial Conduct Authority to carefully consider the impact of planned branch closures on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs and consider possible alternative access arrangements.

Alternative options for access include the Post Office. The Post Office Banking Framework allows 95% of business and 99% of personal banking customers to deposit cheques, check their balance and withdraw and deposit cash at 11,500 Post Office branches in the UK.

■ **Beer: Excise Duties****Caroline Lucas:**[\[58812\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to use the comprehensive spending review on 27 October 2021 to announce a new, lower rate of duty for draught beer.

Helen Whately:

The Treasury is considering the merits of potential reforms to alcohol duties as part of its alcohol duty review. We are currently analysing responses provided by stakeholders to our call for evidence and will provide further updates in due course.

Children: Disability**Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[59054\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the finding of Scope and the Disabled Children's Partnership's report entitled The Gap Widens, published in October 2021, that there is a £2.1 billion funding gap in disabled children's health and social care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education, ahead of the upcoming Spending Review, on tackling unmet need in disabled children's health and care services.

Mr Simon Clarke:

HM Treasury Ministers and officials regularly meet with other government departments and a range of stakeholders, which includes discussions around support for children.

The government has to date provided the NHS with over £32 billion to support its response to and recovery from COVID-19, which includes the provision of healthcare services to disabled children. This is part of the overall £97 billion support for health services since the start of the pandemic.

The government has also given over £6 billion in un-ringfenced funding directly to councils to support them with the immediate and longer-term impacts of COVID-19 spending pressures, including children's services. At last year's Spending Review, the government provided councils with access to over £1 billion of spending for social care through £300 million of new social care grant and the ability to introduce a 3% adult social care precept. This funding was additional to the £1 billion social care grant announced in 2019 which was maintained in line with the government's manifesto.

HM Treasury will continue to work with other government departments, including the Department for Health and Social Care, Department for Education and Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to ensure the Spending Review reflects the requirements of children's health and care services in the longer term.

Community Development Finance Institutions**Julian Knight:**[\[56342\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to mandate large bank investment through social lenders such as Community Development Finance Institutions.

John Glen:

The Treasury recognises the vital role that non-banks, including Community Development Financial institutions (CDFIs), and challenger banks play in the provision of credit to SMEs. I would like to take the opportunity to reaffirm that the

Government recognises the vital role that CDFIs play in the provision of credit to SMEs and is grateful for the way the sector has responded to the current crisis. It is worth noting the Government remains committed to promoting competition and widening the funding options available to UK businesses.

Whilst there are no plans at this time to mandate large bank investment through social lenders like CDFIs, I should be clear that all lenders accredited under the government-backed Recovery Loan Scheme can benefit from the transfer and assignment of the guarantee, which is something that alternative lenders requested to support their ability to access funding.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Leeds

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[59003\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment has he made of the level of funding available to build the HS2 eastern leg to Leeds.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Spending Review will set out Government's plans for public spending. The Integrated Rail Plan will set out how rail connectivity will be improved in the North and the Midlands. Details will be set out in due course.

■ Housing: Ynys Môn

Virginia Crosbie: [\[59124\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what (a) financial and (b) tax incentives he has put in place to enable the conversion of the 23 per cent of homes in Ynys Môn constituency which are heated by oil to the renewable liquid fuel HVO.

Helen Whately:

Biofuels such as liquid fuel hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) may play a role in future off-gas-grid decarbonisation. However, further evidence is needed to consider the extent of this. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will publish a new Biomass Strategy in 2022, which will review the amount of sustainable biomass the UK will have access to, including liquid biofuels, and how this could be best used across the economy to achieve our net zero target.

As part of the Net Zero Strategy, the Government announced the new £450 million Boiler Upgrade Scheme to support the uptake of heat pumps

The Government keeps all taxes under review, and any changes are made in the round at fiscal events.

■ Insurance: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas: [\[56299\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the impact on small and medium sized enterprises of delays by insurance companies in settling in full covid-19 related claims that have been upheld by the Financial Ombudsman; and if he

will make it his policy to look at providing these businesses with support, including a government backed loan scheme offered via primary lenders and which would give businesses the chance to consolidate their covid related debts and negotiate affordable payment plans.

John Glen:

The Financial Ombudsman Service is an independent body set up to provide arbitration in disputes between customers and financial services firms. Following a consumer's acceptance of an ombudsman's final decision, the decision becomes binding on the firm.

The Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) rules require businesses to co-operate with the ombudsman – this includes complying with any decision that the ombudsman may make.

The Government continues to work closely with the FCA to ensure that the rules are being upheld during this crisis and fully supports the regulator in its role.

Under the Government's Recovery Loan Scheme (RLS), eligible businesses can take out a loan and use part of this facility to refinance their existing loans. Businesses in this situation should speak to lenders about their financing options. Businesses can use any of the accredited RLS lenders to refinance, and not just the lender they have the existing loan with. More information regarding accredited lenders under RLS is available on the British Business Bank's website.

■ **Insurance: Floods**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[56679\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 20 September 2021 to Question 49075 on Insurance: Floods, whether the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is classed as a saving in a Business Interruption claim.

John Glen:

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is the independent non-governmental body responsible for regulating and supervising the financial services industry. The FCA's rules require insurers to handle claims fairly and promptly and settle claims quickly once settlement terms are agreed.

Insurers should calculate claims payments due to the policyholder in accordance with the terms and conditions of the relevant policy.

Policyholders who feel that their claim has not been handled fairly may be able to refer the matter to the Financial Ombudsman Service, an independent body set up to provide arbitration in such cases.

■ **Insurance: Infectious Diseases**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[56462\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the insurance industry on explicitly excluding (a) commutable diseases, (b) coronaviruses

and (c) pandemics from insurance policies; and what assessment he has made of the impact of those exclusions on people purchasing insurance.

John Glen:

The Government is committed to ensuring consumers can access the insurance products that suit their needs and is in continual dialogue with the insurance industry on its response to the Covid-19 crisis.

The Government has taken the position that it would not intervene in the insurance market unless the inability to secure appropriate cover represented the last barrier for the sector to reopen. At various stages throughout this crisis, the government has launched successful insurance interventions.

Moving forward, HM Treasury is learning lessons about the impacts of Covid-19 on the insurance market and the availability of cover. This will be crucial when considering our approach for how we build greater economic resilience against certain risks in the future.

■ **Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Recruitment**

Mr Steve Baker:

[58833]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of the implementation of IR35 on the number of drivers in the haulage industry.

Lucy Frazer:

The Tax Information and Impact Note published in March 2021 sets out expected impacts of the April 2021 reform of the off-payroll working rules:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/off-payroll-working-rules-from-april-2021/off-payroll-working-rules-from-april-2021>.

The Government committed to commission independent research into the short-term impacts of the reform by October 2021 during the debate on the Finance Bill 2020.

That research has now been commissioned, and the findings will be published once complete.

■ **Liverpool Victoria**

Gareth Thomas:

[56761]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who are the two independent experts assigned to the Financial Conduct Authority to assess the potential merits of the proposed the sale of LV (Liverpool Victoria); what assessment he has made of their remit in that assessment; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The Scheme of Arrangement and Member Vote independent expert is Oliver Gillespie from Milliman. The Part VII independent expert is Simon Grout from FTI Consulting. The independent experts are appointed by LV= (and in the case of the Part VII independent experts approved by the PRA, in consultation with the FCA) and their review of the proposed transaction is not only for the regulators but also for the

courts and the members and policyholders of LV=. They are required to perform their role in line with regulatory requirements for independent experts.

The approval of the sale of LV= to Bain Capital, including consideration of the independent experts' reports, is a matter for the members of LV=, as well as the financial services regulators and the courts, both of whom are independent of Government. It is therefore not appropriate for the Government to comment on the substance of an ongoing process.

■ Loans: Small Businesses

Julian Knight: [\[57071\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to extend the Term Funding Scheme to non-bank lenders to improve alternative financing options.

John Glen:

The Term Funding Scheme (TFS) is a monetary policy tool of the independent Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Bank of England. Therefore, it is not appropriate for the Government to comment on its conduct or effectiveness.

The separation of fiscal and monetary policy is a key feature of the UK's economic framework, and essential for the effective delivery of monetary policy.

We will continue to work with non-bank lenders to support their participation in the new Recovery Loan scheme following the closure of the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS), and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs).

■ Maternity Allowance and Parental Pay

Kirsten Oswald: [\[58920\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many new claims for (a) statutory paternity pay, (b) statutory maternity pay and (c) maternity allowance were approved in each quarter of financial year 2020-21.

Lucy Frazer:

The information is not held in the form requested. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) does hold information on claimants of statutory maternity pay and statutory paternity pay, but this is not limited to new claims. Quarterly counts of claims would include claimants in each quarter in which they received the statutory payment. HMRC does not hold any information on payments of Maternity Allowance.

The Department for Work and Pensions publishes statistics about benefits, including average caseloads for Statutory Maternity Pay and Maternity Allowance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/benefit-expenditure-tables>

■ Members: Correspondence**Rosie Cooper:** [\[56900\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 13 August 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, regarding funeral plan regulation, reference ZA56841.

John Glen:

I responded to the Honourable Member's correspondence on 18 October 2021.

Feryal Clark: [\[57447\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to the correspondence addressed to the previous Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office dated 10 August 2021 from the Hon. Member for Enfield North on the Government's international aid cuts and the UK's Special Drawing Rights allocation, reference FC8050.

John Glen:

A response to the relevant correspondence was issued on 12 October 2021.

■ Mortgages: Self-employed**Kirsten Oswald:** [\[57074\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with mortgage lenders on their treatment of payments under the Self Employed Income Support Scheme when assessing the income of self-employed mortgage applicants.

John Glen:

Ministers and officials regularly meet with lenders to understand their lending policies. However, decisions concerning the pricing and availability of loans, including application requirements, remain commercial decision for lenders which the Government does not seek to intervene in.

For individuals applying for new credit, it remains important that lenders are able to carry out the proper checks to ensure that these individuals are not lent to in an unaffordable way, especially if, for example, a borrower's income has changed as a result of Covid-19.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) recognises that lenders should have flexibility to decide what evidence of income they can accept from self-employed customers. Due to the wide variety of mortgage products available in the UK, self-employed borrowers may find it useful to contact a broker to help them identify the best lender for their circumstances, and prepare for and organise their mortgage application.

■ Mutual Societies

Gareth Thomas: [\[53824\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on what date he last made an assessment of the effectiveness of existing legislation in preventing the demutualisation of financial mutuals; and if he will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas: [\[53825\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions officials in his Department have held with representatives of the co-operative and mutual sector on increasing safeguards for financial mutuals against demutualisation; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The Government is a strong supporter of the mutuals sector. Mutuals offer a different way of running a business, with their clear focus on their members needs and serving their local communities.

The Government routinely considers the effectiveness of legislation, including that for financial mutuals, and if any amendments are necessary. The Government is open to discussions about legislative reforms to support mutuals and other proposals to develop the sector. Treasury officials recently met with the Association of Financial Mutuals, which has put together a working group dedicated to exploring the impact of legislation and regulation on mutuals and friendly societies.

■ National Insurance: Ilford North

Wes Streeting: [\[58957\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he made of the number of (a) individuals and (b) businesses in Ilford North constituency that will be affected by the planned increase to National Insurance Contributions.

Wes Streeting: [\[58958\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the amount of additional revenue that will be received as a result of his planned increase to National Insurance Contributions from (a) businesses and (b) individuals in Ilford North constituency.

Lucy Frazer:

The final costing of the policy, as well as the impacts on individuals and businesses, are due to be set out in the upcoming Autumn Budget.

■ National Savings and Investments

John Lamont: [\[56680\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Answer of 28 April 2021 to Question 187297 on National Savings and Investments, what estimate he has made of the date on which the NS&I Green Savings Bond will be available to customers.

John Glen:

The Green Savings Bonds were made available to customers via National Savings and Investments on 22 October and will be on sale for a minimum of three months. The 3-year fixed-term savings product with an interest rate of 0.65% will give UK savers the opportunity to take part in the collective effort to tackle climate change. Customers can invest between £100 and £100,000.

WALES**■ Wales Office: Correspondence****Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[\[56138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what steps he is taking to improve his Department's response times to correspondence from members of the public.

Simon Hart:

The Government recognises the importance of responding to members of the public in an effective and timely manner, and the Cabinet Office published an updated [Guide to Handling Correspondence](#) for government departments and agencies in July 2021.

The guidance reasserts the standards for handling correspondence, including a 20 working day deadline for departments to respond to members of the public, criteria outlining when a response to a member of the public is required, and when a piece of correspondence from a member of the public should be transferred to another department. Following publication of the updated guidance, all departments have been reminded that they must follow the processes outlined in the guidance.

The Office of the Secretary of State for Wales has a 15 working day deadline to reply to correspondence where a response is required. Correspondence response times are regularly monitored and reported to the Departmental Board. Internal processes have been improved to ensure members of the public are responded to in a timely manner.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Conversion Therapy: Victim Support Schemes****Kim Johnson:**[\[56459\]](#)

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

Mike Freer:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to [PQ 50166](#) on 22 September 2021.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Attendance Allowance**

Dan Jarvis: [\[58877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing a mobility component to attendance allowance for people of pension age with disabilities.

Guy Opperman:

Attendance Allowance (AA) is intended to help those with a severe disability who have long term care or supervision needs where those needs arise after reaching State Pension age. Entitlement is based on the on-going need for frequent personal care and attention, or supervision to ensure personal safety. A mobility component for those whose needs arise after State Pension age is not provided as it is expected that many older people will develop mobility issues as part of the ageing process. This is a long standing policy continued by successive Governments. There is no constraint on what the benefit can be used for, and individual recipients can choose to use their Attendance Allowance to fund mobility aids.

Latest published figures at end of February 2021, show that nationally there were 1.49m claimants of AA, of which 2,222 were in the Barnsley Central Parliamentary Constituency. In terms of expenditure on AA, nationally this was forecast to be £5.3bn in 2020/21.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Complaints

Justin Madders: [\[56253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints were lodged with her Department in each month from September 2019.

Guy Opperman:

The Department publish complaints received data on a quarterly basis on Gov.uk.

The data is currently published up to June 2021 and is available at [DWP complaints data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

■ Employment: Disability

Marion Fellows: [\[57128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the National Disability Strategy published by the Government in July 2021, when her Department plans to begin consulting on workforce reporting on disability for large employers; what the timeframe is for that consultation; and when her Department plans to publish next steps and recommendations in response to that consultation.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: We will begin consulting on workforce reporting on disability for large employers in the coming months. In line with the government's

consultation principles, the consultation will run for at least 12 weeks, and will provide a response within 12 weeks of the consultation closing. We have committed to publishing our next steps following the consultation, and plan to do so in 2022.

■ National Insurance

Ruth Cadbury: [\[57060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of issuing a National Insurance number to people who have been granted a Turkish Businessperson visa as soon as they receive that visa.

Guy Opperman:

In respect of immigration applications, Turkish Businesspersons are initially granted 12 months' visa, during which time they should establish their business and register for tax and national insurance. Self-employed business people are legally required to register for the payment of income tax and national insurance contributions.

As part of Turkish Business person extension applications, applicants are asked to provide documentary evidence to confirm that their business is active and that they are genuinely self-employed. Evidence may include tax returns, national insurance returns, and evidence of public liability insurance.

It is not mandatory for Turkish Businesspersons to provide a National Insurance Number (NINo) as part of their immigration application and the Home Office will ensure they are not penalised for any previous delays in issuing one.

DWP and the Home Office have no plans to issue NINo's to Turkish Businesspersons when their initial visa is approved.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[57061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 12 July 2021 to Question 29073, on National Insurance, if she will further outline the steps taken to streamline the process for issuing National Insurance numbers to people with Turkish Businesspersons visas.

Guy Opperman:

When applying for a National Insurance number (NINo), Turkish Businessperson Visa holders were previously required to attend a face to face appointment with DWP where they were asked to provide documentary evidence of their self-employment/business.

From 9 June 2021, Turkish Businessperson Visa holders are able to apply on-line for a NINo and are no longer required to attend a face to face appointment with DWP to provide additional evidence of their self-employment. DWP will instead accept the BRP as evidence of their self-employment, meaning they no longer need to prove to DWP they are gainfully self-employed in order to be allocated a NINo.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Scotland

Ian Murray: [\[58376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions her Department has had with the Scottish Government on changing the eligibility criteria to access adult disability payment from the current criteria in personal independence payment.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 21 October 2021]: The eligibility criteria for Adult Disability Payment are a matter for the Scottish Government. My Department works closely with the Scottish Government to support its implementation of the social security provisions of the Scotland Act 2016.

■ Social Security Benefits: Ellesmere Port and Neston

Justin Madders: [\[56637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many benefit-capped households there were in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency in each financial year from 2019 to 2021.

David Rutley:

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

The available information on the number of households, receiving Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, who were subject to the Benefit Cap, by month and Parliamentary Constituency, is published every three months and can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ State Retirement Pensions

Stephen Farry: [\[56625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the Government's policy is on a spouse's entitlement to a share of their husband or wife's State Pension when the latter is in a care home and associated income from the State Pension is being paid to a care home to cover the costs of care.

Guy Opperman:

Where a State Pension recipient goes into a care home, this has no impact on their State Pension. The State Pension continues to be paid to them as the individual who has entitlement to it.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Females**Matt Rodda:****[59016]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many women affected by the underpayment of the State Pension have been reimbursed by her Department through the State Pension Correction Exercise to date.

Guy Opperman:

DWP published data on this on the 22 October 2021.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-pension-underpayments-progress-on-cases-reviewed-to-30-september-2021/state-pension-underpayments-progress-on-cases-reviewed-to-30-september-2021>

■ Universal Credit**Justin Madders:****[57095]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the cost to the public purse was of the implementation of the automated identification process in universal credit to ensure claimants receive more consistent benefit payments.

David Rutley:

Costs are not readily identifiable for the implementation of the automated identification process as teams work in an agile way, and make a number of changes to specific parts of the system.

Gill Furniss:**[58981]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made on the impact of the removal of the £20 uplift to the standard allowance of universal credit on regional inequalities.

David Rutley:

No such assessment has been made of the impact on regional inequalities.

The Chancellor announced a temporary six-month extension to the £20 per week uplift at the Budget on 3 March to support households affected by the economic shock of Covid-19. Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and the temporary uplift was part of a COVID support package worth a total of £407 billion in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

There have been significant positive developments in the public health situation since the uplift was first introduced. With the success of the vaccine rollout and record job vacancies, it is right that our focus is on helping people back into work.

Through our Plan for Jobs, we are targeting tailored support schemes of people of all ages to help them prepare for, get into and progress in work. These include: Kickstart, delivering tens of thousands of six-month work placements for Universal Credit claimants aged 16-24 at risk of unemployment; we have also recruited an additional 13,500 work coaches to provide more intensive support to find a job; and introduced Restart which provides 12 months' intensive employment support to

Universal Credit claimants who are unemployed for a year. Our Plan for Jobs interventions will support more than two million people

We recognise that some people continue to require extra support, which is why we have introduced a £421 million Household Support Fund to help vulnerable people in England with essential household costs over the winter as the economy recovers. The Barnett Formula will apply in the usual way, with the devolved administrations receiving almost £80 million (£41m for the Scottish Government, £25m for the Welsh Government and £14m for the NI Executive), for a total of £500 million.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[59084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy that there be transitional protection on income entitlements for those transitioning from the legacy benefit system to the Universal Credit system.

David Rutley:

When required to move to Universal Credit from legacy benefits, having been notified to do so by this Department, eligible claimants will be awarded transitional protection. This will ensure that their Universal Credit is not less than the sum of their legacy benefit payments at the point that they move to Universal Credit.

Claimants may also move from legacy benefits to Universal Credit when they experience a significant change in their circumstances that triggers a new claim to benefit. Transitional protection is not generally awardable in these cases as a claimant making a new claim due to changes in their circumstances has always been likely to receive a different benefit entitlement than on their previous benefit. This would be the case whether the new claim had occurred pre-Universal Credit system or on Universal Credit.

■ Universal Credit: Personal Income

Catherine West:

[\[53305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will commit to permanently removing the minimum income floor when assessing self-employed workers for universal credit.

Mims Davies:

Universal Credit supports people into self-employment where self-employment is the best route for them to become financially self-sufficient. The Minimum Income Floor encourages individuals to increase their earnings and make a success of their business through developing their self-employment. It also addresses flaws in the previous Tax Credit system which allowed self-employed claimants to receive full State support while continuing to declare very low earnings and to prevent people from under-declaring earnings in the future. This restores fairness for the taxpayer.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Public Lending Right

Ben Lake:

[\[57257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many authors received compensation through the Public Lending Right in (a) Wales, (b) Scotland, (c) Northern Ireland and (d) England in 2019.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 20 October 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Nigel Huddleston:

For the Public Lending Right (PLR) Scheme year 2019/20, PLR payments were made to 20,911 registered authors in the United Kingdom. The British Library, which administers the PLR Scheme on behalf of the department, does not maintain a record of payments to authors by country of residence in the United Kingdom.

The Public Lending Right Act 1979 provides a right for authors, known as the “public lending right”, to receive payments from a central fund for the loan of their books to the public by local library authorities. The central fund is provided from government grant-in-aid, and the PLR Scheme is administered for DCMS by the British Library.

The PLR Scheme sets out how to calculate the payments that authors can expect to receive from the central fund and this is calculated, and recommended to the government, by the British Library using the number of ‘notional loans’ of their books from public libraries in the UK. The PLR Scheme sets out a maximum payment threshold per author of £6,600 and the minimum level for authors to receive payments is £1.

TRANSPORT

■ Driving Licences: Medical Examinations

Jamie Stone:

[\[42064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many blood samples were requested by DVLA as part of a fitness to drive medical in each of the last five years.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 8 September 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Rachel Maclean Trudy Harrison:

The number of blood tests requested by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency as part of a medical fitness to drive investigation in the last five years is shown in the table below:

YEAR	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2020/21
Total requests	35,524	36,792	36,125	43,332	34,216

YEAR	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total requests	35,524	36,792	35,040	36,125	43,332	34,216

Information on the number of blood tests that needed to be retaken or the reason why is not readily available. Retrieving this information would require the interrogation of each individual case to identify the reason for which the blood test needed to be retaken.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

EDUCATION

■ Further Electronic Distribution

The Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi):

[\[HCWS350\]](#)

Today I am announcing that the government is providing a further 500,000 laptops and tablets. These devices will be available to disadvantaged children and young people via their school and college, to care leavers and young people supported by a social worker and to recently arrived children from Afghanistan. This is on top of the significant investment of over 1.3 million devices we have already provided and will support schools, colleges and local authorities in ensuring that all children and young people, regardless of their background, can achieve their potential. Providing more devices now will also increase our capacity to mitigate the effect of any disruption this winter.

Laptops and tablets distributed by the DfE are owned by schools, academy trusts, local authorities or further education providers. The majority of devices will be delivered to schools, colleges and trusts, which will lend them to children and young people who need them the most. Up to 10,000 devices will be available to local authorities for children and young people supported by a social worker and care leavers, which will allow them to stay in touch with their social workers and personal advisors. Up to 6,000 devices will be available for children from Afghanistan.

Devices will be delivered to organisations via the Get Help With Technology service, which reopens on Friday 29 October. My Department will send 'invitation to order' emails to schools, colleges, trusts and local authorities throughout November and December. Full guidance on the new offer and wider support available will be available when the service reopens on 29 October. We are also making grant funding available to contribute towards the technical support costs of setting up or resetting devices received through this scheme. This is to ensure that devices remain safe for children and young people to use.

Our provision of laptops and tablets – which comes to a commitment of 1.85 million following today's announcement – is on top of an estimated 2.9 million already owned by schools before the start of the pandemic.

The government has also supported families get online through a number of initiatives. We recently announced new funding to support schools and colleges in providing internet access during the autumn term for disadvantaged pupils whose face-to-face education is disrupted. Schools and colleges will be able to claim this funding from January 2022. We are also continuing to provide 4G wireless routers for pupils without internet access.

Government investment has also helped more than a thousand schools with the slowest speeds access gigabit broadband. It means teachers can make use of the most cutting-edge learning tech benefitting thousands of children. Further information can be found

here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/1000-schools-connected-to-top-of-the-class-full-fibre-broadband>.

In addition, our EdTech Demonstrator network provides free peer to peer training and advice to state-funded schools and further education institutions, further information can be found here: <https://edtechdemo.ucst.uk/>. EdTech Demonstrators can help schools and further education institutions make the best use of technology for classroom teaching and for remote education where pupils or students need to self-isolate in line with public health advice or government guidance.

The Government continues to fund expert technical support to help schools and colleges set up secure user accounts for Google and Microsoft's education platforms. Schools still have until 30 November 2021 to apply for Government funded support to get set up on either Google Workspace for Education or Microsoft Office 365 Education. Since April 2020, almost 7,000 schools have applied to the programme and over 2.34 million accounts have been created.