



Daily Report

Monday, 1 November 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 1 November 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:38 P.M., 01 November 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	6	COP26	13
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	6	■ Climate Change: Debts	13
■ Carbon Capture and Storage: Peterhead	6	■ Climate Change: Finance	14
■ Construction: Equipment	6	■ Environment Protection	14
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	6	■ Environment Protection: Developing Countries	15
■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Quarantine	7	■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Children and Young People	15
■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Stonewall	7	■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Mascots	16
■ Fireworks: Regulation	8	DEFENCE	16
■ Petrol: Newport West	8	■ Afghanistan: Cybercrime	16
■ Post Offices: York	9	■ Ajax Vehicles: Technology	16
■ Public Expenditure	9	■ Armed Forces: Climate Change	17
■ Re-employment	10	■ Armed Forces: Housing	18
■ Satellites: North East	11	■ Army: Scotland	18
■ Self-employed: Adoption	11	■ Army: Vehicles	18
■ UK Research and Innovation: Mental Health	12	■ Defence: Carbon Emissions	19
CABINET OFFICE	12	■ Ministry of Defence: Buildings	19
■ Cabinet Office: Ministers	12	■ Ministry of Defence: Land Use	21
■ Government Departments: Conference Centres	13	■ Ministry of Defence: Public Appointments	21
		■ Ministry of Defence: Quarantine	21
		■ Ministry of Defence: Staff	22

■ Ministry of Defence: Stonewall	22	■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Local Government Finance	35
■ Nuclear Submarines: Decommissioning	23	■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Stonewall	36
■ Oman: Military Attachés	23	■ Fly-tipping	37
DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	24	■ Food: Waste Disposal	37
■ 5G: Finance	24	■ Meat: Consumption	38
■ Arts: Universal Credit	24	■ Nature Conservation	38
■ BBC: Stonewall	25	■ River Wye: Pollution	39
■ Broadband: Voucher Schemes	25	■ Rivers: Sewage	40
■ Freedom of Information: Complaints	25	■ Slaughterhouses: CCTV	40
■ Members: Correspondence	26	■ Veterinary Medicine: Vacancies	40
■ Ofcom: Staff	26	■ Waste Management	40
EDUCATION	27	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	41
■ British Students Abroad	27	■ Afghanistan: Food	41
■ Children: Social Services	27	■ Afghanistan: Overseas Aid	41
■ Higher Education: Finance	28	■ Afghanistan: Refugees	42
■ Holiday Activities and Food Programme	29	■ Afghanistan: Repatriation	42
■ Pre-school Education	29	■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	43
■ Sixth Form Education: Greater London	31	■ Developing Countries: Debts	43
■ Special Educational Needs	31	■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Afghanistan	44
■ Special Educational Needs: Reviews	33	■ Hamas	44
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	33	■ Italy: G20	45
■ Air Pollution	33	■ Jerusalem: Palestinians	45
■ Breed Specific Legislation	34	■ Western Sahara: Sovereignty	46
■ Buildings: Land Drainage	34	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	46
■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Correspondence	34	■ Arthritis: Joint Replacements	46
		■ Bereavement Counselling	47
		■ Brain: Tumours	47

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus	48	■ NHS Test and Trace	59
■ Coronavirus: Budesonide	48	■ NHS: Military Aid	60
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	48	■ Pain and Palliative Care: Research	60
■ Drugs: Cost Effectiveness	49	■ Palliative Care	60
■ Drugs: Rehabilitation	50	■ Palliative Care: Health Professions	60
■ Electronic Cigarettes: Health Hazards	51	■ Preventive Medicine and Screening	61
■ Fampridine	51	■ Public Health: Finance	61
■ Genito-urinary Medicine	51	■ Royal Cornwall Hospital	61
■ Genito-urinary Medicine: Females	52	■ Suicide: Antidepressants	62
■ Health Services: Missing Persons	52	■ Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust: Complaints	62
■ Health Services: Statistics	52	HOME OFFICE	62
■ Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme	53	■ Carles Puigdemont	62
■ Heart Diseases: Health Services	53	■ Home Office: Stonewall	63
■ Heart Diseases: Medical Treatments	54	■ Human Trafficking: Victims	64
■ Hospital Beds	54	■ Immigration: Standards	65
■ Hospitals: Construction	54	■ Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam	65
■ Hyperactivity: Mental Health Services	55	■ Nationality and Borders Bill	65
■ Influenza: Drugs	55	■ Refugees: Afghanistan	66
■ Influenza: Screening	56	INTERNATIONAL TRADE	68
■ Influenza: Vaccination	57	■ Department for International Trade: Quarantine	68
■ Joint Replacements: Waiting Lists	57	■ Department for International Trade: Stonewall	69
■ Malnutrition: Health Services	57	■ Diplomatic Relations: Australia	69
■ Maternity Services: Ethnic Groups	57	■ Trade Agreements: New Zealand	69
■ Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency: Finance	58	JUSTICE	70
■ Members: Correspondence	58	■ Barristers	70
		■ Berwyn Prison: Prison Officers	70
		■ Courts: Video Conferencing	71

■ Crown Court	71	■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Stonewall	84
■ Legal Aid Scheme	72	■ Elections: Visual Impairment	85
■ Legal Opinion: Fees and Charges	73	■ Homelessness and Sleeping Rough: Harlow	85
■ Marriage	73	■ Housing: Herefordshire	85
■ Ministry of Justice: Quarantine	73	■ Land: Regeneration	86
■ Non-payment: Fines	74	■ Local Government Finance: Coronavirus	86
■ Prison Accommodation: Females	74	■ Local Government: Expenditure	86
■ Prisoners: Females	74	■ Local Housing Allowance: Homelessness	87
■ Prisoners: Pregnancy	75	■ Members: Correspondence	87
■ Prisons	76	■ Mobile Homes: Rents	88
■ Prisons: Distance Learning	76	■ Religious Buildings: Closures	88
■ Prisons: Industrial Health and Safety	77	■ Right to Buy Scheme	88
■ Prisons: Labour Turnover	77	NORTHERN IRELAND	89
■ Prisons: Security	77	■ Financial Services: Northern Ireland	89
■ Prisons: Staff	78	■ Northern Ireland Government	89
■ Prosecutions: Coronavirus	78	■ Northern Ireland Office: Quarantine	90
■ Remand in Custody: Children	79	■ Northern Ireland Office: Stonewall	90
■ Stonewall: Ministry of Justice	79	TRANSPORT	90
LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	80	■ Buses: Exhaust Emissions	90
■ Building Regulations: Floods	80	■ Department for Transport: Stonewall	91
■ Building Safety Fund	80	■ Great British Railways	92
■ Buildings: Insulation	81	■ Railways	93
■ Buildings: Safety	82	■ Railways: Bristol	93
■ Community Renewal Fund: Northern Ireland	83	■ Railways: Chester	93
■ Conservation Areas	83	■ Railways: Costs	94
■ Councillors: Safety	83	■ Railways: Fares	94
■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Quarantine	84		

■ Railways: Timetables	94	■ Social Security Benefits	109
■ Road Signs and Markings	95	■ Social Security Benefits: Death	110
■ Transport: Schools	97	■ Universal Credit	110
TREASURY	98	■ Universal Credit: Harrogate	113
■ Air Passenger Duty	98	MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS	114
■ Land Registry: Public Expenditure	98	BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	114
■ Property Development: Taxation	99	■ Oil: Exploration	114
■ Social Services: Finance	99	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	114
■ Third Sector: Finance	100	■ Afghanistan: Refugees	114
■ Treasury: Quarantine	100	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	116
WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	100	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	116
■ Gender: Personal Records	100	■ UK National Report on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons	116
WORK AND PENSIONS	101	HOME OFFICE	117
■ Access to Work Programme	101	■ Framework Document for the Domestic Abuse Commissioner	117
■ Department for Work and Pensions: Quarantine	102	■ Istanbul Convention Ratification: 2021 Report on Progress	119
■ Department for Work and Pensions: Stonewall	102	■ Shootings in Plymouth: Review of police firearms licensing processes	120
■ Employment: Ashfield	103	WORK AND PENSIONS	122
■ Inflation	104	■ Cold Weather Payments Scheme	122
■ Maternity Leave	105		
■ Personal Independence Payment	106		
■ Personal Independence Payment: Scotland	107		
■ Poverty: Coventry	108		

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: Peterhead

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[59075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what representations his Department received from the Scottish Government in support of the application for a carbon capture and storage site to be supported at Peterhead.

Greg Hands:

Ministers and officials from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy hold regular meetings with counterparts in the devolved administrations to discuss energy and decarbonisation policy.

■ Construction: Equipment

Emily Thornberry:

[\[62658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of potential shortages of building equipment and supplies over winter 2021-22; and what discussions he has had with suppliers and the construction sector on those potential shortages.

Lee Rowley:

At present, demand for building materials is outstripping supply due to a complex set of global issues. The sector is collectively working hard to maximise production, but is experiencing difficulties in keeping pace with demand due to issues including: global shipping congestion; delays at ports; lack and increasing price of containers; increasing costs; challenges recruiting into the industry, and; increasing energy prices.

The Government recognises the impact this situation is having on many smaller building firms and is working closely with the Construction Leadership Council (CLC)'s Product Availability Group to stress that the industry must work collaboratively during this challenging period, and to emphasise the importance of good forward-planning, as well as clear communication within the industry.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[63848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it is the policy of his Department to use COVAX to procure more doses of the covid-19 booster jab.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[63849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the procurement by the UK of the covid-19 booster jab through COVAX on developing countries.

George Freeman:

We have already secured the doses we need for everyone in the UK who requires a booster this Autumn/Winter

Mike Amesbury:

[\[63867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the feasibility of introducing nasal vaccines as part of the Government's covid-19 vaccination programme.

George Freeman:

The Government's approach to seeking a vaccine for COVID-19 has, from the outset, been to take a portfolio approach to vaccine procurement. This has allowed the Government to secure access to six different vaccine candidates across three vaccine types and from a range of developers. The aim is to ensure that the UK has access to the most promising vaccines currently in development, should any of these prove safe and effective.

While there are currently no approved nasal vaccines for COVID-19, the Government continues to engage with the market as new vaccines and vaccine technologies gain approval.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Quarantine**

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[61090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many of his Department's ministers have been exempted from quarantine in a hotel after returning to the UK from a covid-19 red list country to which they have travelled for the purposes of conducting official business.

George Freeman:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has granted no letters exempting BEIS Ministers returning from red list countries from managed quarantine. Two BEIS Ministers performing duties outside of their BEIS roles were granted exemptions for engagements by other Departments.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Stonewall**

Tim Loughton:

[\[61054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what funds have been paid by his Department to Stonewall in each of the last five years; and to what projects those funds were allocated.

George Freeman:

In the last five years, the Department has paid a membership fee to Stonewall of £2,500 + VAT every year as part of the Diversity Champions programme.

Membership of the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme is reviewed on an annual basis by the Diversity & Inclusion team and the LGBT+ Network and will be reviewed again ahead of the 2022-2023 financial year.

■ Fireworks: Regulation**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[62806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to ban the sale of high decibel fireworks to the public.

Paul Scully:

There is a comprehensive regulatory framework already in place for fireworks that the Government believes strikes the right balance for people to enjoy fireworks, whilst aiming to reduce risks and disturbances to both people and animals.

Existing legislation already limits the noise level of fireworks available to consumers to a maximum of 120 decibels.

Peter Gibson:[\[62851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department has taken to (a) limit the impact of disruptive fireworks and (b) update guidance for businesses selling fireworks to the public for private use.

Paul Scully:

The Government takes the issues associated with the sale and use of fireworks seriously. That is why there is a comprehensive framework already in place for fireworks which controls their availability and use, as well as setting a curfew and 120 decibel noise limits to reduce disturbance to both people and animals.

The 2021 fireworks public safety information programme is now underway. The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is working with animal welfare groups, safety charities, local authorities, and the industry, to promote the safe and considerate use of fireworks to the general public. The messaging also raises awareness of retailers' responsibilities when selling fireworks, including promoting the range of guidance available through Local Authority Trading Standards and published on GOV.UK.

■ Petrol: Newport West**Ruth Jones:**[\[62843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of effect of recent increases in petrol prices on people in Newport West constituency.

Greg Hands:

The Government is aware that the increase in petrol price may be difficult for families. Therefore, for the twelfth year in a row, at the Budget, fuel duty was frozen. This has saved the average driver in the Newport West constituency a cumulative £1,900 compared to the pre-2010 escalator.

■ Post Offices: York**Rachael Maskell:**[\[63779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he will take to tackle the decline in the number of post offices in York and the impact that decline has had on residents' access to services.

Paul Scully:

The Post Office network meets and exceeds Government-set access criteria which require, for instance, that 95% of the urban population is within one mile of the nearest post office. In order to help maintain services to each community, the Post Office uses solutions such as mobile or other types of outreach services where necessary. There are currently 11 post office branches within the York Central constituency.

■ Public Expenditure**Chi Onwurah:**[\[64603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to Table 2.2 of the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 Red Book, whether funding for (a) the Advanced Research & Invention Agency, (b) Help to Grow, (c) Future Fund: Breakthrough and (d) the National Productivity Investment Fund will come from Core Research, Innovate UK or another expenditure line.

George Freeman:

Table 2.2 of the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 Red Book relates to departmental R&D budgets.

Funding for the Advanced Research & Invention Agency is R&D spend and has its own ringfence, so does not come from either the Core Research or Innovate UK ringfences listed in table 2.2.

Funding for Help to Grow, and the Future Fund: Breakthrough is not R&D spend and they will be funded from the Programme and Financial Transactions Capital budget respectively.

Chi Onwurah:[\[64604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much of his Department's Capital DEL was spending on (a) Core Research, (b) Innovate UK, (c) EU Programmes Association, (d) the Department for Health and Social Care and (e) other in each of the last five years; and what the Resource DEL out run was in those periods.

George Freeman:

We understand this question to be based on the Table 2.2 of the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 Red Book which refers to overall Government R&D expenditure. In which case only a) Core Research, b) Innovate UK and c) EU Programme Association are relevant to BEIS.

The Core Research ringfence was only established by HM Treasury at the 2020 Spending Review. As a result we do not have an exact historical comparison over the last five years, but the majority of this funding is made up of UKRI Council funding. UKRI publishes details of its expenditure by Council, including Innovate UK, in its Annual Report and Accounts, which can be found in the House of Commons Library.

BEIS has allocated £1.3billion to fund EU programmes in 2021/22. Previously this was funded directly by HMT as part of our membership of the European Union

The Resource DEL outturn for all BEIS spend over the last five years was as follows;

£(M)	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Non-ringfenced	2,224,853	1,606,596	1,447,538	934,592	2,506,905	25,989,881
Ringfenced	268,978	355,397	266,467	310,652	331,470	275,918
Total	2,493,831	1,961,993	1,714,005	1,245,244	2,838,375	26,265,799

Please note that 2020/21 figures have yet to be signed off by the annual audit process and may be subject to change

■ Re-employment

Neale Hanvey:[\[63900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions his Department has had with companies or organisations in the (a) aviation, (b) retail, (c) higher education, (d) further education, (e) local authorities, (f) manufacturing, and (g) energy sectors on the practice of fire and rehire; and if he will make a statement.

Neale Hanvey:[\[63901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent representations he has received from companies or organisations in the (a) aviation, (b) retail, (c) higher education, (d) further education, (e) local authorities, (f) manufacturing and (g) energy sectors on the practice of fire and rehire; and if he will make a statement.

Neale Hanvey:[\[63903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what representations he has received from (a) individual companies, (b) employers

organisations and (c) trade unions on the practice of fire and rehire; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

This Government has been consistently clear that we do not accept the inappropriate use by some employers of fire and rehire as a negotiation tactic.

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State meets regularly with a diverse range of stakeholders including trade unions and employers to discuss various policy matters, across the sectors covered by the Department. The Department has also welcomed further evidence from trade unions and employers on the nature and scale of the issue.

■ **Satellites: North East**

Paul Howell:

[\[63918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to support the North East Space Hub.

George Freeman:

The recently published National Space Strategy set out our commitment to supporting businesses across all parts of the UK, helping to develop clusters based on areas of local excellence and addressable market opportunities.

The UK Space Agency has co-funded a Centre of Excellence for Satellite applications in the North-east, in partnership with the Satellite Applications Catapult, since 2014. This has helped to forge collaborative partnerships across the region's space sector.

This has provided a strong platform and evidence base for the Northeast Space Hub and the region clearly has an important role to play to achieve our ambitions of making the UK one of the most innovative and attractive space economies in the world.

■ **Self-employed: Adoption**

Tommy Sheppard:

[\[64651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason self-employed people are ineligible for statutory adoption pay.

Paul Scully:

So far, the Government has focused on supporting employed parents as they do not generally have the same level of flexibility over their work as self-employed parents do. But we recognise that affordability may limit the time away from work that some self-employed adopters can take, and this is why statutory adoption guidance says that Local Authorities should consider making a payment - equivalent to Maternity Allowance - in cases where adopters do not qualify for any statutory payment because of their self-employment. Prospective adopters are also entitled to an assessment of their family's needs and can benefit from a range of support including

discretionary means-tested financial support, advice, information and counselling, and support services.

■ **UK Research and Innovation: Mental Health**

Tommy Sheppard:

[\[64650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether UK Research and Innovation plans to increase its funding for research on mental health in the 2021-22 Parliamentary session.

George Freeman:

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funds a range of research programmes and activities focussed on mental health. For example, the recently announced £24m investment in seven adolescent mental health research programmes that will run for four years from September 2021, and a £2m investment in a mental health data research hub in partnership with Health Data Research UK. These and wider programmes and networks funded through UKRI will continue to develop our understanding of mental health.

UKRI's overall budget is set by BEIS for each financial year as part of the R&D allocations process. The allocations for financial year 2021-22 were published on 27 May 2021.

New funding in this area will be subject to UKRI's overall budget following the R&D allocations process for financial year 2022-23.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Cabinet Office: Ministers**

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[61089\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many of his Department's ministers have been exempted from quarantine in a hotel after returning to the UK from a covid-19 red list country to which they have travelled for the purposes of conducting official business.

Michael Ellis:

Details of Ministers' overseas travel are published quarterly on GOV.UK. All travel is arranged in line with official regulations.

Ministers are able to claim an exemption from travel restrictions under the 'Crown Servants or government contractors exemption.' The full text of this exemption can be found under the Government guidance Coronavirus (COVID-19): jobs that qualify for travel exemptions, available on GOV.UK.

■ Government Departments: Conference Centres

Rachael Maskell:

[\[61174\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress the Government has made on establishment of a Government Conference Centre; and what steps have been taken to ensure a due diligence assessment of proposals for that Conference Centre, including for its potential siting in York.

Michael Ellis:

In February 2021, the Government Property Agency (GPA) considered establishing a conference centre in York. As part of this ongoing work, a number of aspects are being considered more broadly, including commercial considerations.

COP26

■ Climate Change: Debts

Stephen Morgan:

[\[62824\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what recent assessment he has made of the levels of climate finance debt borne by the poorest countries.

Stephen Morgan:

[\[62825\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what recent steps he has taken to mobilise long-term climate finance of a further US\$100 billion a year by 2020, as agreed at the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Change Conference.

Michael Ellis:

Throughout the UK's COP26 and G7 Presidencies, we have made significant progress. The \$100bn Delivery Plan, which the COP President has asked Germany and Canada to lead, shows that the goal to mobilise \$100 billion per year for developing countries will be met by 2023 at the latest, continuing on a rising trajectory through to 2025. In the five years to 2025, \$500bn will be mobilised. This is significant progress, driven by ambitious new climate finance commitments that have been made in recent months.

We have also prioritised the issue of fiscal space and debt sustainability, for example in engagements with the IMF, World Bank and climate vulnerable countries. We welcome the progress that has been made. The IMF has implemented an historic \$650bn allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) to boost global liquidity and provide fiscal space. G7 Leaders have also agreed to consider options for voluntary SDR channelling of \$100bn to further support developing and vulnerable countries. The G20 and Paris Club agreed to a further final extension of the Debt-Service Suspension Initiative in April and have continued implementation of the Common Framework for Debt Treatments.

■ Climate Change: Finance

Catherine West:

[\[62800\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he is taking to help ensure that new and additional finance for loss and damage is included in the discussions on the new post-2025 climate finance target at COP26.

Michael Ellis:

At both Ministerial and official level, we continue to raise the need for finance and action on loss and damage, noting that relevant finance for averting, minimising and addressing loss and damage comes from sources under and outside the UNFCCC.

As COP26 incoming Presidency, the UK has convened seven consultations which have devoted substantial time to the issue of operationalising the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage and included the question of finance to enable its work. The COP President also convened dedicated Ministerial sessions on loss and damage at the July Ministerial in London and at PreCOP. At these sessions, the issue of finance was discussed, including the post-2025 goal, with a view to political leaders providing the strategic framing for negotiator-level discussions at COP26.

As part of the COP25 Presidency and incoming COP26 Presidency joint informal work plan on finance, we have undertaken informal negotiator-level consultations on the post-2025 climate finance goal with all Parties that have expressed an interest. Public reflections notes on these engagements are available on the UNFCCC website. The COP26 Presidency role is to facilitate balanced progress on this item in Glasgow, reflecting the positions of all Parties as best possible.

■ Environment Protection

Feryal Clark:

[\[60522\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what recent steps he has taken to help ensure that (a) climate change and (b) ecological destruction are tackled in an integrated way at COP26.

Alok Sharma:

During the World Leaders' Summit at COP26, there will be a event focused on bringing together ambitious governments, companies, financial actors, and non-state leaders to raise ambition on forests and land-use, in a way that delivers for the climate, people, economic development and biodiversity. The event will demonstrate how action on forests and land-use can contribute to keeping the 1.5 temperature goal in sight, to supporting sustainable livelihoods, and to meeting shared promises on adaptation and finance.

COP26 will also include a Nature Day highlighting action on forests, agriculture and wider land-use to address the climate crisis. We are working with international partners to promote sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture; to mobilise increased and more targeted finance for nature; and to build the political consensus for ambitious action.

At the G7 summit, leaders committed to an ambitious 'Nature Compact', which includes working to accelerate an inclusive global transition to sustainable and climate resilient agriculture, as well as committing to achieving net zero emissions no later than 2050.

The UK has also played a central role in promoting the 'Leaders' Pledge for Nature', which now has over 80 signatories. The pledge sets out ten urgent actions to put nature on a path to recovery by 2030, addressing both biodiversity loss and climate change.

■ **Environment Protection: Developing Countries**

Helen Hayes:

[\[62788\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he is taking to ensure COP26 delivers the commitments required to help farmers in the global south to (a) adapt to the impacts of climate change and (b) transition to more sustainable environmental practices.

Helen Hayes:

[\[62789\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using climate finance to support farmers in the global south whose businesses are disrupted by the impacts of climate change.

Michael Ellis:

The Just Rural Transition coalition launched at the UN Climate Action Summit in 2019. Since then, the UK and World Bank have co-convened a series of Government-to-Government Policy Dialogues in order to accelerate the transition to sustainable agriculture. These dialogues will culminate in an event at COP26 which will bring together Governments, policy makers and farmers in a framework for action to accelerate transition to sustainable agriculture.

The UK has also committed to doubling its spend on International Climate Finance (ICF) to £11.6 billion over the next five years; £3 billion of which will support outcomes on nature and the environment, including through agriculture. These investments will help the most vulnerable people, including farmers, adapt and build resilience against the impacts of climate change. FCDO's agriculture portfolio has contributed substantially towards these results through interventions such as the introduction of drought resilient crops, irrigation systems and agricultural extension.

■ **UN Climate Conference 2021: Children and Young People**

Ruth Jones:

[\[61212\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he has taken to involve children and young people in the preparation for the COP26 summit.

Michael Ellis:

The UK COP26 Presidency is committed to amplifying the voices of young people from across the world in the lead up to and at COP26 this November. The COP President committed to meeting with young people on international visits over the last

year and has established the COP26 Civil Society and Youth Advisory Council, which he chairs together with two youth representatives.

On the road to COP26, we have worked with our COP26 partner, the Government of Italy, to deliver the 'Youth4Climate2021: Driving Ambition' event held in Milan in September, and we are endorsing the 16th UN Conference of Youth event held in Glasgow.

At COP26, we will host a dedicated Youth & Public Empowerment Day to elevate youth voices and demonstrate the critical role of education and empowerment to drive climate action. We have been working closely with YOUNGO (the official children's and youth constituency to the UNFCCC) and diverse youth organisations to co-create the events programme for the day.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Mascots

Luke Pollard:

[\[62838\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, how much was spent on the seal mascot for COP26.

Michael Ellis:

The seal mascot is owned by Glasgow City Council. The seal is an existing mascot that has been in use since the Glasgow 2018 European Championships. The cost of the COP26 uniform came from the volunteering programme budget; this will be laid out along with other costs for COP26 after the event.

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Cybercrime

Jim Shannon:

[\[62728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent steps he has taken in response to the Government's Afghanistan email data breach.

James Heappey:

Following the data breach which occurred on 20 September 2021 the Defence Secretary instigated an investigation into data handling within the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) team. A thorough review of processes has been undertaken and changes made to prevent a recurrence.

All ARAP eligible individuals whose details were involved have been contacted and provided with additional security advice. We are not aware that anyone has come to harm as a result of this breach. We continue to do everything we can to support the relocation to the UK of all ARAP-eligible families.

■ Ajax Vehicles: Technology

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[64553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the headset used for the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle is being used currently on any other defence platform.

Jeremy Quin:

The in-service headset used during trials of Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicles is also in use on other armoured vehicle platforms including Warrior, all variants of Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance (Tracked), AS90, Bulldog, Terrier, Viking, Multiple Launch Rocket System, Beach Recovery Vehicle, Titan, Trojan and FUCHS platforms.

As part of ongoing investigations into headsets used on all in-service armoured vehicles, a Safety Panel has taken the precautionary measure to limit the time crews may operate Warrior and Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance (Tracked) platforms pending further investigation.

■ Armed Forces: Climate Change**John Healey:**[\[62580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 14 of his Department's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach published on 30 March 2021, how much of the £6.6 billion allocated to defence R&D over the next four years he plans to spend on improving suitability and equipping the armed forces for a climate-changed world between +2° and 4°C.

Jeremy Quin:

Work is ongoing to deliver all of the activities covered in the strategic approach with delivery plans working to the timelines set out in the Initial Action Plan. The impact of Climate Change is being considered within these activities and includes spend looking at "improving suitability and equipping the armed forces for a climate-changed world between +2° and 4°C" across a range of capabilities and Defence Lines of Development. Due to the disaggregation of this funding, it is not possible to state exactly how much of the £6.6billion R&D budget is allocated specifically to this task.

John Healey:[\[62581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 14 of his Department's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach published on 30 March 2021, what steps he has taken to improve medical planning to ensure that defence adapts its understanding of the different psychological, disease and injury risks resulting from climate change.

James Heappey:

Climate change presents a number of risks. Severe weather events, for example, could threaten the health of Service personnel on operations and cause widespread destruction and humanitarian crises. Heat injury among Service personnel has been a Defence Medical Services (DMS) research and policy focus for some time and will continue to be so.

Increasing DMS involvement in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations will require clinical skills different to those in warfighting. DMS training is continually being enhanced to address these changing requirements.

Senior DMS clinicians and academics offer advice throughout the planning and delivery phases of military operations and exercises, to ensure that medical planning can adapt. The Joint Medical Operational Planners course is mandatory training for medical planners. It is constantly reviewed to ensure current understanding of the environments to which personnel deploy.

A Military Global Health Engagement course is also provided to DMS personnel. We collaborate with partner nations to ensure a broad awareness of emerging global health issues.

■ Armed Forces: Housing

John Healey: [\[64544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many buildings on the Defence Estate that currently have flammable cladding fixed to them are (a) Service Living Accommodation and (b) Service Family Accommodation.

Jeremy Quin:

27 high rise buildings (defined as being six floors and over) have been confirmed as having an external walling system that contains combustible components. All 27 are Single Living Accommodation.

MOD has also identified a further 728 low rise buildings that may potentially have an external walling system that contains combustible insulation, of which 188 are SFA and 567 are SLA which includes RFCA and training facilities. The list of buildings in scope is being verified and investigative works progressed.

■ Army: Scotland

Kenny MacAskill: [\[63894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the 77th Brigade were active in Scotland in 2014.

James Heappey:

77th Brigade was not formed until 2015.

■ Army: Vehicles

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[64554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many vehicles belonging to the British Army are currently in storage.

Jeremy Quin:

There are currently 5,589 vehicles held in storage by the British Army. This number includes vehicles held at a mixture of high or low readiness as appropriate, as well as those identified for disposal.

■ Defence: Carbon Emissions

John Healey:

[\[62583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 15 of his Department's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach published on 30 March 2021, what carbon targets have been set across defence organisations.

Jeremy Quin:

Work is ongoing to deliver all of the activities covered in the strategic approach with delivery plans working to the timelines set out in the Initial Action Plan. Defence Carbon Targets for estate and domestic business travel emissions are currently set through the Government Greening Commitments.

John Healey:

[\[62588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 21 of his Department's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach published on 30 March 2021, whether the defence-wide consultation on future disaggregation of carbon targets has been opened.

Jeremy Quin:

Work is ongoing to deliver all of the activities covered in the strategic approach with delivery plans working to the timelines set out in the Initial Action Plan. Defence Carbon Targets for estate and domestic business travel emissions are set through the Government Greening Commitments which will be disaggregated between Commands for financial year 2022-23.

■ Ministry of Defence: Buildings

John Healey:

[\[62589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 22 of his Department's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach published on 30 March 2021, when he plans to announce the new policy on standards for new builds for the defence estate.

Jeremy Quin:

In order to deliver a new policy on standards for new builds on the defence estate considerable research is needed to ensure the most appropriate solutions are chosen. Work is currently underway to deliver the evidence needed to support the delivery of net zero policy in respect of new builds. This work includes the capability to conduct whole life carbon assessment which is needed to ensure sound infrastructure investment decisions are made and which will need to be implemented in order for any new standards to be fully effective. Pending this Defence continues to monitor and review the operation of its policy in this respect to ensure that all measures that can be taken in order to meet the net zero ambition are taken into consideration.

John Healey:

[64541]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the locations of buildings on the defence estate that have flammable cladding.

Jeremy Quin:

There are 27 high rise buildings (defined as being of six floors or over) on the defence estate that have currently been confirmed as having an external wall system that contains combustible components. These are shown in the table below:

NUMBER OF BUILDINGS	LOCATION
22	HMNB Clyde
1	Hyde Park Barracks
1	Royal Centre for Defence Medicine, Birmingham
2	HMS Nelson
1	HMS Drake

MOD has also identified a further 728 low rise buildings that may potentially have an external walling system that contains combustible insulation. Investigative work is ongoing.

John Healey:

[64542]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when officials in his Department were made aware of the presence of flammable cladding on buildings in the Defence Estate.

Jeremy Quin:

Ministry of Defence Officials were first made aware that one Single Living Accommodation block at HMS Nelson was not compliant with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government guidance on cladding in July 2019.

John Healey:

[64543]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many buildings on the defence estate with flammable cladding are undergoing work to safely remove the cladding from the building.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence is carrying out remedial work, or investigating remedial options, on 27 high rise buildings (defined as being six floors and over) confirmed as having an external wall system that contains combustible components.

■ Ministry of Defence: Land Use

John Healey:

[\[62584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 16 of his Department's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach published on 30 March 2021, what steps he has taken to change defence's land management practices to protect the environment to ensure carbon offset and improve biodiversity and environmental resilience to climate change.

Jeremy Quin:

Work is ongoing to deliver all of the activities covered in the strategic approach with delivery plans working to the timelines set out in the Initial Action Plan. The MOD is currently undertaking a phased Natural Capital assessment to better understand the existing assets and potential for the defence estate to sequester carbon and enhance biodiversity.

John Healey:

[\[62590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 22 of his Department's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach published on 30 March 2021, how many test and trial sites have been established on the tenanted estate.

Jeremy Quin:

Following consultations with DEFRA over their proposed Environmental Land Management (ELMs) scheme, MOD has identified two dedicated test and trial site locations at Catterick and Salisbury Plain East. This will involve 20 farmers at both sites (40 in total) .

Subject to confirmation of funding and final approval from both MOD and DEFRA, the trial is planned to commence before the end of 2021 and conclude by February 2023.

■ Ministry of Defence: Public Appointments

John Healey:

[\[62587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 21 of his Department's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach published on 30 March 2021, when his Department plans to appoint a sustainability non-executive director.

Jeremy Quin:

Lt Gen (Rtd) Nugee was appointed as the Non-Executive Director with a particular focus on Climate Change and Sustainability on 1 March 2021.

■ Ministry of Defence: Quarantine

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[61101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many of his Department's ministers have been exempted from quarantine in a hotel after returning to the UK from a covid-19 red list country to which they have travelled for the purposes of conducting official business.

James Heappey:

Two Ministry of Defence Ministers have been exempted from quarantine in a hotel after returning to the UK from a covid-19 red list country to which they have travelled for the purposes of conducting official business.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Staff****John Healey:**[\[62586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 21 of his Department's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach published on 30 March 2021, what progress he has made in establishing an adequately resourced head office team whose activities are governed at the highest levels of defence and who oversee delivery of the strategic approach and a future implementation plan; and who will lead that team.

Jeremy Quin:

The new Director of Climate Change and Sustainability was formally appointed in September 2021 and the majority of the directorate have been appointed and should be in post this year. The Terms of Reference of the MOD's Defence Safety and Environment Committee, chaired by the Permanent Secretary, have been amended to better reflect the significance of climate change and sustainability.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Stonewall****Tim Loughton:**[\[61052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what funds have been paid by his Department to Stonewall in each of the last five years; and to what projects those funds were allocated.

Leo Docherty:

No donations are made to the charity; however, the Ministry of Defence (MOD), the MOD Police, the Royal Navy, Army, and Royal Air Force are all members of Stonewall's 'diversity champions programme' for which membership costs an annual fee. In addition, a number of courses and professional development sessions are purchased on an ad-hoc basis, primarily by the LGBT+ networks. Estimated total expenditure by the MOD can be found in the table below:

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL
2017/18	£23,181
2018/19	£15,150
2019/20	£11,790
2020/21	£18,691
2021/22 (to date)	£11,500

■ Nuclear Submarines: Decommissioning

John Healey: [\[64539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department has taken to decommission the retired nuclear submarines housed at Devonport.

John Healey: [\[64540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the costs associated with decommissioning the retired nuclear submarines housed at Devonport.

Jeremy Quin:

As set out in the United Kingdom's future nuclear deterrent: the 2020 update to Parliament, we continue to develop the submarine dismantling techniques necessary to meet all safety and sustainability standards and establish the long-term solution that provides best value for the taxpayer. Our commitment to the safe, secure, environmentally sound and cost-effective defueling and dismantling of all our decommissioned nuclear submarines as soon as practicably possible remains undiminished.

A demonstrator submarine is being used to define and refine the dismantling process. At Rosyth, initial dismantling, through the removal of low-level radioactive waste from the first two submarines, Swiftsure and Resolution, has been successfully and safely completed. As the unique approach is developed, work continues with the removal of low-level radioactive waste from a third submarine, Revenge. We expect to have a fully developed process for steady state submarine dismantling ready by 2026. As the demonstrator programme progresses, the outcomes will provide more certainty in the future costs to dismantle the Devonport-based submarines. It is not MOD policy to pre-announce the funding of its projects for reasons of protecting commercial interests.

■ Oman: Military Attachés

John Healey: [\[62576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 15 of the Defence Command Paper, published 22 March 2021, what plans he has to increase the number of defence attachés to Oman.

James Heappey:

None. There are no current plans to expand the Defence Section in Oman.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ 5G: Finance****Chi Onwurah:**[\[64607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what funds she plans to make available for the 5G Supply Chain Diversification Strategy; and whether those funds will come from resource or capital DEL.

Julia Lopez:

Last year, the government kickstarted an infrastructure revolution, publishing the National Infrastructure Strategy and laying out plans to upgrade road, rail and digital infrastructure. The multiyear settlement of £100 billion included approximately £1.4 billion of digital spend by DCMS including on gigabit broadband, 4G, Local Full Fibre Networks, 5G Diversification and Testbeds and Trials Programmes.

As part of the Spending Review, the government announced the UK will benefit from improved digital connectivity and mobile coverage through investment to deliver one of the largest ever upgrades to our digital infrastructure. The settlement includes £250 million over the Spending Review period to ensure the security and resilience of digital infrastructure networks. This builds on funding this year that has supported the delivery of the first stages of the 5G Supply Chain Diversification Strategy, including early steps to accelerate the development of Open RAN technologies, including investing £30 million in a Future RAN Competition (FRANC) and opening the doors of the SmartRAN Open Network Interoperability Centre (SONIC Labs).

The government will set out further details in due course.

■ Arts: Universal Credit**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[62601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the impact on the creative and performing arts sector of the withdrawal of the £20 uplift to the standard allowance of universal credit.

Julia Lopez:

We have not made an assessment on the impact of the removal of the £20 Universal Credit Uplift on the creative and performing arts sector. However, to ensure that work always pays, the government announced a reduction to the taper rate from 63% to 55% at the Spending Review, meaning claimants from sectors across the economy will be able to keep an additional 8p for every £1 of net income they earn.

The government is committed to supporting the creative and performing arts sectors, recently announcing a further £42m of investment in the creative industries at the Spending Review to help grow businesses in the creative industries and provide opportunity for people across the country. Additionally we will be funding the £800 million Live Events Reinsurance Scheme and an extension to the £500 million Film & TV Production Restart Scheme, to enable UK events and productions to thrive and plan with certainty.

■ BBC: Stonewall

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[63845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department's policy is to withdraw the BBC from Stonewalls' Diversity Champions programme.

Julia Lopez:

The BBC is operationally and editorially independent from the government and the government cannot intervene in the BBC's day-to-day operations.

The BBC's membership of external schemes is a decision for the BBC.

■ Broadband: Voucher Schemes

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[62707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of using some of the £5 billion allocated to Project Gigabit to create broadband vouchers that will enable network builders to upgrade the non-commercial parts of an exchange area at the same time as they are deploying full fibre to the commercial parts.

Julia Lopez:

The government is investing £5 billion through Project Gigabit so that communities which will not gain gigabit connectivity through commercial roll-out are not left behind. Commercial delivery is going further and faster following announcements by suppliers this year and will reach most UK homes and businesses while Project Gigabit is targeted at the remainder.

As part of Project Gigabit, the government is investing up to £210 million into the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS). The eligibility criteria for vouchers was changed in April 2021 when we moved from the previous scheme to the new Project Gigabit criteria which are focused on ensuring we only provide public subsidy in areas which are least likely to get commercial coverage. We will conduct a performance review every six months to monitor the performance and effectiveness of the vouchers scheme, including the eligibility criteria.

■ Freedom of Information: Complaints

Dan Carden:

[\[64717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans she has to support the Information Commissioner's Office to tackle the backlog of Freedom of Information complaints.

Julia Lopez:

The Freedom of Information Act is regulated and enforced independently of the government by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

The ICO responds to all Freedom of Information complaints with an email acknowledging receipt, which sets out current expected timescales for a response. All complaints are triaged: investigations into relatively simple cases usually commence within 30 days of receipt, while more complex cases may take longer for an ICO officer to investigate.

The ICO currently receives Grant In Aid funding from the government for its statutory responsibilities in relation to the Freedom of Information Act.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Robert Largan: [\[64755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to respond to the enquiry from the hon. Member for High Peak of 9 July 2021, reference RL21341.

Julia Lopez:

A response was issued on 28 October 2021 under the case reference MC2021/13876. We apologise for the delay in responding.

■ **Ofcom: Staff**

Michael Fabricant: [\[63651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of Ofcom's conflict of interest policies to curb regulators moving to jobs at the organisations that they regulated while at Ofcom.

Michael Fabricant: [\[63652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate she has made of the number of Ofcom staff who have left Ofcom to work for organisations that are regulated by Ofcom over the last five years.

Michael Fabricant: [\[63653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with Ofcom with regard to staff from the regulator moving to jobs at organisations regulated by Ofcom.

Julia Lopez:

Ofcom is responsible for the recruitment, retention and terms and conditions of its staff and as such is not a matter for the Secretary of State to discuss with Ofcom.

Ofcom has a robust and comprehensive conflict of interest policy, managed and regularly reviewed by its Executive Board, that upholds high regulatory standards of independence, impartiality and integrity. The policy and procedures in place enable Ofcom's Executive to take swift and appropriate action should a situation emerge where an employee leaves to join a company it regulates.

In the past two years Ofcom has placed circa six staff on immediate garden leave as they have left to join companies which Ofcom regulates or will regulate in the future.

Ofcom does not have data immediately available for a five year period but can provide this on request once available.

EDUCATION

■ British Students Abroad

John Howell:

[\[903954\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to help increase access to opportunities to study overseas.

Alex Burghart:

This Government recognises the value of supporting students to study and do work placements overseas because of the benefits it brings to the UK and our international partners.

Student mobility can provide life changing opportunities while creating a generation of globally minded young people with broadened horizons. It enhances productivity and employment outcomes for young people while also helping to build international relationships between students and institutions.

That is why we introduced the UK's £110 million international mobility programme, the Turing Scheme, which is providing the opportunity for more than 40,000 students in schools, colleges and universities to study and work abroad this academic year in over 150 destinations.

The Turing Scheme specifically seeks to support participation of UK students from disadvantaged backgrounds and areas of historical low participation in student mobility. More than 19,000, 48%, of the placements approved for funding are for participants from disadvantaged backgrounds. This will help to ensure these life-changing opportunities are accessible to everyone across the country.

■ Children: Social Services

Munira Wilson:

[\[64746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional (a) funding and (b) support his Department has provided to meet (i) the costs and (ii) the needs of vulnerable children in social care placements over the past 12 months.

Will Quince:

The government is committed to ensuring that vulnerable children and young people have safe and stable homes, to give them the highest chances of success.

Last year, the government provided an additional £6 billion of funding directly to councils to support them with the immediate and long-term impacts of COVID-19 spending pressures.

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced at this year's Budget, that government is providing local authorities with £4.8 billion of new grant

funding over the next Spending Review period. This will enable the sector to maintain vital frontline services, including children's social care.

£259 million was also announced over the Spending Review period to maintain capacity and expand provision in secure and open residential children's homes. This will provide high quality, safe homes for some of our most vulnerable children and young people. This is a continuation of the 2021-22 financial years funding of up to £24 million to maintain capacity and expand provision in secure children's homes, and up to £6.5 million for open residential children's homes.

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[903951\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the need to identify and provide support services for children with a parent serving a term of imprisonment.

Will Quince:

We recognise the impact that a parent going to prison can have on a child's learning, behaviour, mental health, and wellbeing. This is why statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children is clear that anyone who has concerns about a child's welfare should make a referral to local authority children's social care.

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

Statutory guidance for schools (Keeping Children Safe in Education) is clear that staff should consider the additional needs of children with a family member in prison or who are affected by parental offending. The guidance highlights the risk of poor outcomes including poverty, stigma, isolation, and poor mental health. It signposts staff to the National Information Centre on Children of Offenders website which provides specialist staff advice and resources to support professionals working with offenders' children and their families, to help mitigate negative consequences for those children.

■ Higher Education: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[\[62771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for higher education.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[62772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a reduction in student tuition fees.

Michelle Donelan:

The department remains committed to a sustainable funding model for the higher education system which supports high value provision, meets the skills needs of the country and maintains the world-class reputation of UK higher education.

We continue to consider carefully the recommendations made by the independent panel that reported to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding. This includes their proposals relating to changes to tuition fee caps and the level of Strategic Priorities Grant funding that is paid directly to providers by the Office for Students. The department plans to set out a full conclusion to the Review in due course.

The government has announced that maximum tuition fee caps for academic year 2022/23 will be frozen at their current levels to deliver better value for students and to keep the cost of higher education under control.

■ Holiday Activities and Food Programme**Peter Kyle:**[\[63783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children took part in the Holiday Activities and Food programme in the 2021 summer holidays in (a) total and (b) each local authority in England.

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. 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. The department has also 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.

■ Pre-school Education**Barbara Keeley:**[\[62680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2021 to Question 51582, on Pre-school Education, and with reference to the Action for Children report entitled Beyond reach: Barriers to accessing early years services for children, published on 21 September 2021, what plans he has to improve accessibility to early years services.

Barbara Keeley:[\[62681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2021 to Question 51660, on Pre-school Education, what assessment he has made of the consistency of early years services for children up to five years old across the UK.

Barbara Keeley:

[62682]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2021 to Question 51659, on Pre-school Education: North West, what assessment he has made of the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on the accessibility of early years services in the North West region.

Will Quince:

Access to the government's entitlement offers remain high. As of January 2021, 87% of all three year olds and 93% of all four year olds, including those in a reception place, were registered for some funded early education with 30 hours childcare benefitting around 330,000 children in January 2021.

In response to the Action for Children report entitled 'Beyond reach: Barriers to accessing early years services for children' published on 21 September 2021, the most common reason for not using childcare is preference. Around seven in ten (69%) parents who were not using childcare said they would rather look after their children themselves, while only 16% said it was because they could not afford childcare. More information can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/853358/CEYSP_2019_Report.pdf#:~:text=Responses%20to%20the%20Childcare%20and%20Early%20Years%20Survey,prepare%20their%20child%20for%20school%20%2830%25%29%20%28Table%203.6%29.

The department's Parent Poll, conducted by Ipsos MORI in July 2021, shows that more than nine in ten (94%) parents whose child used formal childcare before COVID-19 reported that their child was using formal childcare at the time of the interview. In addition, when comparing formal childcare use with the previous term (January to March 2021), 93% of children using formal childcare in the previous term were using formal childcare in July 2021, and just 5% were using no childcare at all (neither formal nor informal childcare). Among parents whose child was not receiving formal childcare in July 2021, the most common reasons were that the parent never uses formal childcare (23%), that the childcare available was too expensive (21%), and that childcare was not needed as the parent(s) was on maternity or paternity leave (18%). Only 6% of parents whose child was not receiving formal childcare said they would like to use formal childcare but have not been able to find a suitable provider. This is only approximately 2% of all parents. More information can be found here: <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/childcare-use-perceived-impact-child-development-information-working-home-and-awareness-and-use>.

We recognise that the needs of many parents will have changed dramatically in line with the reopening of the economy and the department continues to investigate how we can improve these experiences for parents.

■ Sixth Form Education: Greater London

Marsha De Cordova:

[60507]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of top sixth form schools in the Central London area that are available to girls.

Alex Burghart:

Across inner London there are 60 state funded schools with sixth forms and further education colleges which are rated Outstanding by Ofsted. Of these, 45 are accessible to boys and 54 accessible to girls[1].

Local authorities have broad duties to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education or training. This includes securing sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people in their area who are over compulsory school age but under 19, or up to age 25 for learners with an education, health and care plan.

The government's free schools programme has opened eight 16-19 free schools in inner London with places available to female students and a further 21 mainstream free schools that have 16-19 places. All of these schools that have been inspected to date have been judged Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. This includes the London Academy of Excellence in Newham, a 16-19 free school judged Outstanding by Ofsted, which in the 2020/21 academic year had 57% female students. Proposals for approving further free schools will be set out in due course.

Nationally, capital funding of £83 million has also been made available in the 2021/22 financial year to existing post-16 providers, including sixth form colleges, to enable them to accommodate the demographic increase in 16-19 year olds.

[1] Some single sex schools may have mixed sixth forms. This is not reflected in the figures provided above.

■ Special Educational Needs

Kim Leadbeater:

[61233]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities are supported to meet (a) timescales and (b) legal thresholds for assessments for child Education and Health Care plans.

Will Quince:

The special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice makes clear that local authorities must give their decision, in response to any request for an education health care (EHC) needs assessment, within a maximum of six weeks from when the request was received or the point at which a child or young person was brought to the local authority's attention.

This year, local authorities have access to £51.3 billion to deliver their core services, including SEND services. Local authorities have the flexibility to spend according to local needs and priorities, including to undertake EHC needs assessments.

The Department for Education supports, and where needed challenges, local authorities to meet their statutory duties for SEND where there are long standing delays.

In addition, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission continue with their full inspection programme and officials, working with our team of SEND advisers and colleagues in NHS England, continue to provide support and challenge to help improve performance. Depending on the underlying issues a local authority faces, we commission specialist support from our delivery partners, or facilitate or fund peer to peer or regional support to address issues.

Olivia Blake:

[64758]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he will take to ensure that college students with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities but without High Needs funding, will receive the same level of support they received at school.

Alex Burghart:

Under Section 66 of the Children and Families Act 2014, if a registered student at a college has special educational needs, the college has a statutory duty to use their best endeavours to secure that the special educational provision called for by the student's special educational needs is made. They must fulfil this duty for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), regardless of whether the student has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

When deciding on the provision to be made for a particular young person with SEND, colleges and local authorities must have regard to the SEND Code of Practice. The Code is clear that professionals working with young people with SEND should involve the parents and the young person at every stage of planning and reviewing support, and take into account their wishes, feelings and perspectives.

The department is committed to providing extra funding for students who need extra help. This includes, in the 2021/22 academic year, almost £532 million to help colleges, schools and other providers to support disadvantaged 16 to 19-year olds.

This includes a block of funding to support students with additional needs, including moderate learning difficulties and disabilities, with funding to institutions based on the number of students with low prior attainment in maths and/or English. Providers, including colleges, decide exactly how to use this funding.

Learners aged over 19 are funded through the Adult Education Budget. Providers can access learning support funds to enable them to meet the additional needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to meet the costs of reasonable adjustments, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Support can cover a range of needs, including an assessment for dyslexia, funding to pay for specialist equipment or helpers and arranging signers or note takers. If a learner needs significant levels of support to start or continue learning, and has support costs of more than £19,000 in a funding year, there is a mechanism to enable providers to claim exceptional learning support.

■ Special Educational Needs: Reviews

Olivia Blake:

[\[64759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he will set out in the forthcoming SEND Review to ensure a smooth and supportive transition from school to college for young people with Education Health and Care Plans.

Will Quince:

The department is determined to improve the outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) with a focus on preparing them for later life and adulthood, including their transition into further education.

The government is working at pace, and extensively with children and young people with SEND, parents and carers, as well as those working in local government, education, health and care services to ensure we get this right, and that proposals from our SEND Review lead to improvements in outcomes for children and young people.

The department is committed to concluding the Review and will publish proposals for full public consultation in the coming months.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Air Pollution

Ruth Jones:

[\[61203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of his Department's work is dedicated to tackling toxic air.

Jo Churchill:

Improving air quality is a priority for this Government. We are committed to tackling a diversity of pollutants which harm human health and the environment. My department is taking urgent action through our ambitious Clean Air Strategy, our landmark Environment Bill and delivery of our £3.8 billion programme to clean up transport and tackle roadside NO₂ pollution.

Ruth Jones:

[\[61204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many times he has discussed air quality with the Prime Minister since July 2019.

Jo Churchill:

The Secretary of State has regular discussions with the Prime Minister on all Defra matters, including air quality.

■ Breed Specific Legislation

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[63809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of conducting a review of (a) Breed-Specific Legislation and (b) the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 by the end of 2021.

Jo Churchill:

Defra commissioned Middlesex University to examine measures to reduce dog attacks and promote responsible ownership of all breeds of dogs. The research, which will be published shortly, considers different approaches and the effectiveness of current dog control measures.

■ Buildings: Land Drainage

Olivia Blake: [\[64757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to implement Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to require the mandatory implementation of sustainable drainage systems for new developments to help achieve biodiversity net gain targets.

Rebecca Pow:

In August 2021 the Government announced a review of the case for implementing Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, which started this autumn. This review will look at the benefits and impacts of implementation as well as alternative methods for ensuring that sustainable drainage systems, or SuDS, are incorporated in future developments and maintained after construction.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Correspondence

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[56481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to improve his Department's response times to correspondence from members of the public.

Victoria Prentis:

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.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Local Government Finance**

Mr Clive Betts:

[56779]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many funds are allocated to local authorities by his Department through a process of competitive bidding; and if he will publish the names of those funds.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government believes that providing councils with the freedom to use funding in a way that responds to local needs and priorities is key to supporting financial sustainability and sound financial management.

The Government has a long-standing policy to provide grant funding to local government on a non-ringfenced basis as part of the commitment to greater localism. This policy provides greater funding flexibility to local authorities (LAs) and supports them to make spending decisions based on their local needs and priorities.

LAs also receive significant funding outside of biddable pots, through Section 31 grants and through unringfenced funding. The Local Government Finance settlement and the vast majority of local government's Core Spending Power (£51.3 billion) is un-ringfenced, giving LAs flexibility over their spending decisions.

There are times when dedicated competitive biddable funding streams are the best way to make sure local government receives the support, they need to deliver the Government's objectives, including specific funding initiatives, trials or pilots. In such circumstances, Ministers will look to maximise value for money by considering the timing, value and conditions attached to any funding.

Core Defra has run annual competitions for air quality grants, where eligible LAs are able to apply:

Financial Year (FY) 2021-22: A budget of £9 million has been allocated to English local authorities under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. Applications for this competition are currently under evaluation. This competition is offered under two lots:

- Lot 1 – projects designed to reduce air pollutant exceedances especially in those areas that are projected to remain in exceedance of the UK's legal targets
- Lot 2 – projects that will improve knowledge and information about air quality and steps individuals can take to reduce their exposure to air pollution and/or projects that include measures that deal with particulate matter.

FY 2020-21: £5 million for the delivery of projects designed to support LAs to develop and/or implement measures to improve local air quality.

FY 2019-20: £2 million for the delivery of projects designed to support LAs to develop and/or implement measures to improve local air quality.

FY 2018-19: £3 million to incentivise LAs to improve air quality in areas most in need of improvement and identify projects which are likely to have the greatest environmental impact.

FY 2016-17: £3 million for LAs in England where Defra's national air quality assessment, as reported to the EU Commission, identified and/or projected an exceedance, and/or which have one or more Air Quality Management Areas.

In 2020 Core Defra and the Environment Agency invited lead local flood authorities to express interest to participate in our £150m Flood Resilience and Innovation Programme. The 25 successful areas were announced in March 2021, ([Innovative projects to protect against flooding selected - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/innovative-projects-to-protect-against-flooding-selected)), and received £40k each from Defra to further develop their plans. The Environment Agency is managing the programme, including distribution of the capital funding between now and March 2027.

We have not run any other LA-only competed grants schemes within Core Defra.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Stonewall

Tim Loughton:

[61057]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what funds have been paid by his Department to Stonewall in each of the last five years; and to what projects those funds were allocated.

Victoria Prentis:

Payments made to Stonewall Equality Ltd for the last five financial years are shown in the table below, along with a brief description as to what the payment relates to.

FINANCIAL YEAR	AMOUNT PAID	DESCRIPTION
2016-17	£390.00	Attendance at a training programme for LGBT Role Models
2016-17	£2,400.00	Membership of the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme 01/02/16 - 31/01/17
2017-18	£3,000.00	Membership of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme 01/02/17 - 31/01/18
2017-18	£3,000.00	Membership of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme 01/02/18-31/01/19
2018-19	£3,000.00	Membership of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme 01/02/19-31/01/20

FINANCIAL YEAR	AMOUNT PAID	DESCRIPTION
2018-19	£813.60	Attendance at Stonewall Workplace Conference
2018-19	£252.00	Attendance at Stonewall Workplace Conference
2019-20	£8,400.00	Subscription to Proud Employers website (for advertising vacancies)
2019-20	£3,000.00	Membership of Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme 01/02/20 to 31/01/21
2020-21	£741.60	Attendance at Stonewall Workplace Conference

■ Fly-tipping

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[60518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department is making on developing a fly-tipping toolkit to support local authorities and other parties to tackle fly-tipping.

Jo Churchill:

The development of the fly-tipping toolkit was delayed as a result of the department switching focus to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. It remains an important piece of work and we expect to complete the first element on 'presenting robust cases to court' early next year, following the conclusion of additional research we commissioned in this area.

We are taking further steps to clamp down on waste crime such as taking powers to introduce electronic waste tracking; consulting on reforms to the waste carrier, broker, and dealer regime; and strengthening powers to detect and prosecute waste criminals through the Environment Bill.

■ Food: Waste Disposal

Geraint Davies:

[\[56749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the impact that the £2.7 billion per annum cost that the reforms to extended producer responsibility will have on (a) food and drink businesses and (b) food prices.

Jo Churchill:

Under our proposals the cost of managing and recycling packaging waste will transfer from local taxpayers and others who deal with waste to the businesses who make and use packaging. Our initial analysis indicates that this will not result in significant increases in consumer prices (including food prices). However, it will be for the businesses in question to decide if they will increase prices, or improve and reduce their packaging.

The final impact assessment, which will be published next year, will include assessment on this point.

Geraint Davies:[\[56750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department had made of the impact of the £2.7 billion per annum cost of reforms to extended producer responsibility (a) for food and drink businesses and (b) on food prices.

Jo Churchill:

Under our proposals the cost of managing and recycling packaging waste will transfer from local taxpayers and others who deal with waste to the businesses who make and use packaging. Our initial analysis indicates that this will not result in significant increases in consumer prices (including food prices). However, it will be for the businesses in question to decide if they will increase prices, or improve and reduce their packaging.

The final impact assessment, which will be published next year, will include assessment on this point.

Meat: Consumption**Nick Fletcher:**[\[903879\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to promote the consumption of British meat.

Victoria Prentis:

We want people at home and abroad to be lining up to Buy British. Our farmers produce high-welfare, high-quality meat and we are committed to supporting them. Our new farming schemes will offer the opportunity to move towards a more pastoral system, producing higher quality meat that is reared in a sustainable way.

Nature Conservation**Layla Moran:**[\[59130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when his Department plans to publish an updated wildlife control policy in terms of (a) epidemiological-led culling and (b) wildlife monitoring.

Rebecca Pow:

There are no current plans to publish an updated bovine TB policy in terms of epidemiological-led culling of wildlife or wildlife monitoring. Our response in March 2020 to Professor Sir Charles Godfray's review of government's bovine tuberculosis

eradication strategy set out plans to evolve badger control policy with increased support for badger vaccination, following the wide-scale deployment of effective, industry-led intensive badger culling.

We are now developing measures to make badger vaccination, combined with biosecurity, the focus of addressing risks from wildlife as an exit strategy from intensive culling. Our aim is to allow future badger culls only where the epidemiological evidence points to a reservoir of disease in badgers.

There is little evidence to suggest tuberculosis in other wildlife species is a significant problem that is driving the epidemic in cattle in England. There are no plans, therefore, to control other wildlife species.

■ River Wye: Pollution

Jesse Norman:

[\[58817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Ministers in the Welsh Government on pollution in the River Wye.

Jesse Norman:

[\[58818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with (a) Natural England and (b) the Environment Agency on pollution in the River Wye.

Rebecca Pow:

Improving water quality is a government priority. The issues with phosphate pollution in the River Wye are well known. We are working closely with the Environment Agency (EA), Natural England (NE), Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Ministers and local councils to address this issue through multiple channels.

A cross-border meeting about the Wye catchment was convened by Herefordshire Council in September. It is a new group set up to bring together the councillors and officers across all authorities, agencies, Welsh Water, and The Wye and Usk Foundation.

Separately, NE, Natural Resources Wales, the EA and other partners continue to work together, through the Nutrient Management Board and its associated Technical Advisory Group. The board meets quarterly to identify and deliver actions that achieve the phosphorous conservation target of the River Wye Special Area of Conservation. The primary mechanism for achieving this will be through the delivery of the Nutrient Management Plan which will identify measures needed to both restore the site to favourable condition and seek to create capacity for development, without harming the natural environment.

I have also visited the River Wye and attended a roundtable meeting with the hon. Member for North Herefordshire, the Minister of State (Minister for Housing) the Rt Hon Member for Tamworth, local EA and NE staff as well as Herefordshire Council staff held on 13 July to discuss the long-term plan for the River Wye and how we mitigate nutrient pollution there.

■ Rivers: Sewage

Luke Pollard: [\[64729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the cost was of producing the video, published 26 October 2021 used to promote the Government's proposed new sewage and rivers policy.

Rebecca Pow:

The video published 26 October 2021 was made in-house by the Defra group communications Digital Engagement and Creative Content team and did not incur a cost.

■ Slaughterhouses: CCTV

Daniel Zeichner: [\[64637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether mandatory CCTV in abattoirs has resulted in any prosecutions of abattoir employees for offences against animals.

Jo Churchill:

Three individuals have been convicted of animal welfare offences identified following the review of CCTV by the Official Veterinarian since the introduction of legislation in England in May 2018.

■ Veterinary Medicine: Vacancies

Alec Shelbrooke: [\[61143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions officials in his Department are having with representatives of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons on (a) extending the waiver on level 7 English language requirements for Official Veterinarians introduced in June 2021 and (b) relaxing the technical supervisory conditions imposed as a condition of that waiver.

Victoria Prentis:

There are no current plans to discuss extending the waiver on level 7 language requirements for official veterinarians supporting the delivery of official controls in abattoirs. Nor are there any plans to discuss relaxing the technical supervisory conditions imposed because of that waiver. Defra has therefore not raised these proposals in discussion with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

■ Waste Management

Dr Luke Evans: [\[60519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress he has made on developing proposals for the reform of the waste, carrier, broker and dealer regime.

Jo Churchill:

Reforms to the waste brokers and dealers licensing, alongside our electronic waste tracking reforms, offer the opportunity to take a huge step forward in the fight against fly-tipping and waste crime. We expect to consult on them shortly.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Afghanistan: Food****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[62807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent estimate she has made of the number of Afghan people facing acute food insecurity; and what steps she is taking to provide urgent humanitarian support to that country.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 28 October 2021]: The latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification findings show that in September and October 2021, nearly 19 million people in Afghanistan experienced high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above), an almost 30 per cent increase from the same season last year (14.5 million people). We are using every diplomatic and humanitarian lever at our disposal to address the crisis, including doubling our humanitarian and development aid to Afghanistan and the region to a total of £286 million this year. Responding to food insecurity is a high priority for our £286 million funding for Afghanistan and we will be making further announcements shortly.

■ Afghanistan: Overseas Aid**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[62809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2021 to Question 57228 on Afghanistan: Overseas Aid, what assessment she has made of the potential impact on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan having disbursed 12% of the budget allocated to that country at this point in the financial year.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 28 October 2021]: We are working closely with partners to develop new programmes to respond to the changing situation in Afghanistan. While the need is urgent and we are working to deploy funding as quickly as possible, it is also important that we carry out the appropriate programme design and due diligence to ensure that every penny of taxpayers' money is spent well and helps those most in need. We will be making further announcements shortly on how our funding will be allocated.

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[62744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with the Home Secretary on the date on which the Afghan Citizens Resettlement programme will open; and what steps the Government is taking to secure the safe passage out of Afghanistan of journalists and former journalists whose lives are immediately at risk until the Afghan Citizens Resettlement programme opens.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 28 October 2021]: The Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will provide those put at risk by recent events in Afghanistan with a route to safety. The ACRS is one of the most generous schemes in our country's history under which we will welcome up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans over the next year and up to a total of 20,000 in the coming years. The Foreign Secretary has discussed the ACRS with the Home Secretary and Lord Ahmad has had regular meetings with the Minister for Afghan Resettlement, Victoria Atkins, most recently on 27 October. Officials are in daily contact. The scheme is not yet open and further details will be announced in due course by the Home Office. Further details on the scheme will be published here: Afghanistan resettlement and immigration policy statement - GOV.UK.

■ Afghanistan: Repatriation

Rachael Maskell:

[\[61176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of the comparative safety of routes out of Afghanistan.

James Cleverly:

FCDO travel advice advises that the situation in Afghanistan remains extremely volatile. All travel throughout Afghanistan is extremely dangerous. The Government continues to do all it can to ensure safe passage for those who wish to leave, and is committed to supporting the people of Afghanistan. We are in contact with British nationals and others who are eligible for resettlement in the UK, and are working urgently with neighbouring countries to ensure that at-risk Afghans have options for safe passage. We have evacuated around 8,000 British nationals to date. We are continuing to work as hard as we can to get more people out.

Grahame Morris:

[\[63703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to prioritise the safe evacuation from Afghanistan of journalists who (a) are employed by the BBC as of 26 October 2021 and (b) were formerly employed by the BBC, who are at risk as a result of their professional associations.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 29 October 2021]: It remains a top priority to help those British nationals and those Afghans eligible to come to the UK, to leave Afghanistan, including journalists. Since the end of the military evacuation, the Government has facilitated the departure of both Afghan and British nationals from Afghanistan. Although travel within Afghanistan remains dangerous, and many border crossings have been closed during this period, we have also helped both British nationals and eligible Afghans when they have crossed into third countries, from where our diplomatic missions have been able to support their onward travel to the UK. We will continue to work to take advantage of all opportunities to help those eligible to come to the UK to leave Afghanistan.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[64709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October 2021 to Question 61186 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, how many UK donations have had less than two months until expiry.

Wendy Morton:

The Prime Minister has committed the UK to donating 100 million vaccine doses by June 2022, of which 30 million will be donated by the end of 2021. To date, we have donated 20.6 million doses. For bilateral donations, we seek assurance from all recipients that they have the capacity to roll out the doses offered ahead of their expiry, in line with National Deployment and Vaccination Plans. COVAX secures the same assurances from recipients before they deploy vaccines. We aim to donate all doses with at least 8 weeks until expiry as recommended by the World Health Organisation.

■ Developing Countries: Debts**Ruth Jones:**[\[61214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with her European counterparts on tackling the growing debt crisis in low income countries.

Vicky Ford:

HMT lead on international debt policy for the UK government. My Right Honourable colleague, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, regularly discusses low-income country debt with European and Global partners through the G7 and G20. The G20 and Paris Club of international creditors are implementing a landmark Debt Service Suspension Initiative which has so far seen low-income countries suspend over \$10 billion of debt repayments since the start of the crisis. The G20 have also launched a Common Framework for Debt Restructuring, also to be implemented with and by the Paris Club, that will provide debt treatments for individual countries that need and apply for this.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Afghanistan

Layla Moran: [\[63861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to correspondence sent to all hon. Members by his Department on 25 October 2021, how many civil servants will be (a) permanently and (b) temporarily assigned to the Joint Afghanistan Casework Unit.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 29 October 2021]: The Government has created a new Joint Afghanistan Casework Unit (JACU), staffed by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Ministry of Defence and Home Office officials, which is taking forward the UK's commitment to resettle individuals and family members who are confirmed to be eligible. The Unit is still in the process of being set-up. We currently have approximately 40 staff and will move to approximately 80. The number will reflect requirements at the time.

Layla Moran: [\[63862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to correspondence sent to all hon. Members on 25 October 2021, what estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of the annual budget of the Joint Afghanistan Casework Unit.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 29 October 2021]: The Government has created a new Joint Afghanistan Casework Unit (JACU), staffed by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Ministry of Defence and Home Office officials, which is taking forward the UK's commitment to resettle individuals and family members who are confirmed to be eligible. The Unit is still in the process of being set-up. The forecasted annual budget of JACU when it is fully operational is approximately £750,000 per annum.

■ Hamas

Andrew Gwynne: [\[62642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how her Department defines the distinction between the military wing and the political wing of Hamas.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 28 October 2021]: Hamas' military wing has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK since 2001 and the UK maintains a no contact policy with Hamas in its entirety.

■ Italy: G20

Ruth Jones:

[61215]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what preparations she has made for the G20 Rome Summit.

Vicky Ford:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has supported the Prime Minister's objective to use the G20 Rome Summit as an opportunity to rally the most powerful nations to tackle the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and secure a sustainable, inclusive recovery. We have been at the forefront of UK diplomatic engagement at the G20 and have pushed for greater multilateral cooperation on areas of climate, health, trade, technology and development. We will continue to use this forum alongside our G7 Presidency and hosting COP26 to demonstrate international leadership and deliver on the priorities set out in the Integrated Review.

■ Jerusalem: Palestinians

Layla Moran:

[R] [63858]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations she has made to her Israeli counterpart on the potential forced evictions faced by Palestinian families in the Karm Al Jaouni area of Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 29 October 2021]: The UK regularly raises the issue of demolitions and forced evictions of Palestinians from their homes with the Government of Israel, most recently with Israel's Ministry of Defense on 19 October. The former Foreign Secretary raised ongoing evictions, demolitions and settlement activity with the Israeli Authorities during his visit to the region on 26 May. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions and evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. We continue to urge the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to avoid actions which make peace more difficult to achieve.

Layla Moran:

[R] [63859]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the accuracy of reports that on 11 August 2021, a one-storey building was demolished by its owners, displacing four families in the Shu'fat neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, following a ruling by the Israeli High Court.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 29 October 2021]: We are aware of these reports. Demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians, call into question Israel's commitment to a viable two-state solution, and, in all but the most exceptional of cases, demolitions by an occupying power are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. We continue to urge the Government of Israel to avoid actions which make peace more difficult to achieve.

■ Western Sahara: Sovereignty**Daniel Kawczynski:** [\[64561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government plans to follow the US in recognising Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara province.

James Cleverly:

As the former Foreign Secretary stated on 11 December 2020, the UK regards the status of Western Sahara as undetermined. The UK supports UN-led efforts to reach a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Arthritis: Joint Replacements****Rachael Maskell:** [\[62764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps with NHS England to ensure that hip and knee surgery for people with arthritis is a protected part of the forthcoming delivery plan for tackling the elective backlog.

Rachael Maskell: [\[62765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to (a) ensure that local areas tackle the waiting times backlog in joint replacement surgery and (b) implement the recommendations of the Joint Replacement Support Package published by Versus Arthritis.

Edward Argar:

As announced in September, an additional £1 billion has been provided this year as part of the Elective Recovery Fund, which can be accessed by local trusts if they meet the eligibility criteria to tackle the backlog. A further £8 billion was announced to transform elective services and increase activity across the following three years. The Department has also committed to £5.9 billion of capital funding to further support National Health Service in reducing the backlog of people waiting for procedures, tests and scans, including £1.5 billion for increased bed capacity, equipment and new surgical hubs.

The NHS is improving the efficiency of joint replacement surgery, using lessons learned from the high-volume low acuity approach piloted in London and developed by the Getting It Right First Time programme to streamline processes and utilise surgical hubs. NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to work with Versus Arthritis and are evaluating patient support and developing regional and system strategies focused on those waiting for elective surgery and their health and wellbeing.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[62766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the risk to people with arthritis, waiting for joint replacement surgery, of (a) difficult pain management, (b) reduced mobility, (c) risk of other health complications, including depression and obesity as a result of a lack of mobility and (d) having more complications after surgery in the event that deterioration is experienced while waiting for surgery.

Edward Argar:

No formal assessment has been made. However, the '2021/22 priorities and operational planning guidance: October 2021 – March 2022' asks trusts to engage fully in the national clinical validation and prioritisation programme to ensure continued improvement in waiting list data with regular clinical validation and prioritisation, including for patients with arthritis.

Work is underway to evaluate patient support and to develop regional and system strategies focused on those who are waiting for elective surgery, including patients waiting for joint replacement surgery.

■ Bereavement Counselling

Rachael Maskell:

[\[61169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of bereavement services.

Gillian Keegan:

No recent assessment has been made. Bereavement support services are commissioned locally depending on the needs of that specific population.

However, we continue to work closely with bereavement services to ensure support is available. Since March 2020, the Government has allocated over £10.2 million to mental health charities, including those providing bereavement support.

■ Brain: Tumours

Nadia Whittome:

[\[56605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made for the implications of his policies of the findings of the Level Up and Stop the Devastation Report from Brain Tumour Research on creating a dedicated levelling up brain tumour research fund.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Department agrees further brain tumour research is vital for improving the treatment and outcome for these patients. In 2018, we announced £40 million over five years for the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission via the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). To encourage applications for this research, the NIHR is supporting the research community in submitting fundable proposals. The NIHR also continues to encourage brain tumour research applications. We therefore have no plans for a dedicated fund.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus**Sarah Olney:** [\[44422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to support residents in care homes who are spending much of their time in isolation as a result of outbreaks of covid-19 in care homes.

Gillian Keegan:

The Government has updated guidance on outbreaks in care homes to reduce the duration of restrictions. Following identification of two positive COVID-19 cases, if no further cases are detected in whole home testing on day 0 or in further testing of those who tested negative between days four to seven restrictions may be lifted, subject to a risk assessment. This may mean that measures are only in place for approximately seven days, depending on polymerase chain reaction testing times. This is less than the 14-day period of restrictions that was previously required.

In addition, all residents should be supported to nominate an essential care giver who may visit them to attend to care and wellbeing needs. The care giver should be enabled to visit in most circumstances, including if the care home is in outbreak. Window and pod visits may also take place, subject to a risk assessment.

■ Coronavirus: Budesonide**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[62624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the outcome was of the trial on the use of inhaled budesonide to treat older people with covid-19 symptoms who are not hospitalised.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 28 October 2021]: Inhaled budesonide, a corticosteroid, was entered into the PRINCIPLE clinical trial in November 2020 for the treatment of non-hospitalised patients with COVID-19 who are 65 years old and over or 50 years old and over with an underlying health condition. The final trial results were peer reviewed by an independent panel of experts and published in The Lancet on 10 August 2021. The PRINCIPLE trial reported a three-day median benefit in self-reported recovery for patients with COVID-19 in the community setting who received inhaled budesonide.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Mr Clive Betts:** [\[53833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of covid-19 vaccinations have been delivered by GP surgeries to date.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 18 October 2021]: Data on the proportion of COVID-19 vaccinations by delivery model is not currently available in the format requested.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[60508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on how many and what proportion of severely immunosuppressed people have received a third covid-19 vaccination as of 21 October 2021 in accordance with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation guidance of 1 September 2021.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency collects data on the number of people with severely immunosuppressed conditions as recorded on their electronic health record and the number of COVID-19 vaccinations they have received. Data on the proportion of severely immunosuppressed people who have received a third COVID-19 vaccine as of 21 October has not yet been evaluated.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[62631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of allowing people to request to have the Oxford-AstraZeneca covid-19 vaccine as a booster.

Maggie Throup:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that those eligible for the COVID-19 booster vaccine should be offered a booster dose of either the Pfizer vaccine or the Moderna vaccine. Where mRNA vaccines cannot be offered, vaccination with the AstraZeneca vaccine may be considered for those who received AstraZeneca vaccine in the primary course.

There are currently no plans to allow patients to request the type of COVID-19 vaccination they receive. People will be offered the vaccine type most appropriate to them, taking into account the JCVI's advice and any allergies to ingredients of particular vaccine ingredients. They will be directed to a vaccine site with the appropriate vaccine available.

■ **Drugs: Cost Effectiveness**

Alex Norris:

[\[64711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of changing the NICE discount rate to align with the latest evidence base and guidance in the Treasury Green book.

Alex Norris:

[\[64712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the NICE methods and process review, what steps he is taking to tackle the policy and system barriers NICE has identified as preventing the implementation of the discount rate.

Alex Norris:

[\[64713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access on

improving patient access to new medicines; and if he will make a statement on the relevance to patients of changing the discount rate used by NICE from 3.5 per cent to 1.5 per cent.

Edward Argar:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is an independent body and is currently reviewing the methods and processes it uses in its health technology assessments, including considering changes to the discount rate applied to costs and benefits.

NICE has recently consulted publicly on a set of proposals for changes to its methods and processes and is considering the comments received. NICE's consultation stated that there is an evidence-based case for changing the discount rate to 1.5%.

However, it acknowledged the wider policy and fiscal implications and proposed to maintain the existing rate while further data is collected on the likely effects of a change. NICE also proposed to maintain a non-reference case discount rate of 1.5% for use in exceptional circumstances.

The Department supports NICE's proposal, which is in line with the expectations for the review as set out in the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access (VPAS) agreed with industry. The VPAS has driven significant improvements in patient access to clinically and cost-effective medicines, whilst ensuring sustainable and predictable spend growth for the National Health Service and industry. Aided by the new commercial flexibilities provided by VPAS and the NHS Commercial Framework, NICE now recommends the vast majority of new medicines it appraises, with 100% recommended in 2020/21.

■ **Drugs: Rehabilitation**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[63776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his officials in his Department have had with commissioners of substance misuse services to assess the adequacy of their funding in meeting demand for those services.

Maggie Throup:

Departmental officials have regular discussions with the commissioners of substance misuse services. We commissioned Dame Carol Black to undertake a comprehensive review of drug treatment system in England. The review looked at national funding and local spending on drug and alcohol treatment, consulting extensively with local authority commissioners. The review made a number of recommendations, including to increase the funding available for treatment services.

We have committed to publish a new long term drug strategy later this year, informed by the latest evidence including from Dame Carol's review. We will set out further action in the coming months.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Health Hazards

Alex Sobel: [\[64724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of potential harms caused by the use of geek bar disposable vape devices.

Alex Sobel: [\[64725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of safeguards to help ensure that children under the age of 16 are not accessing geek bar disposable vape devices.

Maggie Throup:

The Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is the United Kingdom's competent authority for ensuring that e-cigarettes, including geek bars, legally sold in the UK are compliant with regulations. They must also not resemble a food or a cosmetic product and must adhere to limits on nicotine strength. It is also illegal to sell an e-cigarette product, including geek bars, to anyone aged under 18 years old.

We will continue to work closely with the MHRA, Trading Standards and other regulatory enforcement agencies to ensure that products sold in the UK comply with these regulations, and for non-compliant products to be removed from the market.

We will act if we see a rise in prevalence amongst children and/or if there is a public health risk from counterfeit or illicit products.

■ Fampridine

Theresa Villiers: [\[62639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with NICE on access to Fampridine by people with multiple sclerosis.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 28 October 2021]: We have had no such discussions. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body responsible for developing evidence-based guidance for the National Health Service on whether medicines represent a clinical and cost-effective use of resources.

NICE was unable to recommend fampridine in its clinical guideline on managing multiple sclerosis (MS) which was originally published in 2014. However, NICE is now updating this guideline, which will include reviewing the recommendation on fampridine. NICE expects to publish its draft guidance on the management of MS for consultation in December this year, with final guidance expected on 1 June 2022.

■ Genito-urinary Medicine

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[64557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare Strategy will be published.

Maggie Throup:

The Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy will be published early next year.

■ Genito-urinary Medicine: Females**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[64560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recommendations in the APPG on Sexual and Reproductive Health's report Women's Lives, Women's Rights, whether the forthcoming national Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy will incorporate all aspects of women's sexual and reproductive health needs and recognise the changing needs of women throughout their lives.

Maggie Throup:

The Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy will include women's sexual health and related aspects of women's reproductive health. The Department is also developing a new Women's Health Strategy, which will also include women's reproductive health, with a focus on reproductive wellbeing. Together, the two Strategies will cover all aspects of women's reproductive health needs and recognise the changing needs of women throughout their lives.

■ Health Services: Missing Persons**Rehman Chishti:**[\[52473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been reported missing from (a) hospitals and (b) other healthcare settings in each of the last ten years.

Gillian Keegan:

The information requested is shown in the attached table.

Attachments:

1. Table [TABLE PQ52473 attachment (1).xlsx]

■ Health Services: Statistics**Rachael Maskell:**[\[59856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that health data will continue to be available on a Unitary Authority footprint, as the ICS footprint data is too broad to determine local health outcomes.

Gillian Keegan:

Data will continue to be available at local authority level to enable determination of health outcomes. Future directions to NHS Digital may specify at what organisational level specific data is made available.

■ Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[62749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 July 2021 to Question 35720 on Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme, how much funding was allocated to supporting parents on a low income engage with the care of their babies in neonatal care in 2021-22; and how that spending was monitored.

Maria Caulfield:

The information requested is not held centrally. Details of discretionary payments made by local trusts for travel expenses is not collected centrally.

■ Heart Diseases: Health Services

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[57047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing reporting requirements for providers and commissioners of heart failure services on (a) referrals for suspected heart failure, (b) urgent referrals for suspected heart failure, (c) specialist appointments held within six weeks of referral for suspected heart failure and (d) specialist appointments held within two weeks of urgent referral for suspected heart failure.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[57048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to introduce reporting requirements for providers and commissioners of heart failure services on (a) referrals for suspected heart failure, (b) urgent referrals for suspected heart failure, (c) specialist appointments held within six weeks of referral for suspected heart failure and (d) specialist appointments held within two weeks of urgent referral for suspected heart failure.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The Department has not made a formal assessment. The reporting requirements for National Health Service commissioners and providers are based on a balanced assessment, to collect timely and clinically valuable data. There are currently no plans to introduce new reporting requirements. When considering future changes to reporting requirements for commissioners and providers of heart failure services, NHS England and NHS Improvement will take account of the views of clinicians, patients and stakeholder organisations.

NHS England's Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) includes data on heart failure collected in primary care and community care services. In April 2020, the QOF was updated to support earlier diagnosis and management. General practitioner surgeries are asked to collect data to show they have fulfilled their QOF requirements. This update also means that patients with heart failure can expect to have an annual review.

■ Heart Diseases: Medical Treatments

Chris Green: [\[53927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the cost-saving benefits of (a) mitral valve repair and (b) open heart surgery.

Maria Caulfield:

No such assessment has been made, as there is no direct comparison between mitral valve leaflet repair and conventional open heart surgery. Patients must be assessed by clinicians as inoperable or very high risk to undergo mitral valve repair and the procedure would be expected to provide sustained quality of life benefits.

■ Hospital Beds

Rachael Maskell: [\[61175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what contingency plans he has in place for managing hospital admissions in the event that hospital bed occupancy has reached capacity.

Edward Argar:

The National Health Service has established processes to respond to such pressures through the NHS Business Continuity Management Framework. These processes enable NHS providers to access the necessary support to maintain the continuity of services.

■ Hospitals: Construction

Daisy Cooper: [\[62856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding he plans to make available to the eight pathfinder trusts in the New Hospital Programme to deliver new facilities; and what recent assessment he has made of adequacy of that planned funding.

Daisy Cooper: [\[62857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will to publish a timeline for releasing funds for the detailed design and enabling works required from West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust and the other seven pathfinder trusts to help those trusts meet the New Hospital Programme's timescale.

Daisy Cooper: [\[62858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it remains his policy for the pathfinder trusts to start construction in 2023 and be ready to open by 2027 at the latest as part of the New Hospital Programme.

Edward Argar:

Individual allocations for trusts will be determined once the respective final business cases have been reviewed and agreed. The timing and amount of funding allocations

for each scheme are dependent on trusts' specific requirements. In total, pathfinder schemes have received public dividend capital of £94 million prior to the current financial year for fees and enabling works. In addition, West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust has £117 million in confirmed allocations for 2021-22 and future years. Further requests for funding are currently being considered and will be subject to the appropriate governance process to ensure maximum value for taxpayers' money.

The pathfinder schemes are currently anticipated to start construction between 2023-24 and complete in the period 2026-28.

■ **Hyperactivity: Mental Health Services**

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[61236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the waiting time for an ADHD assessment on young people's education and wellbeing.

Gillian Keegan:

No specific assessment has been made. Schools have a statutory duty to use their best endeavours to make suitable provision available for children with special educational needs (SEN). A specific diagnosis is separate from making an assessment of SEN. Local authorities may be asked to carry out an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment without a specific diagnosis and it would be possible for the local authority to assess a child's needs and put a EHC plan in place ahead of any formal diagnosis. The EHC plan can be revised if necessary, once the diagnosis has been completed.

■ **Influenza: Drugs**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[57051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department has spent on stockpiling (a) Oseltamivir (tamiflu), (b) Zanamivir (Relenza) and (c) other antiviral drugs in each year since 2014.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[57052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how the size of the UK's stockpiles of (a) Oseltamivir (tamiflu), (b) Zanamivir (relenza) and (c) other antiviral drugs to treat influenza have changed since 2014.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: The following table shows the total spend from 2013/14 to 2020/21 in England for the replenishment of oseltamivir and zanamivir antivirals for the pandemic influenza preparedness stockpile. The United Kingdom's stockpiles have not included any other antivirals for influenza

YEAR	£ MILLION (INCLUDING VAT)
2013/14	49.0
2014/15	0.0
2015/16	1.4
2016/17	55.9
2018/19	46.0
2019/20	104.8
2020/21	50.4

Stockpile volumes of oseltamivir and zanamivir are held to treat 50% of the population, based on a reasonable worst-case scenario. The stockpiles have been maintained since the 2009 swine flu pandemic. Year-to-year variation in stockpile spending is due to variation in cost of replenishing and maintaining the stockpile at these levels. The devolved administrations are responsible for their respective antiviral stockpiles

Christian Wakeford: [\[62900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of flu patients were prescribed antiviral medication in the most recent year for which data is available.

Maggie Throup:

Data on the proportion of flu patients prescribed antiviral medication is not collected centrally.

■ Influenza: Screening

Christian Wakeford: [\[62901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to increase the number of people tested for flu during the 2021-22 winter season.

Maggie Throup:

The diagnosis of influenza is generally made using clinical symptoms in primary care settings. Diagnosis of influenza can only be confirmed by laboratory testing. Rapid testing should be undertaken in all people with complicated influenza, which often takes place in hospital. The UK Health Security Agency is exploring options to pilot increased testing for influenza for certain cases as an extension of the current routine community surveillance for COVID-19.

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Mike Amesbury:

[62832]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the availability of the winter flu vaccine in (a) Weaver Vale, (b) North West England and (c) the UK.

Maggie Throup:

No specific assessment has been made as flu vaccine supplies are purchased locally. The Department is in regular contact with vaccine manufacturers to ensure there is sufficient supply to vaccinate eligible cohorts.

General practitioners and community pharmacists are responsible for ordering flu vaccines from suppliers, which are then used to deliver the national flu vaccination programme, with deliveries phased through the season. Local providers determine the appropriate stock of vaccines to purchase, based on their local populations, eligible cohorts and uptake ambitions for the National Health Service programme.

■ Joint Replacements: Waiting Lists

Rachael Maskell:

[62767]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he will take to (a) monitor and (b) report on the progress of work to reduce waiting times for joint replacement surgery at a (i) national and (ii) local level.

Edward Argar:

Waiting time data for joint replacement surgery is published in the trauma and orthopaedic dataset in referral to treatment data, with progress regularly monitored. The data is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/rtt-waiting-times/>

■ Malnutrition: Health Services

Andrew Rosindell:

[62634]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the cost to the NHS of malnutrition treatment, in the latest period for which data is available.

Maggie Throup:

The Department has not made a specific estimate.

■ Maternity Services: Ethnic Groups

Daisy Cooper:

[62871]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recommendation of the Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries report, published in January 2021, what steps he has taken to help

identify and meet the specific needs of Black and Asian populations in the context of reproductive and pregnancy healthcare provision.

Maria Caulfield:

In summer 2021, the Department commissioned the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to carry out a pilot survey of women's reproductive health experiences in England. The sampling strategy included working with advocacy organisations to try to maximise participation from women from ethnic minority groups, including black and Asian women. Data from the survey will contribute to evidence around the specific needs of black and Asian populations in reproductive healthcare provision.

The Department is developing a new Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy, which will be published early next year. The Strategy will include an overarching focus on identifying and addressing health inequalities, including those faced by black and Asian populations, in relation to sexual and reproductive healthcare.

On 6 September, NHS England and NHS Improvement published 'Equity and Equality: Guidance for Local Maternity Systems'. Local Maternity Systems are asked to undertake interventions to understand the specific needs of black and Asian populations through the local population's maternal and perinatal health needs; map community assets which help address the social determinants of health; conduct a baseline assessment of the experience of maternity and neonatal staff by Workforce Race Equity Standard indicators; and plan to co-produce interventions to improve equity for mothers, babies and race equality for staff.

■ **Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency: Finance**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[63807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of maintaining funding for the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency at its current level.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 29 October 2021]: The Department has made no such assessment. As an executive agency of the Department, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) makes a robust assessment of its funding. We will continue to invest in the MHRA and the detail of its funding allocation will be confirmed in due course following the Spending Review.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Rosie Cooper:

[\[56889\]](#)

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 regarding the cost of COVID-19 travel test kits, reference ZA57178.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 25 October 2021.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[56898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 13 August 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, regarding Integrated Care Systems, reference ZA56188.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 26 October 2021.

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[60368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Hemel Hempstead of 21 April 2021, regarding issues on isolation accommodation, case number MP 69213.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 26 October 2021]: We replied to the hon. Member on 26 October 2021.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[61129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 20 August 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, reference ZA57447 regarding GP access.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 26 October 2021.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[61130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 18 August 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, reference ZA57409 regarding the discontinued minor ailment scheme.

Edward Argar:

We responded to the hon. Member's letter on 28 October 2021.

■ NHS Test and Trace

Mr Steve Baker:

[R] [\[63721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set out the conditions that must be reached for him to stop the operation of NHS Test and Trace.

Maggie Throup:

NHS Test and Trace remains critical to our plan for managing the virus in the autumn and winter. We continue to keep all elements of our COVID-19 response under review, taking into account the latest scientific and medical advice.

■ NHS: Military Aid

Rachael Maskell: [\[63771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Defence on contingency support for the NHS from the armed forces in winter 2021-22.

Edward Argar:

There have been no such discussions.

■ Pain and Palliative Care: Research

Rachael Maskell: [\[61164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the amount of research funding available for improving palliative care and providing pain management.

Maria Caulfield:

The National Institute for Health Research welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including palliative care and pain management for patients at the end of life. However, it is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and healthcare services, value for money and scientific quality.

■ Palliative Care

Rachael Maskell: [\[61168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of support to the family and carers of people in receipt of end-of-life care.

Gillian Keegan:

We have made no specific assessment. Local authorities have a statutory duty to assess the eligible social care needs of the local population, including for carers of people in receipt of end-of-life care, with clinical commissioning groups holding the equivalent responsibility for their health needs.

■ Palliative Care: Health Professions

Rachael Maskell: [\[61167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of medical and health professional staff working in palliative care.

Edward Argar:

NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) workforce statistics for England. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), but excludes staff working in primary care, general practitioner surgeries, local authorities, and other providers. As of June 2021, there

were 2,964 HCHS staff working in palliative medicine in National Health Service trusts and CCGs in England.

■ Preventive Medicine and Screening

Rachael Maskell:

[\[63777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase population screening and prevention.

Maggie Throup:

The UK National Screening Committee welcomes proposals for new population screening programmes through its call for topics from September to December each year. This annual call for gives stakeholders a regular opportunity to suggest new topics for consideration.

The 2021-22 Mandate to NHS England and NHS Improvement set an objective for the National Health Service to improve prevention of ill-health and delivery of public health services. This includes investment in evidence-based programmes on smoking, alcohol and secondary prevention of heart attacks, stroke, diabetes and dementia.

■ Public Health: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[\[64661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much additional funding he has made available for public health in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021.

Maggie Throup:

We will maintain the Public Health Grant in real terms, enabling local authorities to invest in prevention and frontline services. We will continue the £100 million per year investment announced in 2020, to help people achieve and maintain a healthy weight. We are allocating an additional £66 million by 2024/25 for a new Start for Life offer for families, including breastfeeding advice and parent-infant mental health support.

■ Royal Cornwall Hospital

Cherilyn Mackrory:

[\[61223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide additional support to help de-escalate the Royal Cornwall Hospital's current operational level from internal critical incident.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are providing intensive support to the Royal Cornwall Hospital and a range of measures have been put in place to address the pressures.

■ Suicide: Antidepressants**Cat Smith:** [\[56202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the effect of antidepressant use has not been included in suicide prevention strategies.

Cat Smith: [\[56515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason antidepressant use has not been included as a possible cause of suicide in suicide prevention strategies.

Gillian Keegan:

The national strategy for suicide reduction in England does not seek to list all potential causes of suicide. The strategy notes that the factors leading to someone taking their own life are complex and supports action to reduce suicide rates by bringing together knowledge about groups at higher risk of suicide, rather than potential causes and by applying evidence of effective interventions and highlighting resources available. As the strategy looks at preventing suicide in high risk groups, it does not include the potential risk that some forms of antidepressant may cause for some people.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency introduced warnings within prescribing and patient information leaflets (PIL) for the most commonly used selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor class of antidepressants. The PIL contains information about the need for close supervision of patients and advises that caregivers should be alerted to monitor for any changes in mood or behaviour and to seek medical advice immediately if these occur.

■ Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust: Complaints**Sir Greg Knight:** [\[59713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many complaints have been made (a) to and (b) about the Yorkshire Ambulance Service in the last five years for which figures are available.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 25 October 2021]: The information requested is not held centrally.

HOME OFFICE**■ Carles Puigdemont****Alex Sobel:** [\[62829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government plans to accept any request to extradite Carles Puigdemont to Spain in the event that he visits the UK in response to invitations from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Damian Hinds:

As a matter of long-standing policy and practice, the UK will neither confirm nor deny that an extradition request has been made or received unless an arrest has been made in relation to that request

Extradition cooperation with Spain operates under the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (the 'TCA').

■ Home Office: Stonewall**Tim Loughton:**[\[61063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what funding her Department has allocated to Stonewall in each of the last five years; and for what projects.

Kit Malthouse:

[Holding answer 1 November 2021]: The Home Office has not allocated any grant funding to Stonewall Equality Ltd in any of the last five years. However payments have been made as a supplier of services. Please see the table below which detail payments made in each of the last five years, and the reason for payment.

	INVOICE DATE	AMOUNT £	DESCRIPTION
1	31-Mar-17	708.00	Fee for attending the Stonewall Workplace Conference
2	18-Aug-17	3,000.00	Diversity Champions annual membership
3	14-Feb-18	6,300.00	Stonewall In-house Allies Programme
4	02-May-18	813.60	Fee for attending the Stonewall Workplace Conference
5	22-Aug-18	3,000.00	Diversity Champions membership
6	16-Nov-18	1,200.00	Fee for attending the Stonewall Scotland Workplace Conference

7	26-Sep-19	3,000.00	Diversity Champions membership
8	05-Nov-20	3,000.00	Diversity Champions Membership
9	19-May-21	3,000.00	Diversity Champions Membership
10	31-May-21	240.00	Network Group Masterclass

■ Human Trafficking: Victims

Carol Monaghan:

[\[59834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce the time taken to assess potential victim of human trafficking cases.

Rachel Maclean:

There is no target timeframe in which to make conclusive grounds decisions in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). A decision can only be made fairly and reasonably once sufficient information has been made available to the competent authority for it to complete the decision.

When the competent authority has received sufficient information for it to complete a decision it should seek to do so. This is done as soon as possible once a potential victim has been provided with a minimum of 45 calendar days of the recovery period they are eligible for, during which they may access the support and protections of the NRM. Timescales on individual decisions can vary according to the relative complexity of each case and on sufficient information being made available to the competent authority by the parties involved.

The Home Office is mindful of the substantial increase in referrals into the National Referral Mechanism in recent years, with 10,613 referrals made in 2020. To address the time taken to make decisions in the NRM, we have already introduced a digital referral and casework system to increase the efficiency of decision making in the system. We are also undertaking work to better ensure that first responders are providing quality information that can better enable prompt decisions from the Home Office. As part of wider work to identify sustainable models for the NRM, in June 2021 we launched a series of pilots across the United Kingdom, including in Glasgow City Centre, to test devolving the responsibility to make NRM decisions for child victims of modern slavery from the Home Office to local authorities for 12 months.

Further, in the course of the last year the Home Office has been recruiting a significant number of new decision makers across the UK to increase capacity for NRM decision-making and bring down decision making timescales.

■ Immigration: Standards

Ruth Jones:

[61202]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of immigration applications are decided within (a) six and (b) 12 months; and if she will make a statement.

Damian Hinds:

The Home Office is committed to ensuring all applications are considered without unnecessary delay. Information on our immigration routes with service standards and whether they have been processed against these standards is available as part of our transparency data at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data#uk-visas-and-immigration>

If an application is deemed complex and expected to take longer than the standard processing timescale, UKVI will write to the customer within the standard processing time and explain what will happen next.

The published information on processing times for complex/ non straightforward visa applications is published as part of the Migration Transparency data, available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data#uk-visas-and-immigration>

■ Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

Peter Grant:

[53946]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the case for and against removing the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam from the list of organisations proscribed under the Terrorism Act 2000.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 18 October 2021]: In October 2020 the Proscribed Organisations Appeal Commission allowed the appeal against the Government's decision to maintain the proscription of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on the basis of a procedural error. The Home Secretary subsequently undertook to reconsider the application for deproscription and, having reconsidered the application, determined that the LTTE should remain proscribed. The Home Secretary wrote to the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee on 31 August 2021 notifying the Chair of her decision. A copy of the Home Secretary's letter was deposited in the libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

■ Nationality and Borders Bill

Neil Coyle:

[63737]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to conduct a children's rights impact assessment for the Nationality and Borders Bill.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 29 October 2021]: The Nationality and Borders Bill is part of our New Plan for Immigration, delivering the most comprehensive reform of the asylum system in decades.

An Equality Impact Assessment was published on 16 September, and this includes consideration of possible impacts on children. The Equality Impact Assessment can be found on the GOV.UK website; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nationality-and-borders-bill-equality-impact-assessment>.

Refugees: Afghanistan**Anne McLaughlin:****[53930]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which local authorities have expressed a willingness to accommodate Afghans arriving under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy or Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme; how many local authorities have offered accommodation; and how many accommodation units have been offered to date.

Anne McLaughlin:**[53931]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many hotels are being used across the UK to accommodate Afghans under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy or Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme; how many people are residing in those hotels as at 23 September 2021; and what regions, as defined in asylum accommodation contracts, those hotels are in.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 18 October 2021]: We continue to work with local authorities to source appropriate accommodation as quickly as possible for Afghan families who were evacuated to the UK. So far, over 300 local authorities across the UK have offered to house Afghan families. We would strongly urge every council across the country to contribute to this national effort. We are working across government and with local authorities to realise appropriate accommodation opportunities to meet the demands of this urgent national response.

There are around 11,000 individuals accommodated in bridging hotels across the UK who had been evacuated as part of Operation Pitting.

The Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme has not yet opened, however, we publish statistics on resettlement by local authority at [Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets)

John Healey:**[56783]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 44194, on Afghanistan: Refugees, whether applicants to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme that are already in the UK will be settled before the Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme opens.

Victoria Atkins:

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) is separate from, and in addition to, the Afghanistan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP). Whilst the ACRS is not yet open, some of those who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme, which prioritised individuals who were considered to be at particular risk will be the first to be resettled under the ACRS. Officials are working urgently to stand up the remaining elements of the scheme, amid the complex and changing picture.

Further information on both the ARAP and the ACRS is set out in the policy statement published on gov.uk on 13 September, available at:

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

Gareth Thomas:**[62567]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many invitations to apply to the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme have (a) already been sent to potential applicants and (b) will be sent to potential applicants in the future.

Victoria Atkins:

Through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), the UK will relocate up to 20,000 people at risk, including women and girls and minority groups, so they can rebuild their lives in safety.

The scheme is not yet open. However, the first to be resettled through this scheme will be those who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme, which included individuals who were considered to be at particular risk – including women's rights activists, prosecutors and journalists.

Further information on the eligibility, prioritisation and referral of people for the ACRS is set out in the policy statement published on gov.uk on 13 September, available at:

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

Owen Thompson:**[63780]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of Afghan refugees qualify for rehousing in the UK.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 29 October 2021]: There is a significant cross Government effort underway to ensure Afghans arriving in the UK receive the support they need to rebuild their lives. This includes working at pace with NGOs, local authorities and the commercial sector to secure housing and ensure they have the support they need, while also making sure that local services aren't put under undue strain.

There are around 11,000 individuals accommodated in bridging hotels across the UK who had been evacuated as part of Operation Pitting. Permanent accommodation is

being sourced and will be provided for all Afghans evacuated to the UK. We will publish relocation figures in due course.

Owen Thompson: [\[63781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of Afghan refugees have moved from temporary accommodation to permanent residences.

Owen Thompson: [\[63782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her timeframe is for Afghan refugees to have left temporary accommodation for permanent residences.

Victoria Atkins:

There is a significant cross Government effort underway to ensure Afghans arriving in the UK receive the support they need to rebuild their lives. This includes working at pace with NGOs, local authorities and the commercial sector to secure housing and ensure they have the support they need, while also making sure that local services aren't put under undue strain.

There are around 11,000 individuals accommodated in bridging hotels across the UK who had been evacuated as part of Operation Pitting. Permanent accommodation is being sourced and will be provided for all Afghans evacuated to the UK. We will publish relocation figures in due course.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Department for International Trade: Quarantine

Mr Ben Bradshaw: [\[61094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many of her Department's ministers have been exempted from quarantine in a hotel after returning to the UK from a covid-19 red list country to which they have travelled for the purposes of conducting official business.

Penny Mordaunt:

Details of Ministers' overseas travel are published quarterly on GOV.UK, and all travel is arranged in line with official regulations.

Ministers are able to claim an exemption from travel restrictions under the 'Crown Servants or government contractors exemption'. The full text of this exemption can be found under the Government guidance Coronavirus (COVID-19): jobs that qualify for travel exemptions, available on GOV.UK.

■ **Department for International Trade: Stonewall**

Tim Loughton:

[\[61058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what funds have been paid by her Department to Stonewall in each of the last five years; and to what projects those funds were allocated.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) was established in July 2016 so is only able to cover the period from this date. Our financial records show a payment to Stonewall of £2,500 + VAT in financial years 2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2019/2020 and 2020/2021. These payments were for membership fees given to Stonewall as part of their Diversity Champions programme. DIT has no records of payment to Stonewall for any other activity.

■ **Diplomatic Relations: Australia**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[62665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the dinner she attended at the residence of the Australian High Commissioner on 13 June 2021, whether (a) a departmental official attended those discussions and (b) an official record of those discussions was sent to her Department as soon as possible after the event.

Penny Mordaunt:

Officials were not present at the event. A record of discussions was sent within 24 hours.

■ **Trade Agreements: New Zealand**

Ruth Jones:

[\[61208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she discussed the contents of the UK-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement with the Welsh Government before it was signed.

Penny Mordaunt:

We have not yet signed a Free Trade Agreement with New Zealand but we did reach Agreement in Principle (AIP) on Wednesday 27th October. My officials have been holding discussions with the Devolved Administrations through the entire negotiation and were in constant contact in the run up to AIP. My predecessor, Minister Hands, spoke to the Welsh Government on a number of occasions to update them on progress in negotiations with New Zealand, most recently at the Ministerial Forum for Trade on the 14th July. We offered meetings to all DAs in advance of the AIP for NZ being announced. The Welsh government accepted a meeting but the Minister was then not able to attend. We offered a further meeting which was accepted.

JUSTICE■ **Barristers**

Mr David Lammy: [61085]

o ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many junior barristers have specialised in crime in each financial year since 2010-11.

James Cartlidge:

Ministry of Justice (MOJ) does not routinely hold data on barristers' specialisms. However as part of the Criminal Legal Aid Review, MOJ worked with the Bar Council and other stakeholders to combine key datasets which were summarised in a published [Data compendium](#). This shows that the number of barristers in England and Wales who reported themselves as specialising in crime, and who carried out some publicly-funded criminal work, was 2,780 in 2018-19 and 2,690 in 2019-20 ([Table 5.3](#)). Comparable data is not available prior to 2018-19.

[Table 5.13](#) shows that, in 2019-20, 87% of this group were junior barristers and 13% were QCs.

■ **Berwyn Prison: Prison Officers**

Liz Saville Roberts: [64698]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many band 3 prison officers have left HMP Berwyn in each month since January 2021.

Victoria Atkins:

The latest set of HMPPS Workforce Bulletin statistics for the quarter to 30 June 2021 is available in published workforce statistics here: [Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service workforce quarterly: June 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

This publication provides headline statistics at an organisational, group/division level, we are not able to break this down further to establishment level by month.

Liz Saville Roberts: [64699]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will provide a breakdown of the cost of recruiting and training each new band 3 prisoner officer at HMP Berwyn.

Liz Saville Roberts: [64700]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much his Department has spent on recruiting and training new band 3 prison officers at HMP Berwyn in each year since 2018.

Victoria Atkins:

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) operates a centralised recruitment model to recruit and train new prison officers. Recruitment and training costs are not attributed to individual prisons but are averaged based on a variable cost per hire calculation for all recruitment and training activity. To obtain the information requested specifically for HMP Berwyn could only be obtained at disproportionate

cost and would contain commercially sensitive information relating to partner suppliers.

The overall estimated cost to recruit and train a new Band 3 Prison Officer is currently around £13,000 as published in the Prison Service Pay Review Body report. Further information can be found on page 55 at: [Prison Service Pay Review Body - Twentieth Report on England and Wales 2021 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/100000/prison-service-pay-review-body-report-2021.pdf) Please be aware that the figures contained in the document are estimates and can change as other assumptions change.

■ Courts: Video Conferencing

Mr David Lammy:

[61086]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the impact of video-conferencing linking defendants to the court on (a) remand decisions, (b) sentencing decisions and (c) the take-up of legal representation.

James Cartlidge:

It is for judges to decide whether it is in the interest of justice to enable a live link to be used having considered representations from parties in the case. We will continue to conduct research and testing to ensure that the current technology is reliable, user-friendly and accessible and meets the requirements of justice.

The MoJ is conducting an evaluation of the HMCTS reform programme to ensure that the effects of reform can be identified and assessed. This evaluation will help identify if the reform programme has met its aims and what effects it had, for whom and why, including the impacts on vulnerable users. Our [evaluation framework for HMCTS Reform](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/98444/evaluation-framework-for-hmcts-reform.pdf) was published in May 2021. An interim evaluation report is planned for publication in 2022, and a final evaluation report will be published following the end of the reform programme.

We are keen to evaluate impacts as part of any future research however plans for this are still to be confirmed.

■ Crown Court

Mr David Lammy:

[61084]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Crown Courts in England and Wales have operated below (a) 50 per cent or (b) 25 per cent of their operational capacity within the last 12 months.

James Cartlidge:

In the ten months September 2020 to June 2021 (in line with published statistics) one court recorded an average utilisation rate of below 50%, recording 48%, and no courts were below 25%. This court is the Central Criminal Court and utilisation was affected by a number of factors including maintenance works in two courtrooms and the reconfiguration of eight smaller courtrooms into jury deliberation rooms in support of social distancing. Only court sittings are recorded in utilisation calculations. This is

management information and reflects the data held at the date of extraction, which is subject to change.

■ Legal Aid Scheme

Mr David Lammy: [\[61079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of requests for legal aid funding before an inquest were successful in each of the last 20 years.

Mr David Lammy: [\[61080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many applications have been made for employment legal aid in each year over the last 20 years.

James Cartlidge:

The Legal Aid Agency publishes volumes of applications and grants for civil representation in the inquest and employment law categories at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/legal-aid-statistics>. The published figures (in that link) cover from the 2013/14 and 2006/07 financial years respectively.

Historic volumes are shown below. Please note that the earliest data available in the inquest category dates from the 2002/03 financial year. Data prior to the 2013/14 financial year for this category is sourced from raw data from a legacy operational database which, like any operational database, may contain errors. The figures have not been subject to validation or quality assured to the standard of Official Statistics, and should therefore not be interpreted as such.

INQUESTS

Financial Year	Applications	Granted	% Successful
2002-03	2	2	100%
2003-04	-	-	-
2004-05	25	23	92%
2005-06	75	67	89%
2006-07	127	105	83%
2007-08	160	92	58%
2008-09	159	88	55%
2009-10	176	97	55%
2010-11	136	75	55%
2011-12	143	87	61%
2012-13	151	77	51%

■ Legal Opinion: Fees and Charges

Mr David Lammy:

[\[61081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department has made of the potential economic benefits of expanding the provision of free specialist legal advice.

James Cartlidge:

As part of our commitment to coordinate and signpost people to the right legal support, we have made improvements to telephone signposting from MoJ telephone support lines, for individuals who do not fall within the scope of legal aid. In collaboration with DLHUC, we have also developed an online (guided pathway) signposting pilot to help individuals resolve housing disrepair issues in private rented accommodation. The online pilot launched on GOV.UK in April and offers tailored guidance and information about an individual's rights and responsibilities, with the aim that individuals will be able to resolve their issues independently before they escalate.

The Government has also committed to piloting early legal advice in social welfare law and this pilot will start in early 2022.

■ Marriage

Mike Amesbury:

[\[60506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to enable wedding celebrants to perform legally recognised marriages.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government announced in June 2019 that the Law Commission would conduct a fundamental review of the law on how and where people can legally marry in England and Wales. As part of this review, the Law Commission will make recommendations regarding how provision could be made for the use of independent celebrants. The Government will consider the Law Commission's recommendations carefully when received. It is right for us to await these recommendations.

■ Ministry of Justice: Quarantine

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[61102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many of his Department's ministers have been exempted from quarantine in a hotel after returning to the UK from a covid-19 red list country to which they have travelled for the purposes of conducting official business.

James Cartlidge:

Details of Ministers' overseas travel are published quarterly on GOV.UK, and all travel is arranged in line with official regulations.

Ministers are able to claim an exemption from travel restrictions under the 'Crown Servants or government contractors exemption'. The full text of this exemption can be found under the Government guidance Coronavirus (COVID-19): jobs that qualify for travel exemptions, available on GOV.UK.

■ **Non-payment: Fines**

Mr David Lammy: [61072]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many women are held in prisons in England and Wales for the non-payment of fines.

Victoria Atkins:

As of 30 June 2021, 6 women were held in prisons in England and Wales for non-payment of fines.

■ **Prison Accommodation: Females**

Mr David Lammy: [61070]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which women's prisons are operating (a) under capacity, (b) at capacity and (b) over capacity.

Victoria Atkins:

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) publishes monthly individual prison population and capacity information through the following link:

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

Mr David Lammy: [61071]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Female Offenders Strategy, published on 27 June 2018, what his Department's timeline is for meeting the objective of reducing the women's prison population.

Victoria Atkins:

The publication of the Female Offender Strategy in June 2018 was the start of a new and significant programme of work to deliver better outcomes for female offenders. There was no deadline attached to delivering the Strategy when it was published and we have always been clear that it will take several years to deliver its objectives, including reducing the women's prison population.

In June 2018, the female prison population was 3,803. This had reduced by 16% to 3,196 by June 2021, although it is likely that the impact of the pandemic will be responsible for some of this reduction. As of October 2021, there were 3,227 women in prison.

■ **Prisoners: Females**

Mr David Lammy: [61073]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of women prisoners in England and Wales are in prison as a result of non-violent offences.

Victoria Atkins:

The most recent data indicates that 36% of the female prison population are held for offences of violence against the person. However, of the remaining 64%, there may be other offenders held for offences where violence has occurred but because there is no set guidance on which other types of offences should be classed as 'violent'/'non-violent', it is difficult to provide an exact total proportion.

[Offender management statistics quarterly: January to March 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2021)

Prisoners: Pregnancy

Mr David Lammy: [61068]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many pregnant women are (a) imprisoned and (b) held on remand across the prison estate.

Mr David Lammy: [61069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report by the Prison and Probation Ombudsman entitled Investigation into baby death at HMP Bronzefield HMP identifies key failings, published on 22 September 2021, what steps his Department plans to take in response to the finding that every pregnancy in prison is high risk.

Victoria Atkins:

The death of 'Baby A' was a tragedy and we have taken a range of actions to prevent this from happening again in partnership with Health.

On 20 September the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) published a new policy on pregnancy, Mother and Baby Units and maternal separation from children up to the age of two in women's prisons, which contains a range of reforms for improving the care of pregnant women, including reforms that address the learning from Baby A.

As part of our reforms, we have increased central data collection on self-declared pregnancies in women's prisons. We will be publishing annual snapshots in the HMPPS Annual Digest. The first publication on 29 July, which covers the period July 2020 - April 2021, showed that on average there were 26 women in prison self-declared as pregnant each week. At present, there is no central collection that breaks this data down into those sentenced and those held on remand, however this is collected locally by individual prisons to ensure care is appropriate.

Women in prison should have access to the same range and quality of healthcare services compared to that which they would find in the community, including midwifery, obstetric and health visiting services. For information on the commissioning of clinical services for pregnant women in prison please refer to NHS England and NHS Improvement, the responsible authority.

■ Prisons

Mr David Lammy:

[61074]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) prisons and (b) young offenders institutions have been served with an Urgent Notification in each year since 2000.

Victoria Atkins:

The Urgent Notification (UN) process was launched in 2017. Since then, the UN was invoked seven times across Her Majesty's Prisons and Young Offenders' Institution:

2018

- HMP Nottingham – invoked on 17 January.
- HMP Exeter – invoked on 30 May.
- HMP Birmingham – invoked on 20 August.
- HMP Bedford – invoked on 13 September.

2019

- HMP Bristol – invoked on 13 June.
- HMP/YOI Feltham A – invoked on 24 July.

2021

- HMP/YOI Chelmsford – invoked on 27 August.

The vast majority of the establishments have made crucial improvements in the areas of concerns highlighted by the Inspectorates. Some of this is noted by the Inspectorates in their follow up visits at the establishments.

The safety and wellbeing of all children and prisoners under our care is paramount so they can turn their lives around. Any concerns raised by the Inspectorates during their visits are taken seriously.

More information on the establishments that were issued with an Urgent Notification can be found on the gov.uk website [here](#).

■ Prisons: Distance Learning

Mr David Lammy:

[61075]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of cells across the (a) youth estate and (b) prison estate have access to technology capable of delivering in-cell education.

Victoria Atkins:

In-cell technology is available in three prisons and one young offender institution. We are currently deploying in-cell technology into a further 11 prisons – including the remaining three young offender institutions.

The technology provides access to digital services and includes educational, mental health content and more.

We plan to make the education providers 'virtual campus' system available on the in-cell equipment in due course.

Access to digital education continues to be available to prisoners in other areas of the prison.

■ Prisons: Industrial Health and Safety

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[64697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of HMPPS adopting the Safe Inside Prisons Charter published by the Joint Unions in Prisons Alliance; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins:

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) shares the desire of the Joint Unions in Prisons Alliance (JUPA) to maintain workplace safety, and we to continue to progress this.

My officials provided a response on the individual aims of the Charter in a letter to them dated 23 October 2020.

■ Prisons: Labour Turnover

Mr David Lammy:

[\[61078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the turnover of prison staff in (a) Band 2 and (b) Bands 3 to 5.

Victoria Atkins:

To help stem attrition in Operational Band 2-5's grades Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service has created a retention strategy which is linked to wider activities around employee experience, employee lifecycle and staff engagement at work. As part of this strategy, we are looking at leaver trend data, undertaking in-depth exit interviews and using this feedback to establish the drivers of attrition in Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service. Local, Regional or National Interventions are then agreed to ensure that we are embedding retention plans in establishments. This work consists of reviewing existing data, policy, process and benefit arrangements for staff and establishing how best to optimise them in order to retain employees and stabilise the workforce.

■ Prisons: Security

Mr David Lammy:

[\[61076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his Department's press release, £100 million crackdown on crime in prison, published on 13 August 2019, how much of the £100 million for improving prison security has been spent on the installation of 74 x-ray scanners as announced by his Department on 14 October 2021.

Victoria Atkins:

£6m has been spent on the installation of 74 x-ray body scanners. This sum is comprised of hardware, installation and commissioning costs combined with

construction works required in prisons to accommodate the hardware. Some additional associated spend linked to MOJ project and programme resourcing has been incurred but has not been included as is not directly attributed to specific projects.

The remaining investment is for the implementation of measures across a number of priority sites to operate 'airport style' gate security, drugs trace detection, mobile phone blocking, an expanded counter corruption investigation team and a new 'corruption prevention' function and multi-agency investigations into high harm Serious and Organised Criminals.

■ Prisons: Staff

Mr David Lammy:

[\[61077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of frontline prison staffing levels in the context of current prison population projections.

Victoria Atkins:

As prison capacity expands, total staffing requirements are increasing. The department carefully monitors resourcing levels to ensure that we can manage current staffing levels and make accurate predictions around future needs. Work is ongoing to define the workforce need in association with the new prisons and expansion projects.

■ Prosecutions: Coronavirus

Mr David Lammy:

[\[61087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Lord Wolfson's oral evidence of 27 April 2021 to the Justice Committee, Q148, what plans the Government has to scrutinise non-CPS prosecutors given Lord Wolfson's observation that HMCTS had identified errors in 10 per cent of Covid Single Justice Procedure cases.

James Cartlidge:

A review of Single Justice Procedure (SJP) cases dealt with between 1st September and 30th October 2020 showed that legal advisers and justices identified errors in 10% of cases. The errors are not caused by the type of proceedings; work done over the summer of 2020 suggested that the primary cause was the volume of regulations and the constant amendments, combined with the speed of introduction and the conditions in which officers issuing fixed penalty notices had to work. In the autumn of 2020, work was done with police forces and justices' legal advisers to reduce the errors. Anecdotally, and from limited data, the error rate with the new round of SJP proceedings appears to be lower than last year. As the regulations ceased in the summer, the numbers of Covid SJP cases are set to decline.

■ Remand in Custody: Children

Mr David Lammy:

[61082]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many children were remanded in custody for their own protection, in each year of the last 10 years.

Victoria Atkins:

There is no centrally held data on the number of children remanded for their own protection and the requested information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr David Lammy:

[61083]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of BAME children held on remand were subsequently found guilty of an offence in each of the last 10 years.

James Cartlidge:

The Bail Act 1976 and the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012 provides the framework for courts to remand children to custody.

Court outcomes broken down by type of remand and ethnicity are available from 2011 in the Crown Court and 2013 for the Magistrates' Court and can be found at the following links under remand:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2020>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2016>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2015>

Information on ethnicity for the Magistrates' Courts for 2011 and 2012, however, could only be obtained at disproportionate costs.

■ Stonewall: Ministry of Justice

Tim Loughton:

[61053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what funds have been paid by his Department to Stonewall in each of the last five years; and to what projects those funds were allocated.

James Cartlidge:

In the period covering the last five financial years the MOJ has paid the following sums to Stonewall:

2016-17 Financial Year

£354.00: MOJ conference attendance

2017-18 Financial Year

£3,000.00: MOJ Stonewall Diversity Champions Membership

£3,768.00: MOJ Role Models Cluster Programme

£358.00: MOJ conference attendance

2018-19 Financial Year

£3,000.00: MOJ Stonewall Diversity Champions Membership

2019-20 Financial Year

£3,000.00: MOJ Stonewall Diversity Champions Membership

£460.00: Office of the Public Guardian conference attendance

2020-21 Financial Year

£3,000.00: Stonewall Diversity Champions Membership

£837.60: Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service conference attendance

Total departmental spend across the last five financial years totals £17,778.40 with costs inclusive of VAT.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ **Building Regulations: Floods**

Olivia Blake:

[\[64756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will introduce a set of flood resilience baseline building regulation standards for new properties and properties that have been flooded which are being reinstated.

Christopher Pincher:

Statutory guidance to the Building Regulations in *Approved Document C Site preparation and resistance to contaminants and moisture* already promotes the use of flood resilient and resistant construction in flood prone areas

National planning policy is clear that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided. Where development is necessary, it should be made safe and resilient – and without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Mitigation measures such as defences, landscaping or raising floor levels can sometimes make development acceptable in such areas. Such measures can be made a requirement of any planning consent.

■ **Building Safety Fund**

Hilary Benn:

[\[64549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the replacement of (a) Reinzink and (b) Nedzinc wall systems is eligible for funding from the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

With reference to the Building Safety Fund eligibility criteria, as both Rheinzinc and Nedzinc cladding panels are non-combustible and have a classification of A1, they would need to be present in combination with combustible insulation that meets the eligibility criteria in order to be found eligible. More information on the eligibility criteria for the Building Safety Fund can be found in Prospectus Annex A: Technical Information of the Building Safety Fund Prospectus, available at: www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#prospectus---outlining-eligibility-for-the-fund.

Hilary Benn:**[64550]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, for what technical reason the Reinzinc and Nedzinc wall systems on The Gateway building in central Leeds were rejected for funding from the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

Eligibility for the Building Safety Fund is determined in reference to the criteria listed in Prospectus Annex A: Technical Information of the Building Safety Fund Prospectus. It is available here: www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#prospectus---outlining-eligibility-for-the-fund These criteria, informed by a series of full-scale fire tests published by the DLUHC, are designed to find eligible the most unsafe forms of cladding system.

■ Buildings: Insulation**Stephen Hammond:****[60390]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to announce full details of the long-term, low interest, Government-backed financing arrangement for cladding removal in buildings between 11 and 18 metres, as announced in February 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

I refer my Rt Hon Friend to my answer to Question UIN 59764 on 28 October 2021.

Preet Kaur Gill:**[61239]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to change Government guidance to fire risk assessors to ensure that buildings that have previously received a B2 rating in EWS1 surveys conducted prior to the change are guaranteed to receive fair treatment from lenders.

Christopher Pincher:

The expert advice, published on 21 June 2021, states that where EWS1 forms and assessments have already been completed for buildings below 18 metres, it is strongly recommended that these assessments are reviewed by competent professionals to make sure that the proposed solution is cost effective and proportionate. In the small number of cases where there are known to be concerns these should be addressed primarily through risk management and mitigation. In the

minority of cases under 18 metres where concerns are identified via an up-to-date statutory fire risk assessment, and risk management and mitigation is not an option, leaseholders will be able to access a financing scheme, where costs will not exceed £50 a month and should not inhibit mortgage decisions.

Dame Margaret Hodge:

[63644]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department takes to evaluate the risk of fire in buildings; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of aligning trigger height thresholds for the use of combustible materials with firefighting capabilities.

Christopher Pincher:

In January 2020, we consulted on the proposal to extend the ban of the use of combustible materials in and on the external walls of buildings. We continue to review and analyse the numerous and detailed responses we have received and develop our proposal. We will publish a response to the consultation in due course.

In April 2020, the Government published the workplan for the technical review of the statutory guidance to the Building Regulations with regards to fire safety (Approved Document B). We have commissioned research for this fundamental review which will address key fire safety issues. We have already started research on trigger heights and thresholds, means of escape for disabled people, specialised housing, and other important topics. Details of the technical review are set out here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/877365/Technical_review_of_Approved_Document_B_workplan.pdf

The Technical Review will provide us a robust evidence base to make any future policy decisions.

■ Buildings: Safety

Dame Margaret Hodge:

[63646]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will review the scope of the Building Safety Bill and the 18 metre threshold at which the Building Safety Regulator has oversight of buildings.

Christopher Pincher:

The Building Safety Regulator will have a duty to keep under review the safety and standard of all buildings, not just those over 18 metres. It could fulfil this oversight duty by undertaking research, using evidence, data and intelligence to identify and assess emerging risks, encouraging learning to be shared and making recommendations to Government to improve standards when needed. This could include recommending altering the definition of higher-risk building if the conditions for doing so are met.

The Building Safety Bill has a provision requiring the Secretary of State to appoint an independent person to carry out a periodic review of the system every five years once

Royal Assent is received. The 18 metre height threshold used to define higher-risk building for the new regulatory regime set out in the Building Safety Bill and the effectiveness of the Regulator in carrying out its duties must be covered under these reviews.

■ **Community Renewal Fund: Northern Ireland**

Louise Haigh: [\[64678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many bids to the Community Renewal Fund were received from Northern Ireland.

Neil O'Brien:

The UK Community Renewal Fund received a total of 83 bids from organisations in Northern Ireland.

■ **Conservation Areas**

Stuart Anderson: [\[63880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department has taken to (a) increase the number of conservation areas and (b) protect those areas from excessive development.

Christopher Pincher:

The designation of conservation areas is a matter for local planning authorities. They are required by law to determine from time to time whether any part of their area should be designated as a conservation area. The planning system protects conservation areas in a number of ways – as designated heritage assets, the National Planning Policy Framework gives them strong policy protections; the demolition of unlisted buildings within them requires planning permission; permitted development rights (which allow certain development without a planning application) are more restricted and there are protections for trees within them.

■ **Councillors: Safety**

Ruth Jones: [\[61209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure elected officials in local government can safely carry out their duties.

Kemi Badenoch:

Violence and intimidation will not be tolerated and have no place in public life. Government is firmly committed to the safety and security of all of those in public life.

The Government updated the House on action being taken to tackle intimidation in public life in a recent [WMS \(UIN HCWS833\)](#). This includes introducing a new electoral sanction of intimidation against those who participate in elections. The Local Government Association also provides comprehensive guidance and advice for councillors on personal safety.

■ **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Quarantine**

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[61095]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many of his Department's ministers have been exempted from quarantine in a hotel after returning to the UK from a covid-19 red list country to which they have travelled for the purposes of conducting official business.

Eddie Hughes:

No Minister from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has travelled to a country while the country was on the Covid-19 red list for the purpose of conducting official business.

■ **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Stonewall**

Tim Loughton:

[61059]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what funds have been paid by his Department to Stonewall in each of the last five years; and to what projects those funds were allocated.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) , formerly the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, became a member of Stonewall Diversity Champions in 2010. DLUHC is no longer a member of Stonewall UK Diversity Champions Programme, it concluded its membership with the 2018/19 subscription which was also the year MHCLG last applied to be included on Stonewall's "Workplace Equality Index. Detailed below is the funds allocated to Stonewall by project for each of the last five financial years

		STONEWALL DIVERSITY CHAMPIONS ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP 16/17
2016/17 FY	2,400.00	
2017/18 FY	7,506	Stonewall In House Allies Programme (£6,000) Stonewall – Leadership Program (£1,506)
2018/19 FY	3,000	Stonewall - Diversity Champions Annual Membership 18/19 (£3,000)
2019/20 FY	Nil	
2020/21 FY	Nil	

■ Elections: Visual Impairment

Jim Shannon:

[\[62727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he plans to take with Cabinet colleagues to ensure that the partially sighted are not adversely affected by potential electoral identification legislative reform.

Kemi Badenoch:

It is integral to our democracy that everybody is able to make their voice heard and that elections are accessible for all those eligible to vote.

The Government in its manifesto committed to protecting the integrity of our democracy by introducing identification to vote at polling stations. Stealing someone's vote is stealing their voice. Voter fraud is a crime that we cannot allow room for and we must stamp out any potential for it to take place in elections. A broad range of documents will be accepted and any eligible voter who does not have one of the required forms of photographic identification, will be able to apply for a free, local Voter Card from their local authority.

We continue to work with local authorities, the Electoral Commission, charities and civil society organisations to make sure that reforms, including the provision of a Voter Card, are delivered in a way that is inclusive for all voters.

■ Homelessness and Sleeping Rough: Harlow

Robert Halfon:

[\[62705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much funding the Government has provided to help tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Harlow since 2018-19.

Eddie Hughes:

Over £1.065 million funding has been allocated to Harlow district council to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in 21/22.

Overall, the Government has committed over £750 million to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping this year further demonstrating the Government's commitment to end rough sleeping this Parliament and fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act.

■ Housing: Herefordshire

Jesse Norman:

[\[64596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the impact on the construction industry in Herefordshire of the housing moratorium issued in October 2019.

Christopher Pincher:

I refer my Rt Hon Friend to the answer given to Question UIN 59777 on 28 October 2021.

■ Land: Regeneration

Ruth Cadbury: [\[64643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the £1.5 billion announced in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 to regenerate underused land will go directly to local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The £1.5 billion funding announced at Spending Review will help to regenerate communities and level up the country, unlocking homes on derelict and underused land and delivering transport links and community facilities.

The processes around how this funding will be allocated, and the criteria against funding requests will be considered, are currently in development. Further details on how to access the funding will be provided, but in the meantime we continue to encourage local authorities to engage with Homes England where they have schemes which unlock housing supply and support local growth opportunities.

■ Local Government Finance: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell: [\[64658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he will take to support local authorities to reduce deficits accumulated as a result of covid-19-related expenditure.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has allocated over £12 billion directly to councils since the start of the pandemic, over £6 billion of which is unringfenced, recognising that local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet their major COVID-19 pressures. We have also announced £1.6 billion additional grant for local government for each year of the next Spending Review which local authorities can use to meet funding pressures, including those exacerbated by the pandemic. We continue to closely monitor the sector's finances as we emerge from the pandemic.

■ Local Government: Expenditure

Mr Clive Betts: [\[64535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much of the £4.8 billion increase in local government spending announced in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 is available in each of the next three years; and whether those amounts include funds from the National Insurance levy.

Kemi Badenoch:

In his spending review announcement on 27 October 2021, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced around £1.6 billion additional LGDEL funding for each year of the Spending Review for social care and other services.

This is in addition to the £5.4 billion announced on 7 September to support reforms for adult social care. This includes £3.6 billion to reform the social care charging

system and enable all local authorities to move towards paying providers a fair rate for care; and a further £1.8 billion to institute major improvements across the social care system in England, including at least £500 million investment in the workforce. Further details will be announced later this year in the Adult Social Care Reform White Paper.

■ Local Housing Allowance: Homelessness

Lucy Powell:

[\[64625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 policy costings document, published 27 October 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on homelessness of the decision to maintain local housing allowance at 2020-21 cash levels.

Eddie Hughes:

The causes of homelessness are complex and it is driven by a range of factors, both personal and structural.

In April 2020 we boosted investment in Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates by nearly £1 billion providing 1.5 million claimants of Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit with around £600 more housing support in 2020/21 than they would otherwise have received. In 2021/22 we have maintained LHA rates at the same cash level.

As set out at the Autumn Budget, the forecast default is that LHA rates for 2022-23 will be maintained at the elevated cash rates agreed for 2020/21. This will be confirmed at the benefits uprating review.

For those who require additional support Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available. Since 2011 we have provided over £1 billion in DHPs to local authorities to support households with their housing costs.

The Government has also announced an additional £65 million this year to help those with rent arrears who may be at risk of homelessness. This means the Government is spending more than £800 million this year alone on tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

■ Members: Correspondence

John Penrose:

[\[61135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to respond to the letters from the hon. Member for Weston-Super-Mare dated 11 August 2021 and 22 September on behalf of a constituent on parking charges.

Neil O'Brien:

The response to this letter was sent on 29 October.

■ Mobile Homes: Rents

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[58713]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to alter the basis upon which annual rent increases are calculated for park home pitches.

Eddie Hughes:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: In our response to the review of park homes legislation, we made a commitment to change the pitch fee review inflationary index from the Retail Price Index (RPI) to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). We remain committed to improving the lives of park home residents and will introduce the required legislation when the parliamentary timetable allows.

■ Religious Buildings: Closures

Ruth Jones:

[61216]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to protect (a) Bevis Marks Synagogue in the City of London and (b) other places of worship from closure.

Kemi Badenoch:

Whilst I cannot comment specifically on Bevis Marks Synagogue, due to the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role in the planning system, the Government recognises the financial difficulties that many places of worship have faced in the last 19 months. To respond to the impact of Covid-19, we have available a package of support specifically for charities and businesses. Places of worship and faith groups that are also registered charities have been able to apply to a number of those schemes. This included the Government's £750 million package of support specifically for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations (VCSE).

■ Right to Buy Scheme

Lucy Powell:

[64627]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the number of homes sold through right to buy that will be replaced with (a) First Homes and (b) shared ownership.

Christopher Pincher:

In March 2021, the Government announced a package of flexibilities to how local authorities can spend their Right to Buy receipts including allowing replacements to be delivered as Shared Ownership or First Homes. This will help local authorities to build the types of home that they think are most needed in their communities. As part of these reforms, information will be collected from local authorities on whether Right to Buy replacements are delivered as Affordable Rent, Social Rent, First Homes or Shared Ownership. This information will be published as official statistics annually from Summer 2022.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Financial Services: Northern Ireland

Claire Hanna:

[\[58551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps his Department is taking to support the development of Northern Ireland's FinTech and cyber security sectors.

Conor Burns:

The Fintech and Cyber Security sectors are two of Northern Ireland's leading innovative industries. Through the *New Decade, New Approach* agreement, the UK Government committed to achieving 5000 Cyber Security jobs in Northern Ireland by 2030.

I continue to work closely with the Northern Ireland Fintech envoy, and recently met to discuss an ambitious strategy to ensure Northern Ireland can become a world leader in the sector.

In September 2021, the Northern Ireland Office hosted a NI Business and Innovation Showcase which brought together industries such as Fintech and Cyber to London to network and promote their products.

■ Northern Ireland Government

Louise Haigh:

[\[64675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many implementation review meetings have been held since the New Decade, New Approach agreement was signed.

Louise Haigh:

[\[64676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many quarterly updates on progress have been published under the New Decade, New Approach Agreement, Annexe F.

Conor Burns:

Since the New Decade, New Approach agreement restored the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive in January 2020, there has been one implementation review meeting.

We continue to work with the Irish Government and the parties in the Northern Ireland Executive on the timing of the next meeting, which we expect to take place in the coming weeks.

We will use that engagement to agree the terms of an implementation report.

Louise Haigh:

[\[64677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 June 2021 on Northern Ireland update, HCWS105, whether it remains his policy to introduce legislation on language, culture and identity in October 2021.

Conor Burns:

It is disappointing that the Northern Ireland Executive has not taken forward the balanced package of identity, language and culture legislation that was negotiated as part of the New Decade, New Approach agreement.

In the absence of progress, the Government is taking the necessary steps to introduce the legislation.

■ **Northern Ireland Office: Quarantine****Mr Ben Bradshaw:**[\[61103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many of his Department's ministers have been exempted from quarantine in a hotel after returning to the UK from a covid-19 red list country to which they have travelled for the purposes of conducting official business.

Conor Burns:

No Northern Ireland Office ministers have been exempted from quarantine in a hotel after returning to the UK from a covid-19 red list country to which they have travelled for the purposes of conducting official business.

■ **Northern Ireland Office: Stonewall****Tim Loughton:**[\[61067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what funding his Department has allocated to Stonewall in each of the last five years; and for what projects.

Conor Burns:

The following payments have been made to Stonewall Equality Limited:

2019/20: £0.00

2020/21: £3,000.00

2021/22: £3,000.00

These payments are for the Northern Ireland Office's participation in the Diversity Champions programme run by Stonewall. Participation in the scheme gives the NIO access to training, resources and advice on good practice on inclusivity. The programme also gives us access to the annual Workplace Equality Index run by Stonewall.

TRANSPORT■ **Buses: Exhaust Emissions****Sam Tarry:**[\[64753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to paragraph 2.109 of the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, published on 27 October 2021, how many

zero emission buses will be funded by the additional £355 million funding; and what the planned timescale is for (a) producing and (b) delivering those buses to roads.

Trudy Harrison:

As set out in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, £355 million of new funding has been made available for zero emission buses. £150 million of this funding has been made available for 2021-22 with the remaining funding available over the Spending Review period. The Department will provide further details on how the £355 million of new funding will be used in due course.

In addition, up to 900 zero emission buses and associated infrastructure will be supported through existing funding made available since February 2020 from the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme, the All Electric Bus Town or City scheme and the Ultra Low Emission Bus scheme.

Sam Tarry:

[\[64754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to paragraph 4.65 of the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, published on 27 October 2021 on the additional £70 million Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) funding, how many buses are (a) in production and (b) on the road.

Trudy Harrison:

£70.8 million has been allocated from the Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) to five local transport authorities: Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority, Leicester City Council, Kent County Council, Milton Keynes Council and Warrington Borough Council.

Now that funding has been allocated, local transport authorities can begin implementing their proposals to introduce zero emission buses and supporting infrastructure.

■ **Department for Transport: Stonewall**

Tim Loughton:

[\[61060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what funding his Department has allocated to Stonewall in each of the last five years; and for what projects.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department for Transport, including its Executive Agencies (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, Vehicle Certification Agency, and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency), has allocated the following funding to Stonewall in the last five years:

1. £7,863.01 excluding VAT – Membership for the Department including Executive Agencies, 2016/2017
2. £10,000 excluding VAT – Membership for the Department including Executive Agencies, 2018

3. £468 excluding VAT - Programme provided by Stonewall Cymru, Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, 2018/2019
4. £10,000 excluding VAT – Membership for the Department including Executive Agencies, 2019
5. £180 excluding VAT – Networking event, Maritime and Coastguard Agency, 2019/2020
6. £500 excluding VAT – Programme provided by Stonewall Cymru, Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, 2019/2020
7. £10,000 excluding VAT – Membership for the Department including Executive Agencies, 2020
8. £5,450 excluding VAT - Seven (online) training sessions, accessible to staff of Department for Transport Core, 2020

The Department has no plans currently to renew its Stonewall membership.

■ Great British Railways

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[61108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the Great British Railways Retailing Phase One tender document.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Great British Railways will become an online retailer in its own right, ending the current confusion passengers face with multiple train operating company websites. The Department is working with its partners to develop and deliver the new single industry website and app and we will confirm progress in due course. The Department does not, however, recognise the document referred to in this question.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[61109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to progress his plans to deliver the an effective and innovative retail and ticketing proposition for Great British Railways with his tender process and bid document.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Great British Railways will become an online retailer in its own right, ending the current confusion passengers face with multiple train operating company websites. The Department is working with its partners to deliver the industry retail site, to improve passenger experience. We will confirm progress in due course.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[61110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will require the highest levels of consumer data protection in his forthcoming Great British Railways Retailing Phase tender document, to ensure future GBR customers are not subject to their data being collected by any bidding company.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department will seek to ensure that any successful bidder for a future procurement is not able to exploit customer data to suit its own commercial ends. We expect our delivery partners, including in the future Great British Railways, to demonstrate how they would comply with the relevant data collection requirements, including the 2018 Data Protection Act, General Data Protection Regulation and the Information Commissioner's Office regulations. The Department does not, however, recognise the document referred to in this question.

Railways**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[63841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps is he taking to encourage the use of rail.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We have introduced new flexible season tickets across England this year to help encourage passengers to return to the railway.

Railways: Bristol**Thangam Debbonaire:**[\[62750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with South Western Railway on the planned withdrawal of their Bristol to Salisbury train service.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department tasked South Western Railway with finding timetable efficiencies which could be actioned for the December 2021 timetable change. South Western Railway identified Bristol to Salisbury services, which are also provided by Great Western Railway. As a consequence of this, the Department agreed to the removal of these direct South Western Railway Bristol to Salisbury services on the basis that there is sufficient capacity provided by Great Western Railway.

Railways: Chester**Christian Matheson:**[\[63747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans does his Department has to restore hourly direct Avanti West Coast services between Chester and London that were in place prior to the covid-19 outbreak.

Christian Matheson:[\[63748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the number of direct Avanti services currently being provided to Chester and North Wales.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Currently Avanti West Coast (AWC) operate two direct trains per day in each direction between London Euston and Holyhead via Chester. The Department is

working with Train Operating Companies to develop attractive timetables that are reliable, deliver excellent performance for passengers, and offer good value for money for the taxpayer.

■ Railways: Costs

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[63844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the press release published by his Department on 4 October 2021, entitled New competition to find first HQ of Great British Railways, in which specific areas of rail his Department plans to drive down on costs.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Great British Railways which will improve efficiency, making it easier and cheaper to plan maintenance, renewals and upgrades' by unleashing the expertise and innovation of the private sector, delivering a more competitive and financially sustainable rail industry, saving money for the taxpayer.

Savings will be expected a result of the removal of duplication and fragmentation, the introduction of streamlined industry processes, the adoption of modern working practices, and the removal of mis-aligned incentives across the system.

■ Railways: Fares

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[63842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of lowering rail fare costs when running costs are reduced.

Trudy Harrison:

Rail is already a green mode of transport for both passengers and goods and we are committed to delivering a net zero rail network by 2050. The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail set out a transformation in how people will pay for their journeys in the future to encourage a shift to rail. We are working with industry to modernise fares ticketing and on long distance routes, flexible pricing will improve choice and enable cheaper fares at quieter times.

■ Railways: Timetables

Christian Matheson: [\[63749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to include local stakeholders outside of the rail industry in the consultations on covid-19 recovery timetables.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Throughout the pandemic, the Department has been working with the rail industry to keep the country moving while protecting the public purse. Recovery timetables were designed to be flexible, so they could be amended to reflect fluctuating demand.

Given the fast-changing nature of the situation, train operators were unable to follow regular railways procedures, including stakeholder consultations. As new passenger demand patterns are established, we expect train operators to consider local stakeholders when developing their plans.

■ Road Signs and Markings

Chris Grayling:

[\[61119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to Answer of 21 October to Question 56409, if he will list the specific signs which are officially approved but not covered by the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions, 2016, as amended, and require formal approval from his Department before a local authority can install them.

Trudy Harrison:

A list of traffic signs that have been approved by the Department, but are not prescribed in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions, 2016, as amended, and require approval by the Secretary of State for Transport, are shown in the table below:

NP 409 & NP 409.1 VARIABLE SPEED LIMIT START/END

NP 419 TIMES OF OPERATION OF HIGH OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANE AHEAD

NP 420 DEFINITION OF HIGH OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANE

NP 420.1 DEFINITION OF HIGH OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANE - NO HGVs OVER 7.5T

NP 420.2 DEFINITION OF HIGH OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANE - NO HGVs

NP 421 HIGH OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANE AHEAD

NP 423 RISK OF LORRIES OVERTURNING ON ADVERSE CAMBER

NP 426 ROAD NUMBER AND REFERENCE

NP 428 & 428.1 START AND END OF FOOTWAY PARKING PROHIBITION

NP 428.2 FOOTWAY PARKING PROHIBITION REPEATER SIGN

NP 429 EMERGENCY ACCESS

NP 430 STOP FOR CONVOY

NP 431 WAIT HERE FOR CONVOY

NP 432 NEW ROAD SURFACE

NP 433 LOW EMISSION ZONE

NP 545RM ROAD MARKING - CHILDREN

NP 622.11 TUNNEL CLASSIFICATION PLATE

NP 409 & NP 409.1 VARIABLE SPEED LIMIT START/END

NP 818.4A DANGEROUS GOODS PROHIBITED

NP 829.8 ACCIDENT SLOW

NP 829.9 ACCIDENT USE HARD SHOULDER

NP 829.10 EMERGENCY SERVICES TRAINING

NP 958.2 HIGH OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANE AHEAD

NP 958.6 OFF SIDE BUS LANE AHEAD

NP 958.7 OFF SIDE HIGH OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANE AHEAD

NP 958.9 BUS, LORRY AND MOTOR CYCLE LANE AHEAD

NP 958.10 OFF SIDE BUS ONLY LANE AHEAD

NP 958.11 NEAR SIDE BUS ONLY LANE AHEAD

NP 958.12 BUS, AUTHORISED VEHICLES AND MOTOR CYCLE LANE AHEAD

NP 958.13 BUS AND AUTHORISED VEHICLES LANE AHEAD

NP 958.14 OFF SIDE BUS AND AUTHORISED VEHICLES LANE AHEAD

NP 958.15 OFF SIDE BUS AND MOTORCYCLE LANE AHEAD

NP 959.2 HIGH OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANE

NP 959.5 OFF SIDE BUS LANE, CYCLE AND TAXI

NP 959.6 BUS AND LORRY LANE

NP 959.7 BUS, LORRY AND MOTOR CYCLE LANE

NP 959.8 OFF SIDE BUS ONLY LANE

NP 959.9 NEAR SIDE BUS ONLY LANE

NP 959.10 BUS, AUTHORISED VEHICLES AND MOTOR CYCLE LANE

NP 959.11 BUS AND AUTHORISED VEHICLES LANE

NP 959.12 OFF SIDE BUS AND MOTOR CYCLE LANE

NP 960.4 CONTRA-FLOW BUS, CYCLE AND TAXI LANE

NP 962.3 HIGH OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANE ON ROAD AT JUNCTION AHEAD

NP 962.5 BUS AND MOTORCYCLE LANE ON ROAD AT JUNCTION AHEAD

NP 409 & NP 409.1 VARIABLE SPEED LIMIT START/END

NP 2919.2 MOTORWAY LORRY ONLY SERVICE AREA AHEAD

NP 3015 WIG-WAG SIGNAL

NP MW TOLL MOTORWAY (PERMANENT) : 'Toll'

NS 56A DIVERSION ROUTE SYMBOL

NS 66 HIGH OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANE

NS 68 OVERTURNING LORRY

NS 70 PARKING PLACE PARTIALLY OR WHOLLY ON VERGE OR FOOTWAY

NS 74 VEHICLE CARRYING DANGEROUS GOODS

S 68 CLEAN AIR ZONE

NP 551.3 SMALL WILD ANIMALS

NP 2514 PARK ACTIVE

NP 1028.7 E-SCOOTER BAY MARKING

■ Transport: Schools

Peter Kyle:

[64683]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of school buses are hybrid or electric.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department for Transport Annual Bus Statistics include information on what proportion of buses used by local operators in England are electric or diesel-hybrid. These figures cover all operators who run local bus services, including those who also do non-local work (e.g. private hire, school contracts). Operators who do solely non-local work are excluded. Local bus services include school services that are accessible to the general public, school services where the service cannot be used by fare-paying members of the public at bus stops are not included.

The Annual bus statistics: year ending March 2020 show as at March 2020, two per cent of buses used by local operators in England were electric and 14 per cent were diesel-hybrid. The Annual bus statistics: year ending March 2021 are due to be published on 3rd November 2021.

As set out in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 £355 million of new funding has been made available for zero emission buses. The Department will provide further details on how the £355 million of new funding will be used in due course.

TREASURY**■ Air Passenger Duty**

Adam Afriye: [\[64566\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the impact of the reduction in domestic air passenger duty, as announced in the Autumn Budget on 27 October 2021, on the Government's ability to achieve its aviation emissions reductions targets.

Rachael Maskell: [\[64660\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the potential effect of (a) reducing air passenger duty and (b) not implementing the fuel escalator on the UK's carbon footprint.

Helen Whately:

At Budget, the Government announced that, from April 2023, it will introduce a new reduced domestic band of Air Passenger Duty (APD), covering flights between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, in order to support connectivity across the UK. In addition, the Government will introduce a new ultra long-haul band, which will ensure that those who fly furthest, and have the greatest environmental impact, will pay the most. Domestic aviation accounted for less than 1% of the UK's total emissions in 2019.

Fuel duty is levied on the producers or importers of fuel, and is generally included in the price most drivers pay for petrol and diesel at the pump. Therefore, the more fuel that is consumed, the more fuel duty is paid. As noted in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 Policy Costings, there are uncertainties around the behavioural response of the fuel duty freeze.

Transport is a major cost for families and businesses, and to help with the cost of living, the government has frozen fuel duty rates, saving a cumulative £1900 for the average UK car driver, compared to the pre-2010 escalator.

■ Land Registry: Public Expenditure

Lucy Powell: [\[64623\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to page 41 of the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 Policy Costings document, what plans he has for the allocation of the £225m that is expected to be made from the increase in Land Registry caseworker capacity.

Mr Simon Clarke:

As part of the Spending Review, Her Majesty's Land Registry (HMLR) is investing in additional caseworker capacity in the short term to address a backlog of cases for updating or changing the Land Register. Processing these outstanding registrations will provide additional exchequer revenue.

Over the Spending Review period we will also be investing in digital transformation and automation at HMLR to provide better, faster and more efficient services for customers.

This includes a new national digital register, which will reduce the time and costs for property buyers to receive an official search. The roll out of this service will reduce the average time it takes for customers to receive a search to minutes.

■ **Property Development: Taxation**

Lucy Powell:

[\[64626\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the impact on viability of development of the Residential property developer tax; and what steps he is taking to ensure developers do not use the tax to reduce their affordable housing or other infrastructure investment obligations.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government has designed the Residential Property Developer Tax in a way that will minimise any detrimental impact on housing supply, including the supply of affordable housing.

In particular, taxing profits will help to ensure contributions are proportionate to economic returns and will help to minimise distortions that might come from alternative tax bases.

The new tax will not affect developers' planning obligations, including obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

■ **Social Services: Finance**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[64668\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he has taken through his Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 to help local authorities support those in the social care system.

Mr Simon Clarke:

At the Spending Review it was announced that Government is providing Local Government with £4.8bn of new grant over three years to meet core pressures in social care and other services. In addition to this, if local authorities were to use the full flexibility that we have assumed for the purposes of the Spending Review settlement, they are expected to have access to up to £1.7bn of additional funding over the Spending Review period for adult social care through the ability to increase the adult social care precept by up to 1% each year.

In September the Prime Minister announced the package of reforms to adult social care – funded through the Health and Social Care Levy – which committed the Government to investing an additional £5.4bn in adult social care over the next three years. The Spending Review confirmed that £3.6bn of the £5.4bn will be available for local government to implement comprehensive funding reform of the adult social care

system. This funding will also enable local authorities to better sustain their local care markets by moving towards a fairer cost of care.

■ Third Sector: Finance

Rachael Maskell: [\[64659\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he had with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on increasing funding for civil society organisations ahead of the Autumn Budget 2021.

Helen Whately:

Treasury ministers engaged with the Culture Secretary throughout the Budget and Spending Review process to discuss funding and budgets for the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, including civil society.

The Government is committed to supporting civil society sectors and organisations. The Spending Review and Budget will provide £2.7 billion in 2024-2025 for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, representing a 5.8% annual increase above inflation across the SR. This includes funding to support culture, sport, civil society and creative industries.

■ Treasury: Quarantine

Mr Ben Bradshaw: [\[61099\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many of his Department's ministers have been exempted from quarantine in a hotel after returning to the UK from a covid-19 red list country to which they have travelled for the purposes of conducting official business.

Helen Whately:

Ministers from HM Treasury have not claimed any exemptions from the requirement to quarantine in a managed quarantine facility that is required after returning from a red list country. HM Treasury does not hold information on exemption usage by ministers from other government departments.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Gender: Personal Records

Mark Jenkinson: [\[62850\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she will take to ensure the recording of biological natal sex on all records across Government.

Mike Freer:

It is for each individual Department to decide when they collect data including data on sex.

The Office for Statistics Regulation provides draft guidance on collecting and reporting data on sex in official statistics. The Office for National Statistics also has

guidance in the pipeline on harmonised standards on sex and gender data collection for public bodies.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[63710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of late payments through the Access to Work scheme on the ability of scheme users to book British Sign Language interpreters.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 29 October 2021]: Access to Work customers have 9 months to submit their request for payment, once costs have been incurred. Access to Work aim for customers to be paid within 10 days of receipt of claims and all supporting evidence.

Following postal delays during July and August 2021, we are seeing payment clearance times return to normal. We are not aware of any systemic issues with users of the scheme being able to book Sign Language Interpreters.

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[63711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department complies with the Prompt Payment Code in respect of support workers who invoice the Department through the Access to Work scheme.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 29 October 2021]: Access to Work is a discretionary grant scheme which provides funding for in work adjustments and support for people with disabilities and health conditions. The Prompt Payment Code refers to the Government and Private Sector commercial contract payments. As Access to Work is a grant scheme and does not procure the support for customers, the Code does not apply.

DWP and Access to Work recognise the importance of reimbursing grant funding at the earliest opportunity and aims to make payments within 10 working days of a fully completed claim for reimbursement.

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[63712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to move the Access to Work claims and payments processes to a digital system.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 29 October 2021]: We are currently building a digital service which will enable people/customers to:

- Submit a claim for Access to Work online

- View the status of previously submitted claims
- See how much of their grant award is left

We have extensively tested and iterated designs for this service with a range of users to ensure it is inclusive, usable and meets the needs of Access to Work recipients.

We will begin testing this new service with a small number of users soon before scaling up next year.

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[63714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of Access to Work claim forms have to be re-sent by the customer as a result of the form having (a) not reached Access to Work and (b) been lost by Access to Work, in each of the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 29 October 2021]: We are not able to provide information regarding the proportion of claim forms that were re-sent by our customers as we do not hold this data. We handle customer claim forms carefully and while we are not aware that any Access to Work claim forms have been lost by DWP we would be happy to look into any issues individuals raise with ATW.

We are aware that there were postal delays during July and August 2021, however we are now seeing payment clearance times returning to normal levels.

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

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[61096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many of her Department's ministers have been exempted from quarantine in a hotel after returning to the UK from a covid-19 red list country to which they have travelled for the purposes of conducting official business.

Guy Opperman:

None of the Department's ministers have travelled to a 'red list' country and therefore no exemptions have been required.

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

Tim Loughton:

[\[61061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what funding her Department has allocated to Stonewall in each of the last five years; and for what projects.

Guy Opperman:

DWP does not allocate set funding to Stonewall, however spending has occurred out of the sexual orientation and gender identity budget. We routinely pay an annual membership fee for the Diversity Champions scheme of £3000 (including VAT).

21/22 £3000 for membership, £750 for conference

20/21 £3000 for membership, £750 for conference

19/20 £3000 for membership, £480 for event

18/19 £3000 for membership, £234 for event

17/18 £3000 for membership

■ **Employment: Ashfield**

Lee Anderson:

[61218]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department has made on supporting young people into high-skilled jobs in Ashfield.

Mims Davies:

DWP has a variety of provision to support people of all ages into job opportunities in a range of roles and sectors, including into high-skilled roles. Individual Work Coaches will work with claimants to understand their skills, experience and interests as they support them to find work.

For young people specifically, the DWP Youth Offer provides wrap-around support to those aged 18-24 who are in the intensive work search regime of Universal Credit. It was introduced as part of the wider UK Government Plan for Jobs package.

Throughout the programme, every young person is encouraged to take part in a wide range of work-based opportunities. Work coaches will identify and promote the most appropriate provision for the young person, including Kickstart, Sector-based Work Academy Programmes, traineeships, work experience, Mentoring Circles, or apprenticeships. Young people can be referred to a Youth Hub to address skills gaps, or a Youth Employability Coach if there are key barriers or complex needs preventing them from finding or keeping employment.

The Ashfield area feeds into the wider travel to work areas of Mansfield and Nottingham, with numerous opportunities for young people to access high level construction jobs, for example with green energy employer Cobalt Energy Free. There is access to highly paid and skilled careers within the rail industry through Trackworks, and there are local opportunities for funding through DWP's Flexible Support Fund, for example LVG/HGV licences into the logistics sector.

The D2N2 (Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire) Local Enterprise Partnership has supported the local skills offer through Local Growth Fund investments in skills facilities, including a £0.67m contribution to the establishment of an Automation and Robotics Training Centre at the West Nottinghamshire College Sutton-in-Ashfield campus. They also offer digital boot camps, providing support in Coding & Software development, Cyber & System Security, Digital Marketing and IT, Networking and Infrastructure.

The D2N2 Skills Access Hub aims to be a 'one stop shop' for local businesses wishing to close skills gaps through training, recruitment, apprenticeships and placements, activities that can all help support young people into higher skill jobs.

West Nottinghamshire College (whose campus extends across the Ashfield and Mansfield area) is a partner in the Access Hub.

In addition to this, the DWP Youth Hub in Nottingham is delivered in partnership with DBC Training and local employers who regularly visit the hub. The Youth Hub is accessible to all surrounding jobcentres to give young people access to skills, training and employment support, and connects them with the D2N2 Skills Access Hub to deliver opportunities to develop their careers.

Lee Anderson:

[\[62844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effectiveness of the Plan For Jobs in supporting people into work in Ashfield.

Mims Davies:

Through our Plan for Jobs, we are targeting tailored support schemes to people of all ages to help them prepare for, get into and progress in work. These include Kickstart where we have delivered tens of thousands of six-month work placements for Universal Credit claimants aged 16-24 at risk of unemployment, and; 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 have also recruited an additional 13,500 Work Coaches to provide support to unemployed people to find a job.

We continue to ensure that provision is available to support people to move into and progress in jobs in local growing sectors.

This includes Ashfield where the Jobcentre has been working with employers from the transport and distribution sectors delivering Sector Work based Academy Programmes, in the wider East Midlands Kickstart has provided 13,040 job opportunities for young people aged 18-24.

■ Inflation

Wes Streeting:

[\[60468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the rate of inflation as of 21 October 2021 on child poverty.

David Rutley:

[Holding answer 27 October 2021]: No such assessments have been made of the effect of the rate of inflation as of 21 October 2021 on child poverty.

However, DWP Secretary of State completes an annual review of most benefit rates for people below State Pension age to determine whether they have retained their value in relation to inflation. Where prices have increased relative to the value of those benefits, the Secretary of State will increase certain disability and carers' benefits – such as Personal Independence Payments and Carer's Allowance – at least in line with that increase. She may also decide to increase other benefits, such

as the Universal Credit Standard Allowance. That decision is discretionary. The up-rating review is conducted in the Autumn of each year, with the outcome announced in November and the new rates implemented the following April.

We understand that with inflation rising, some people will be concerned about the cost of living. That is why this government is continuing to take action to support living standards by increasing the National Living Wage to £9.50 effective from April 1st 2022.

We have also announced a reduction in the taper rate in Universal Credit from 63% to 55% in the coming weeks, meaning Universal Credit claimants will be able to keep more of their earnings and announced that all work allowances will be increased by £500 per year, meaning many claimants will be able to earn over £550 each month before their benefits begin to be scaled down. These two measures mean 1.9m households will keep, on average, around an extra £1,000 a year.

Children living in workless households were around 5 times more likely to be in absolute poverty in 2019/20 than those where all adults work (before housing costs). That is why, 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. Following the Chancellor's extension and expansion announcement last month our Plan for Jobs interventions will support more than two million people.

In April this year we also increased the value of Healthy Start Food Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25, helping eligible low-income households buy basic foods like milk, fruit and vitamins. We are also investing up to £221m in the Holiday Activities and Food programme, which has been expanded to every Local Authority across England. Participating children are benefitting from a range of support, including healthy and nutritious meals as well as fun and engaging activities covering the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021.

However, we recognise that some people may require extra support over the winter as we enter the final stages of recovery, which is why vulnerable households across the country will now be able to access a new £500 million support fund to help them with essentials. The Household Support Fund will provide £421 million to help vulnerable people in England. 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.

■ Maternity Leave

Ellie Reeves:

[61190]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the suitability of the 26-week period of employment required for expectant mothers to qualify for statutory maternity leave; and whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of reducing that qualification period.

Guy Opperman:

Statutory Maternity Leave (SML) is a “day one” right. This means that all employed women are entitled to 52 weeks’ SML if they are pregnant or give birth, provided they give their employer the correct notice.

To qualify for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), a woman must have been continuously employed by the same employer for at least 26 weeks when she enters the 15th week before the week her baby is due. Once a woman has qualified for SMP, her employer must pay it to her even if she subsequently leaves their employment or is made redundant.

These criteria is designed to achieve a balance between the needs of the employer and those of a pregnant employee, ensuring that a woman has made a reasonable contribution towards her employer's business before that employer is required to administer Statutory Maternity Payments, and bear a proportion of the cost.

There are currently no plans to change the qualification period for SMP.

■ Personal Independence Payment**Debbie Abrahams:**[\[51700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to Written Statement HCWS294 of 20 September 2021, what estimate she has made of the number of personal independence payment claims (PIP) made since 6 April 2016 which need to be reviewed; by what date she estimates (a) the Administrative Exercise to review PIP claims will be completed and (b) affected claimants will have been contacted by her Department; and when she estimates to have completed all backdated payments for those found to be eligible.

David Linden:[\[51807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Written Statement of 20 September 2021, Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Update, if she will publish further detail on (a) the work involved in the Administrative Exercise including the different stages of work to be carried out and (b) the date on which she expects the Administrative Exercise to be completed.

David Linden:[\[51808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Written Statement of 20 September 2021, Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Update, how many individual PIP claims will be reviewed over the course of the Administrative Exercise.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 23 September 2021]:

We currently estimate between 320,000 and 340,000 claimants will need their claims to be reviewed as a result of the MM judgment. Early estimates are subject to uncertainty and we will be refining this estimate as the exercise progresses. The exercise includes claims that were in payment on 6 April 2016 (the date of the original

Upper Tribunal decision) as well as claims where DWP made a decision on or after 6 April 2016, including some claims where we did not award PIP. Where these claimants have made more than one claim for PIP each claim will need to be reviewed. The Department published updated guidance implementing the judgment from 17 September 2020, so new PIP decisions from that date already reflect the judgment and will not be reviewed as part of the exercise.

We are not planning to invite claimants for an assessment. However, we may contact them for more information, so that we can make a decision on their claim. We will write to all claimants whose claim(s) we review. Claimants entitled to more PIP following a review will have their award increased and will receive backdated payments.

It is too early for us to give a date by which we expect to have completed all the reviews.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Scotland

Peter Grant:

[63759]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate her Department has made of the average waiting time to process personal independence payment applications in (a) Scotland and (b) Fife.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 29 October 2021]: We are committed to ensuring that people can access financial support through Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in a timely manner and reducing customer journey times for PIP claimants is a priority for the Department. We always aim to make an award decision as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to review all available evidence.

Average waiting times for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) new claims made under normal rules (i.e. excluding those processed under special rules for terminal illness, which typically take 3 days) are calculated as the median number of weeks from registration to DWP decision, and published as the "Average Actual Clearance Time". For claims cleared in July 2021, which is the most recent data available:

(a) The Average (median) Actual Clearance Time for new claims in Scotland was 26 weeks.

(b) The Average (median) Actual Clearance Time for new claims in the Fife Local Authority was 26 weeks.

Notes:

Data Source: PIP Atomic Data Store (ADS)

- Data for the Fife Local Authority is unpublished. It should be used with caution as there is likely to be more variability in clearance times at small geographical levels. It may be subject to future revision.

- The status of claims as 'normal rules' and 'new claim' is shown as at the point of the DWP decision, in accordance with the measure. It is possible for claims to transition between normal and special rules, and between new claims and reassessments, during the course of the claimant journey.
- Clearance time measures do not include claims that were withdrawn by the claimant or claims that were disallowed by DWP prior to referral to the Assessment Providers (e.g. for failure to meet basic eligibility criteria).

■ Poverty: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[61154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the numbers of people in employment that are living in poverty in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry; and what recent estimate her Department has made of the effect of ending the £20 uplift to universal credit on the levels of in-work poverty in those areas.

David Rutley:

[Holding answer 27 October 2021]: National statistics on the number of people living in in-work absolute low income are set out in the annual "Households Below Average Income" publication. The numbers of people living in in-work absolute low income is not available at constituency or local authority level in this publication because the survey sample sizes are too small to support the production of robust estimates at this geography.

The latest poverty figures (2019/20) demonstrate that absolute poverty rates (both before and after housing costs) for working-age adults in working families have fallen since 2009/10. In 2019/20, 8% of working age adults in working families were in absolute poverty (before housing costs), compared to 9% in 2009/10.

No such assessment has been made of the effect of ending the £20 uplift to universal credit on the levels of in-work poverty in Coventry North East constituency and Coventry.

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 £407billion in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

There have been significant positive developments in the public health situation since the uplift was first introduced with the success of the vaccine rollout. With record vacancies, our focus is on helping people back into work. This approach is based on clear evidence about the importance of employment, particularly where it is full-time, in substantially reducing the risks of poverty.

We have also announced a reduction in the taper rate in Universal Credit from 63% to 55% in the coming weeks, meaning Universal Credit claimants will be able to keep

more of their earnings and announced that all work allowances will be increased by £500 per year, meaning many claimants will be able to earn over £550 each month before their benefits begin to be scaled down. These two measures mean 1.9m households will keep, on average, around an extra £1,000 a year.

We recognise that some people may require extra support over the winter as we enter the final stages of recovery, which is why vulnerable households across the country will now be able to access a new £500 million support fund to help them with essentials. The Household Support Fund will provide £421 million to help vulnerable people in England. 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.

■ Social Security Benefits

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[56660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many internal process reviews have been (a) started and (b) completed on cases of death or serious harm since the Answer of 28 June 2021 to Question 21211 on Social Security Benefits.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: Internal Process Reviews (IPRs) are internal retrospective investigations, focussed on organisational learning. They are not designed to identify or apportion blame (where engaged, a Coroner has responsibility for concluding the cause of death).

IPRs are conducted when:

- o there is a suggestion or allegation that the Department's actions or omissions may have negatively contributed to the customer's circumstances, or cases in which the department may be able to learn about the operation of its processes, AND a customer has suffered serious harm, has died (including by suicide), or where we have reason to believe there has been an attempted suicide.

- o the Department is asked to participate in a Safeguarding Adults Board, or is named as an Interested Party at an Inquest. An Internal Process Review will be conducted - regardless of whether there is an allegation against the Department.

Of those IPRs that have been started since 28 June 2021, those relevant to the question's criteria are as follows:

DEATH*	12
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Serious Harm**	4
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Of those IPRs that have been completed since 28 June 2021, those relevant to the question's criteria are as follows:

DEATH*	12
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Serious Harm**	1
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* Death includes the categories death, alleged suicide and confirmed suicide.

** Serious Harm includes the categories self-harm, serious harm, attempted suicide and 'other'.

■ Social Security Benefits: Death

Kate Osamor:

[\[60478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department records the number of deaths that are directly or indirectly related to instances in which her Department has stopped benefit payments.

Chloe Smith:

Coroners investigate unnatural deaths and where the cause of death is unknown.

There is no requirement for a Coroner to inform the department of the outcome in a former claimant's inquest, unless the department is named as an Interested Person at that inquest - or the Coroner decides to issue the department with a Prevention of Future Deaths report. The Coroner has responsibility for concluding the cause of death.

■ Universal Credit

Jessica Morden:

[\[58797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit claims have been identified as involving (a) identity fraud, (b) departmental error in (i) 2018-19, (ii) 2019-20 and (iii) 2020-21.

Jessica Morden:

[\[58798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the value was of all claims identified as fraudulent benefit claims through identity theft; how much has been recovered from those fraudulent claims; and how many people have been prosecuted for fraudulent benefit claims through identity theft in (a) 2018-2019, (b) 2019-2020 and (c) 2020-2021.

David Rutley:

Where there is a suspicion of fraud, the Department takes the issue extremely seriously. DWP's Integrated Risk and Intelligence Service coordinates the detection of, and response to, fraud risks from organised crime groups detecting and shutting down systematic attacks. Last year, this led us to suspend 152,000 Universal Credit claims and prevented £1.9 billion in benefits from being paid to people trying to defraud the system.

The table below shows the number of Fraud Investigations concluded in each of the requested years where the allegation was recorded as Identity Fraud and the primary benefit in payment was Universal Credit. Also shown is the value associated to these Investigations.

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Cases closed - all outcomes (figures rounded to nearest 100)	900	2,400	2,600*
Values calculated in respect of above cases (rounded to nearest 100)	£65,300	£928,500	£2,092,500**

**As this was identified as a result of serious and organised fraud this figure reflects the number of referrals made and not the number of individual claims that may be incorporated in that referral.*

***These cases and values do not include the large number of additional Identity Fraud attempts during 2020/21 (many of which were the result of co-ordinated attacks) which we spotted and stopped before they went into payment, as the cases are still ongoing.*

DWP's Debt Management system does not match recovery to specific fraud type, so it is not possible to state how much money has been recovered in relation to closed cases classified as Identity Fraud.

Covid-19 restrictions have impacted prosecution cases as it has not been possible to carry out face to face interviews. This is because a face to face interview under caution, carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, is a legal requirement before a case can be referred for either prosecution or for an administrative penalty to be issued.

However, DWP is making considerable progress in securing Covid safe rooms across the country for its fraud investigators and is also securing digital facilities, which will enable interviews to be conducted remotely.

DWP will always look to prosecute this type of offence to the full extent where possible and conducted 4 prosecutions for this offence in 2018/19, 9 in 2019/20 and 3 in 2020/21.

There will always be a time lag between the formal investigation and the court's final verdict, but a number of investigations into hijacked identity are currently being pursued and will come to court in due course.

DWP is currently considering how future legislative change could help target fraud and error even more acutely moving forwards.

All cases where 'Departmental error' leads to overpayments of Universal Credit are logged on DWP's Debt Management system as Official Error cases. These debts are recoverable. The table below shows the total number of these cases recorded on the system in each of the last 3 years.

FINANCIAL YEAR	VOLUME*
2018/2019	106,000
2019/2020	199,000
2020/2021	337,000

**figures rounded to nearest 1000*

Ensuring benefit correctness is a DWP priority. Despite an additional 3 million claimants to Universal Credit as a result of Covid-19, published National Statistics on Fraud and Error in the Benefit System show that Universal Credit Official Error fell in 2020/21 from 1.3% to 0.9% of benefit expenditure.

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

Tommy Sheppard:

[63756]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit claimants have been asked to pose with photos of street signs and the day's local newspaper to establish their identity.

David Rutley:

[Holding answer 29 October 2021]: Asking claimants to upload photographs is a targeted approach to verify evidence in cases where we have intelligence to suggest there is a medium to high risk of fraud.

We do not hold exact figures on the number of cases where photographs have been requested with prescribed background settings, but I can confirm that this only affects a very small proportion of claimants.

This approach is proving to be an effective measure in our efforts to identify and stop fraudulent claims. With overall benefit fraud costing the taxpayer £6.3bn in 2020/21, taking appropriate preventative action is the right thing to do.

Helen Hayes:

[\[64688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to her oral evidence before the Work and Pensions Select Committee on 7 July 2021, whether it remains her policy for all legacy benefit claimants to be transferred onto universal credit by the end of 2024.

David Rutley:

Yes.

■ **Universal Credit: Harrogate**

Helen Hayes:

[\[64687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to her oral evidence before the Work and Pensions Select Committee on 7 July 2021, whether the universal credit managed migration pilot in Harrogate will resume in April 2022; and when that pilot will end.

David Rutley:

As indicated to the Select Committee, the Department will make an announcement in due course on the plan for Move to Universal Credit.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Oil: Exploration

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[58522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many oil production licences he has issued in each year between 2004 and 2020; and how many such licences are under consideration in the current year.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 26 October 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Greg Hands:

The Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) issue **licences** grants to Licensees to search and bore for, and get, petroleum in the seabed and subsoil under the area.

These figures are publicly available from the Oil and Gas Authority and in historic annual reports.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Rachael Maskell:

[\[58936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the Government plans to make available to the people of Afghanistan who do not meet the criteria of the Afghanistan citizens' resettlement scheme but who have a connection with the UK.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 27 October 2021. The correct answer should have been:

James Cleverly:

The Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will provide those put at risk by recent events in Afghanistan with a route to safety. The ACRS is one of the most generous schemes in our country's history under which we will welcome up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans over the next year and up to a total of 20,000 in the coming years. There will not be a formal application process for the ACRS. The scheme is not yet open and further details, including eligibility criteria, will be announced in due course by the Home Office. Further details on the scheme will be published here:

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

statement – GOV.UK. Unfortunately not all who wish to leave Afghanistan will be eligible under the ACRS. The Government continues to do all it can to ensure safe

passage for the most vulnerable Afghans and is committed to supporting the people of Afghanistan.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **UK National Report on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons**

Minister for the Middle East and North Africa (James Cleverly): [\[HCWS362\]](#)

Today the UK published its National Report ahead of the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This report reviews the progress that the UK has made against the NPT's three pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It will be submitted to the UN before the Tenth Review Conference that will take place in New York in January 2022.

The UK's commitment to the Treaty and to fulfilling our NPT obligations remains undiminished. As an original signatory of the NPT, and a Nuclear Weapon State that takes its responsibilities seriously, the UK remains committed to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons where all states share in the peaceful uses of nuclear technologies.

The NPT has been an unmitigated success for over 50 years. It is the centre of international efforts to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, to create a nuclear weapon-free world, and to enable access to the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

Despite its successes, we should not underestimate the challenges facing the global nuclear order. We have previously identified risks to the UK from major nuclear armed states, emerging nuclear states and state-sponsored nuclear terrorism. Those risks have not gone away; some have increased. We face a deteriorating nuclear security environment. The increase in global competition, challenges to the international order, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons pose a significant challenge to strategic stability. We must work to reverse this trend. The NPT will be central to this and we must continue to work with others to reinforce the parts of the international architecture that are under threat. We must also shape the international order of the future so that it can respond effectively.

We are proud of our contributions to the NPT and the steps we have taken since the last Review Conference in 2015.

We have played a leading role by pioneering work in nuclear disarmament verification, championing transparency and advancing risk reduction. We continue to work closely with international partners, civil society and academia to enhance mutual trust and confidence and create the environment for further progress on disarmament. We continue to press for significant steps towards multilateral disarmament. This includes the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and successful negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. We possess the smallest stockpile of any of the Nuclear Weapon States recognised by the NPT and are the only one to maintain a single delivery system. Maintaining the UK's nuclear deterrent capability at a minimum credible level, taking into account the international environment,

is fully consistent with our international legal obligations, including those under Article VI of the NPT.

The UK continues to be a strong supporter of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which underpins non-proliferation under the NPT. We have sought to strengthen the international nuclear safeguards system, through our diplomatic efforts and through direct assistance from our Nuclear Safeguards Programme. The Review Conference offers opportunities to encourage all states that have not yet done so to sign, ratify and implement safeguards agreements. We seek new opportunities to enhance the security of nuclear materials, ensuring these arrangements remain robust and evolve to meet new threats. We will promote the ratification of security conventions at the Review Conference and continue to provide direct assistance to other states through our Global Nuclear Security Programme.

Finally yet importantly, we want to highlight the sometimes-overlooked part of the NPT: the peaceful uses of nuclear technologies. The UK has encouraged and will continue to encourage the development and exchange of peaceful nuclear technologies enabled by the NPT. This has a positive impact on people's lives through nuclear medicine, food safety and pest control. Nuclear technologies have a critical part to play in tackling climate change – not only in helping to achieve Net Zero, but also through nuclear applications that can help countries to adapt and become more resilient to climate change.

Looking towards the Tenth Review Conference, the UK seeks an outcome that strengthens the NPT as the irreplaceable foundation and framework for our common efforts on nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. The UK is ready to work with all countries to strengthen the regime and to promote international stability, peace and security.

A copy of the report has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and on the gov.uk website.

HOME OFFICE

■ Framework Document for the Domestic Abuse Commissioner

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Safeguarding (Rachel Maclean):
[\[HCWS365\]](#)

Tackling domestic abuse remains a key priority for this Government. Our landmark Domestic Abuse Act received Royal Assent in April of this year, setting the legal framework to provide further protections to the millions of people who experience domestic abuse, and strengthen measures to tackle perpetrators.

A number of provisions of the Act have already come into force, including for the first time in history, a wide-ranging legal definition of domestic abuse which incorporates a range of abuses beyond physical violence, including coercive or controlling behaviour, emotional and economic abuse.

Today, further provisions have been implemented as we establish the Domestic Abuse Commissioner as a statutory office holder. As part of this, there is a requirement that the Secretary of State issue a statutory Framework Document that deals with matters relating to the Commissioner such as the functions, powers, governance, funding and staffing linked to the role. The document sets out in detail how the Home Office will work with the Commissioner, and outlines the relationship between the independent Commissioner and Government.

The UK Government has worked closely with the Welsh Government to consider and develop the arrangements set out in the document. The Framework Document has been laid before Parliament today and is also available on GOV.UK.

Background

The Designate Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Nicole Jacobs, was appointed on 18 September 2019 to ensure that the crucial work of the Commissioner could begin.

The office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner will provide public leadership on domestic abuse issues and play a key role in overseeing and monitoring the provision of domestic abuse services.

The Commissioner will be responsible for encouraging good practice in preventing domestic abuse; identifying victims and survivors, including children, and perpetrators; and in the protection and provision of support to people affected by domestic abuse.

The Commissioner will have the power and the duty to publish reports and must lay them before Parliament. Within the next year she must publish a report on the need and provision for certain domestic abuse services in England. These reports will hold local commissioners, statutory agencies and national Government to account and make recommendations on how they can improve their response.

Specified public authorities will be under a duty to cooperate with the Commissioner, and they and Government Ministers will be required to respond to each recommendation made to them within 56 days.

The Commissioner will operate in England and Wales but will consider only reserved matters in Wales, such as criminal justice. They will, however, be expected to work closely with the National Advisers for Violence Against Women, Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Wales. The statutory framework document also covers the Commissioner's relationship with the UK Parliament and Senedd Cymru insofar as the activities of the Commissioner relate to devolved matters in Wales.

The Domestic Abuse Act forms part of the action this Government is taking to transform our response to domestic abuse and violence against women and girls. In July we published a new cross-Government Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, which commits to driving a step-change in the response to these crimes, with a whole system approach focusing on: prioritising prevention, supporting victims and pursuing perpetrators, underpinned by a stronger system. Later this year we will publish a complementary Domestic Abuse Strategy, which will further shift the dial towards preventing domestic abuse from happening in the first place through early intervention,

increasing our focus on tackling perpetrators of abuse to reduce reoffending and reaffirming our commitment to supporting victims.

■ **Istanbul Convention Ratification: 2021 Report on Progress**

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Safeguarding (Rachel Maclean):
[\[HCWS364\]](#)

The Government has today laid before Parliament and published the fifth annual report on the United Kingdom's progress toward the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Combatting Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (the "Istanbul Convention"). The UK signed the Istanbul Convention in 2012, signalling our strong commitment to tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) and this Government remains committed to ratifying it. The report sets out the work undertaken by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations to tackle VAWG since the 2020 Report on Progress, as well as the last remaining barriers to ratification.

Our measures to protect women and girls from violence are already some of the most robust in the world, and in most respects, we comply with, or go further than the Convention requires. Since signing the Convention in 2012, we have significantly strengthened our legislative framework, introduced a range of new protective tools and issued new guidance for professionals to better protect victims. In July, we published our cross-Government Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy to help ensure that women and girls are safe everywhere – at home, at work, online and on the streets. This strategy will be followed by a complementary Domestic Abuse Strategy later this year.

On 29 April 2021 we passed the landmark Domestic Abuse Act, which includes a package of measures to transform our response to domestic abuse. The Act includes the necessary legislative measures to ensure all parts of the UK are compliant with Article 44 of the Convention, which requires that criminal courts in the UK have extraterritorial jurisdiction over certain violent and sexual offences. On 29 June 2021 these provisions automatically came into force in England and Wales, and the corresponding provisions for Scotland were brought into force on the same day. Therefore, we have recorded these parts of the UK as compliant with Article 44 for the first time in this year's report. In addition, on 1 March 2021 the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 became law. The Act creates a new domestic abuse offence which criminalises psychological violence in Northern Ireland, as required by Article 33 of the Convention, and contains provisions for extra-territorial jurisdiction for the new offence. I have received confirmation from Ministers in the Northern Ireland Executive that they expect to implement this new offence and the extraterritorial jurisdiction provisions in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 by late February 2022.

The issue of support for migrant victims of domestic abuse was raised by the Joint Committee on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill in 2019 and we committed to undertake a review into the Government's overall response to migrant victims of domestic abuse. On 3 July 2020 the findings from this review were published on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) which found that a more detailed evidence base was needed to demonstrate which cohorts of migrant

victims are likely to be most in need of support, the numbers involved and how well existing arrangements may address their needs. That is why the Government launched a £1.5 million Support for Migrant Victims (SMV) pilot scheme to address these evidence gaps, which will then enable us to take evidence-based decisions on how best to protect these victims in the long term. The scheme launched in April and is intended to run until 31st March 2022. We have therefore continued to record Articles 4(3) (to the extent that it relates to non-discrimination on the grounds of migrant or refugee status) and 59 as “under review” this year pending the evaluation and findings from the SMV scheme.

The publication of this report fulfils the requirement of section 2 of the Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Ratification of Convention) Act 2017. I will lay before Parliament the report required by section 1 of that Act when our timescale for ratification is clear.

Copies of the report will be published on the Government’s website at GOV.UK.

■ Shootings in Plymouth: Review of police firearms licensing processes

The Minister of State for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): [\[HCWS363\]](#)

On 12 August in Plymouth, Jake Davison shot and killed five people, wounded two others, and took his own life. In the debate on 18 August on these tragic events the Home Secretary announced that she had written to every police force in England, Wales, and Scotland asking them to review their firearms licensing processes. In particular, police forces were asked to review the processes followed for returning a firearms certificate, ensuring they are appropriate as set against the non-statutory Home Office guidance and firearms legislation, which asks Chief Officers to ensure high-risk decisions are approved at a sufficiently senior level.

While Devon and Cornwall’s compliance with firearms licensing guidance is currently subject to both an independent peer review and a review by the Independent Office for Police Conduct, all other police forces confirmed that their procedures were in line with Home Office guidance. In addition, all police forces in England, Wales and Scotland provided data in relation to firearms and shotgun licensing decisions over the last 12 months.

Collectively, a total of 6,434 firearms and shotgun licences were surrendered, seized, revoked or refused over the previous 12-month period across England, Wales and Scotland. Of these, a total of 908 licences were subsequently returned or issued following further checks or appeals decided by the courts. Further details are set out in the table below. Returns were also scrutinised by the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) firearms licensing lead.

	NUMBER OF CERTIFICATES	NUMBER OF WHICH SUBSEQUENTLY RETURNED
Total	6,434	908
Seized	1,563	410

	NUMBER OF CERTIFICATES	NUMBER OF WHICH SUBSEQUENTLY RETURNED
Refused	293	9
Revoked	1,146	27
Surrendered	3,432	462

Source: Data submitted by 43 England and Wales police forces and Police Scotland

Notes : Some police forces were unable to report separately on numbers of seizures and surrenders and grouped these categories together. Where this happened, the figures have been recorded in the category in which they were reported.

As a result of this review of returned licences, in eight cases the original decision was overturned and licences have been re-surrendered or revoked.

The findings set out above provide reassurance that the police have in place robust processes for issuing and reviewing firearms and shotgun licences.

The new Statutory Guidance to Chief Officers of Police on firearms licensing, which was published on 20 October and comes in to force today, will help to further enhance safety checks and ensure greater consistency in licensing decisions taken by police forces.

The guidance has been developed following extensive consultation with, and cooperation from, the British Medical Association (BMA) and the police, and both the BMA and NPCC have welcomed the new guidance.

The Statutory Guidance makes it a requirement for information to be provided to the police about any relevant medical conditions, including mental health conditions. It also makes explicit that firearms' applicants may be subject to open source social media checks as part of the licensing process, as well as interviews with associates, and checking to see if they have any previous record of domestic violence. The police will have a legal duty to have regard to the new statutory guidance.

Ensuring that public safety is prioritised remains foremost in our approach to the processes for considering applications for legitimate firearms possession. The Statutory Guidance, and its implementation, will be kept under close review and further updated as necessary, including in the light of any lessons or recommendations arising from ongoing reviews of the terrible events in Plymouth.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Cold Weather Payments Scheme

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey):

[\[HCWS361\]](#)

We are today announcing the outcome of this year's Met Office review of the Cold Weather Payment scheme. The Department for Work and Pensions asks the Met Office to provide advice annually on whether the linkages between postcode areas and weather stations remain the best available. The postcode linkages take account of topography, the extent of built-up areas and the distance from available weather stations. Each postcode area is assigned to a station with the most similar climate in terms of mean winter temperature. Therefore, the assigned station is not necessarily the nearest one. Where necessary, we make changes annually to ensure that postcodes are linked to the most appropriate weather station for the purposes of administering Cold Weather Payments. For the 2021/22 season, the changes to weather station and postcode linkages are as follows:

- The PH12 postcode will move from Leuchars to Strathallan weather station.
- Due to the closure of the weather station at South Farnborough, the following postcodes will move to Odiham: GU1-4, GU7-12, GU14-35, GU46-47, GU51-52, RG1-2, RG4-8, RG10, RG12, RG14, RG18-27, RG29-31, RG40-42, RG45, SL1-2, SL4-6 and SO24.
- Due to the closure of Bedford weather station, the following postcodes will move to Wittering: NN14-16; and the following postcodes will move to Stowe weather station: NN1-7, NN11-13 and MK18.