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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Baglan Energy Park: Energy Supply

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[71351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to take steps to support businesses located in the Baglan Energy Park with their energy supply.

Greg Hands:

On 24 March 2021, the Baglan Group ("Baglan") including Calon Energy (Baglan Bay) Ltd, Baglan Generating Ltd, Baglan Operations Ltd and Baglan Pipeline Ltd, entered compulsory liquidation. The Secretary of State provided an indemnity to the Official Receiver that same day to ensure Baglan's sites and operations could be secured, and that health and safety concerns associated with the sites could be addressed. This has enabled the private wire network, which supplies electricity to businesses on the Baglan Energy Park, to remain active whilst the Official Receiver develops and implements his disposal plan.

Contingency planning is a devolved matter for the Welsh Government who are working closely with all affected businesses. Officials continue to engage closely with the Welsh Government and provide support where appropriate.

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[71352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the monthly cost of maintaining the energy supply to Baglan Energy Park after 30 November 2021.

Greg Hands:

I am advised by the Official Receiver, who was appointed as liquidator as of 24 March 2021 of the Baglan Group, including Calon Energy (Baglan Bay) Ltd, Baglan Generating Ltd, Baglan Operations Ltd and Baglan Pipeline Ltd, that the estimated monthly cost of maintaining the energy supply to Baglan Energy Park after 30 November 2021 is approximately £1.2m.

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[73852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on helping to minimise disruption to the power supply on the Baglan Energy Park.

Greg Hands:

Officials have met weekly with their counterparts in the Welsh Government since March 2021 to discuss the compulsory liquidation of the Baglan Group and the potential impact on businesses at Baglan Energy Park. Officials continue to provide

regular updates including ongoing contingency planning by the Welsh Government and the affected businesses.

■ **Biofuels: Carbon Emissions**

Helen Hayes: [\[73922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of wood-burning for electricity on the UK's carbon emissions; and what steps his Department is taking to encourage a transition away from biomass burning for power generation.

Helen Hayes: [\[73923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the (a) potential effect of subsidies given to companies burning biomass for power generation on the UK's carbon emissions and (b) potential merits of redirecting that funding to more renewable sources.

Helen Hayes: [\[73924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the paper by Chatham House and Woodwell Climate Research Center, published on 14 October 2021, what steps he is taking to help reduce the use of biomass for energy production and to increase the use of renewable sources, including wind and solar power, in the context of the finding that treating biomass from forests as a zero-carbon fuel risks not being in line with the Paris Agreement.

Greg Hands:

Sustainable biomass has played a vital role in the UK's decarbonisation efforts to date and is an important part of the UK's renewable energy mix. The Government recognises the need to ensure that biomass is prioritised where it brings about GHG emission reductions in hard to decarbonise sectors without other viable alternatives. The CCC and the National Grid's 2020 Future Energy Scenarios indicated that it is not possible to achieve net zero without Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS). The Government has committed to establishing the role that BECCS could play in reducing carbon emissions across the economy.

The Government will continue to support a diversity of renewable technologies including wind and solar, through the Contracts for Difference scheme. The next allocation round will open in December 2021, with a draft budget of £265 million. In the Net Zero Strategy, the Government has committed to a sustained increase in the deployment of renewable generation technologies, such as solar and onshore wind in the 2020s and beyond, and to deliver 40GW from offshore wind by 2030.

■ **Bounce Back Loan Scheme and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**

Owen Thompson: [\[73916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how the Government plans to account for future potential losses from Coronavirus Business

Interruption Loan Scheme and Bounce Back Loan Scheme defaults according to his Department's default estimates for those schemes.

Paul Scully:

Accounting provision for losses and potential future losses for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme will be made in the Department's 2020-21 Accounts, which will be published in due course.

Owen Thompson:

[\[73919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the cost of converting (a) Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and (b) Bounce Back Loan Scheme repayments into a student loan style repayment scheme.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises that a diverse range of businesses took out loans under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) and some of those will benefit from more flexibility in making their repayments. That is why the Government introduced the "Pay as You Grow" (PAYG) measures, which allow borrowers to tailor their repayments to their individual circumstances. PAYG provides borrowers with the option to:

- Extend the length of their loan from six years ten
- Make interest-only payments for six months, with the option to use this up to three times throughout the loan
- Pause repayments entirely for up to six months

Borrowers can use these options either individually or in combination with each other. If borrowers want to take advantage of these options, they should notify their lender when they are contacted about their repayments.

For those who borrowed under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), the Government has taken action to allow lenders to extend the term of CBILS loans up to a maximum of ten years where they assess that borrowers are in difficulty and will benefit from the extension. Given loans under CBILS are more varied than the standardised BBLs and resemble more traditional commercial lending, CBILS borrowers are likely to benefit from engagement with their lender if they have concerns about repayments. Lenders have an ongoing relationship with CBILS borrowers and will be best placed to provide support tailored to the circumstances of each individual business.

■ **Carbon Capture and Storage: Grants**

Alan Brown:

[\[72503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October 2021 to Question 60444, on Carbon Capture and Storage: Grants, if he will publish the scores allocated to each cluster under the assessment process.

Greg Hands:

The sequencing decision was made following a robust, specialist-led assessment based on the criteria presented when the Government launched this process in May. This is outlined in the Government's answer on 27th October (60444). Officials have provided feedback directly to relevant clusters, while respecting commercial sensitivity. However, it would be unsuitable for the Department to publish the scores allocated to each cluster, because: the Cluster Sequencing process is ongoing; the Government needs to respect the commercial sensitivity of the clusters' information.

Conditions of Employment**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[73999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the recommendations of the Good Work Plan published in December 2018, how many of those recommendations (a) have been implemented, (b) are in the process of being implemented by legislation or other means and (c) are still under consideration awaiting legislation or other means to implement them.

Paul Scully:

We have already made significant progress in bringing forward legislation to protect workers' rights, including:

- Giving all workers the right to receive a statement of their rights from day one;
- Introducing new rights to workers to receive a payslip and for payslips for hourly paid workers to include the numbers of hours worked;
- Quadrupling the maximum additional penalty fine that Employment Tribunals can use for employers who treat their workers badly;
- Closing a loophole which sees agency workers employed on cheaper rates than permanent workers;
- Extending the holiday pay reference period from 12 to 52 weeks, ensuring those in seasonal or atypical roles get fair holiday pay; and
- Announcing a new naming scheme for employers who fail to pay Employment Tribunal awards.

Future reforms will build on this record. These reforms will form part of the Government's plan to build back better, enabling a high skilled, high productivity, high wage economy that delivers on our ambition to make the UK the best place in the world to work and grow a business.

Conditions of Employment: Immunosuppression**Alex Norris:**[\[72575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that employment protections are retained for immunocompromised people who are less protected by covid-19 vaccines.

Paul Scully:

There are a range of existing legal protections which can be engaged where an individual has an underlying health condition.

An immunocompromised person may be considered to have a disability and benefit from protections under the Equality Act, which include the duty on an employer to make reasonable adjustments. A disability under the Equality Act is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

Immunocompromised employees may also be protected against unfair dismissal. An employment tribunal will consider all the relevant facts around a dismissal in judging whether it was fair or not. This could include public health guidance regarding coronavirus for those who are immunocompromised, alongside other issues including individual behaviour.

■ Enterprise Zones**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[75824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he undertake a review of Enterprise Zones to date to establish whether further steps can be taken to increase their effectiveness.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 19 November 2021]: Enterprise Zones have been a very successful government policy. They drive growth in local economies, by attracting and supporting businesses, which increases investment and employment to the area. There are no current plans to review Enterprise Zones; however, the experience of delivering Enterprise Zones has informed the development of the Government's new Freeports programme.

■ Fireworks: Carbon Emissions**Hilary Benn:**[\[73733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of fireworks and bonfires on the level of CO₂ emissions in England around 5 November.

Greg Hands:

BEIS currently does not estimate the level of CO₂ emissions produced by bonfires and fireworks.

■ Fireworks: Crimes of Violence**Rachael Maskell:**[\[72516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what research he has undertaken on the potential effect of the public sale and use of fireworks on levels

of assaults of (a) police officers, (b) ambulance staff, (c) firefighters and (d) members of the public.

Rachael Maskell: [\[72517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what research he has undertaken on the potential effect of the public sale and use of fireworks on pressures on emergency services and the NHS.

Rachael Maskell: [\[72518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what data he holds on the number of injuries from fireworks which have been recorded as requiring hospital treatment or other treatment in each of the last five years; and how many inquiries the NHS has received relating to treatment for burns from fireworks in each of the last five years.

Paul Scully:

Any attack on the emergency services, including any that involve fireworks, is a police matter under the criminal law, including the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018. The Home Office and the Department for Health and Social Care manage the pressures on the emergency services.

NHS statistics show that fireworks injuries have declined since 2016. The number of A&E attendances in England due to “firework injury” was 53 in 2019-2020, compared to 1,835 in 2018-2019, 4,378 in 2017-18 and 5,227 in 2016-17.

As part of the Government’s programme of action, we continue to commission research and use evidence to inform our work. This has included developing and publishing an evidence base on fireworks and undertaking engagement with a wide range of organisations. Through our public awareness campaign for the 2021 fireworks season, we have promoted the safe and considerate use of fireworks to the general public, to ensure that those using them do so safely and considerately.

■ Fireworks: Pets

Rachael Maskell: [\[72511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what research he has undertaken on the effect of the public sale and use of fireworks on (a) pets and (b) pet owners.

Rachael Maskell: [\[72512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what research he has undertaken on the effect of the public sale and use of fireworks on (a) wildlife and (b) farm animals.

Paul Scully:

The Government takes the issues associated with the sale and use of fireworks seriously. That is why there is a comprehensive regulatory framework in place for fireworks, that aims to reduce the risks and disturbances to animals.

It is also an offence under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to cause an animal any unnecessary suffering and this includes through the misuse of fireworks. The Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act came into force on 29 June 2021 and has increased the maximum penalty for cruelty to animals to five years' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.

We continue to work with a variety of stakeholders, including animal welfare groups, to promote the safe and considerate use of fireworks to the general public, to ensure that those using them do so safely and considerately.

■ Fireworks: Safety

Rachael Maskell:

[\[72519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of publicly licensed fireworks events for public safety.

Paul Scully:

As part of the Government's programme of action, we continue to commission research and use evidence to inform our work. This has included developing and publishing an evidence base on fireworks and undertaking engagement with a wide range of organisations on the key issues raised. This work provided no evidence that a change in legislation was needed, including the current licensing regime. We also commissioned research by Ipsos Mori that provided evidence on consumer attitudes towards and behaviours around using fireworks in the UK. The key findings have informed our annual public awareness campaigns and support the need to educate consumers on fireworks use.

The Government has no current plans to place further restrictions on the sale of fireworks to the public, but we continue to monitor the situation and engage with a wide range of stakeholders, to understand better what specific issues they face.

Emma Hardy:

[\[73945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to work with the Office for Product Safety and Standards to review the safety regulations for the use of fireworks in the context of distress caused by fireworks to (a) people with learning disabilities, (b) young children and (c) animals.

Paul Scully:

The Government takes the issues associated with the sale and use of fireworks seriously. That is why there is a comprehensive regulatory framework in place that aims to reduce the risks and disturbances to both vulnerable people and animals.

As part of the Government's programme of action, we continue to commission research and use evidence to inform our work. This has included developing and publishing an evidence base on fireworks and undertaking engagement with a wide range of interested groups, including charities supporting vulnerable groups and animal welfare organisations.

Through our public awareness campaign for the 2021 fireworks season, we promoted the safe and considerate use of fireworks to the general public, to ensure that those using them do so safely and considerately. The campaign was far reaching and had a potential reach of 4.1 million people on Twitter (10 October-7 November 2021).

The Office for Product Safety and Standards is part of the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy.

■ Fireworks: Veterans

Rachael Maskell: [\[72513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what research he has undertaken on the effect of the public sale and use of fireworks on veterans with (a) PTSD and (B) other war-related mental health trauma.

Rachael Maskell: [\[72514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what research he has undertaken on the effect of the public sale and use of fireworks on babies and young people, and their parents.

Rachael Maskell: [\[72515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what research he has undertaken on the effect of the public sale and use of fireworks on (a) people with autism and (b) adults with mental health conditions.

Paul Scully:

The Government takes the issues associated with the sale and use of fireworks seriously. That is why there is a comprehensive regulatory framework in place that aims to reduce the risks and disturbances to vulnerable people.

As part of the Government's programme of action, we continue to commission research and use evidence to inform our work. This has included developing and publishing an evidence base on fireworks and undertaking engagement with a wide range of organisations, including charities supporting vulnerable groups.

Through our public awareness campaign for the 2021 fireworks season, we have promoted the safe and considerate use of fireworks to the general public, to ensure that those using them do so safely and considerately.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[74869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many installers (a) have been and (b) are waiting to be paid for completed work under the Green Homes Grant scheme.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 18 November 2021]: Official statistics published on 18 November for the Green Homes Grant Voucher scheme describe the status of applications prior to 05 November.

As of 5 November, a total of 43,071 vouchers have been paid, with a Government contribution funding value of £197 million across 988 active installers. As of 5 November, 3,142 vouchers, where Green Home Grant measures have been installed, were awaiting payment.

Payment of the grant is a four-step process that requires the customer to confirm the work has been completed, the installer to lodge the work, the scheme administrator to undertake scheme checks, and then proceeding to payment. Timescales for this may vary.

The next statistical release will be published on 23 December 2021.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Insulation**Alberto Costa:**[\[71370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that lenders and insurance companies do not unfairly penalise homeowners who have had spray foam insulation installed in their homes as part of the Green Homes Grant.

Greg Hands:

Customers participating on the Green Homes Grant scheme are advised to make sure the options they choose are appropriate for them. The voucher scheme places the responsibility on the homeowner to decide which measures they would like to install and does not recommend or promote any types of insulation.

Spray foam insulation is only permitted in the Green Homes Grant scheme where customers are protected by guarantee.

Installers under the Green Homes Grant scheme must be TrustMark registered and meet Publicly Available Specification standards when installing energy efficiency measures, ensuring the highest levels of quality and customer protection. It is the responsibility of registered installers to abide by building regulations and relevant industry standards.

■ Hydroelectric Power: Expenditure**Alan Brown:**[\[72509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much public funding has his Department allocated to the development of pumped storage hydro projects in each year since 2010.

Greg Hands:

The 2021 Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan set out the Government's approach to electricity storage, including pumped hydro storage, which centres on creating a best-

in-class regulatory framework. The actions in the Plan aim to remove regulatory and policy barriers and ensure that markets reflect the value that these assets provide to the energy system.

Alan Brown:

[72510]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much public funding has his Department allocated to the development of hydro power projects in each year since 2010.

Greg Hands:

The table below illustrates the level of state support for research, development, and demonstration received by hydro power projects each year since 2010. These figures do not include any revenue support provided by the Renewables Obligation and Feed-in Tariffs schemes.

In 2020, the Department allocated £234,000 of support to hydro power projects, through Innovate UK and the UK's contribution to the International Climate Fund.

UK Government Total Research, Development and Demonstration Spend

YEAR	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total	..	£144k	£56k	£22k	£92k	£133k	£8.8m	£331k	£234k	..
Hydroelectricity												

Key

.. = value not available

■ **Internet: Sales**

Owen Thompson:

[73913]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to introduce an equivalent level of consumer protection to online purchases.

Paul Scully:

There is already robust legislation in place that protects consumers when purchasing goods and services online. The Consumer Rights Act 2015 sets out the rights consumers enjoy while shopping online and instore.

The Department recently consulted on advancing online consumer rights in its "Reforming Competition and Consumer Policy" consultation. A copy of the consultation can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-competition-and-consumer-policy>. The consultation closed on 1 October and the department will publish a response in due course.

■ Iron and Steel: Procurement

Stephen Doughty:

[72460]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of steel (a) procured and (b) ordered as of 9 November 2021 is UK-made for (i) Crossrail, (ii) Thames Tideway, (iii) the new Hinckley nuclear power plant and (iv) HS2.

Lee Rowley:

The Department annually collates and publishes information on how much steel is purchased by Government for major infrastructure projects in the previous financial year, including what proportion is UK-produced, where available. Please find the latest publication here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987147/steel-procurement-data-2021.pdf.

■ Land Registry: Standards

Damien Moore:

[72590]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the chief executive of HM Land Registry on application backlogs.

Paul Scully:

My Noble Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Lord Callanan is the responsible Minister for HM Land Registry. My Noble Friend meets the Chief Executive and Chair on a regular basis to discuss a broad range of operational and strategic matters with the last meeting in September 2021. HM Land Registry is focused on increasing output and reducing completion time for applications by increasing capacity, implementing new processes and accelerating digital services.

■ Living Wage

Jim Shannon:

[72424]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the estimated timescale is for increasing to national living wage.

Paul Scully:

As announced at the Autumn Budget, on 1 April 2022 the Government will increase the National Living Wage (NLW) for workers aged 23 years and over by 6.6% to £9.50. This keeps the Government on track to achieve its manifesto commitment for the NLW to equal two-thirds of median earnings by 2024.

The Government will lay a Statutory Instrument to amend the National Minimum Wage Act 1998 in due course. BEIS will publish a full impact assessment next year alongside laying the regulations.

■ Local Enterprise Partnerships: Finance**Bim Afolami:** [\[73942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has for the future funding of Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Paul Scully:

Decisions around the future funding of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) beyond this financial year will be communicated in due course.

■ Manufacturing Industries: Newport West**Ruth Jones:** [\[71454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with manufacturers in Newport West constituency on the rise in energy prices.

Greg Hands:

Ministers and officials continue to engage constructively with businesses to understand, and to help mitigate the impacts of, high global gas prices. The Government's priority is to ensure costs are managed and energy supplies maintained.

■ Motorcycles: Protective Clothing**Simon Jupp:** [\[74016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to remove unsafe or non-compliant motorcycle rider protective equipment from sale.

Paul Scully:

Frontline enforcement of personal protective equipment (PPE) for consumer use, including the removal from sale of unsafe or non-compliant motorcycle rider protective equipment, is conducted by local trading standards authorities supported by the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), and by the Health and Safety Executive where it is used in the workplace. OPSS has been working with the PPE trade association and its Primary Authority where specific allegations of non-compliance have been made.

■ Oil and Natural Gas: Prices**Jim Shannon:** [\[72433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with oil companies on establishing a review of oil and gas prices.

Greg Hands:

Despite the rise in prices, the UK continues to have some of the lowest pre-tax prices in Europe for diesel and petrol. The UK's economic analysis of the relationship between changes in the global crude oil and UK petrol and diesel prices suggests

that the UK road fuels sector is competitive and ensures that consumers get good value for money.

Due to multiple factors, in 2021 gas prices have been higher globally, these include: rebounding demand as COVID-19 lockdowns ease; greater liquefied natural gas (LNG) demand in Asia; upstream maintenance affecting summer supply capacity; and unusually low wind periods. Supply and demand are balanced in the market through adjusting the prices at which energy trades take place. The Government has no reason to anticipate that this will not continue. The Government continues to engage with international and industry stakeholders to monitor the situation.

■ Post Offices: Closures

Marion Fellows:

[\[73897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many temporarily closed Post Office branches have been closed for (a) less than six months, (b) six months to a year, (c) one year and a day to two years and (d) longer than two years in (i) Scotland, (ii) Wales, (iii) Northern Ireland and (iv) each region of England as of 12 November 2021.

Paul Scully:

While Post Office Limited is publicly owned, it operates as an independent, commercial business. Therefore, details regarding the length of time Post Office branches have been closed in (i) Scotland, (ii) Wales, (iii) Northern Ireland and (iv) each region of England as of 12 November 2021, are an operational matter for Post Office Limited.

■ Renewable Energy

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[75803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the assessment of options to shift or rebalance energy levies, such as the Renewables Obligation and Feed-in-Tariffs, and obligations, such as the Energy Company Obligation, away from electricity to gas over this decade as referenced in the Heat and Buildings Strategy will cover both domestic and non-domestic consumers.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[75804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to page 148 of the Net Zero Strategy, whether the Fairness and Affordability Call for Evidence will cover both domestic and non-domestic consumers.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 19 November 2021]: As set out in the Net Zero Strategy and Heat and Buildings Strategy, the Government is committed to ensuring that the costs of the UK's transition to net zero is fair and affordable for all energy consumers. The Government's upcoming Fairness and Affordability Call for Evidence will consider options covering both domestic and non-domestic consumers to shift or rebalance energy levies and obligations over this decade.

■ Scottish Limited Partnerships: Ownership

Alison Thewliss: [\[75911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many Scottish Limited Partnerships have failed to register a Person of Significant Control in each of the last three years.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 19 November 2021]: Companies House considers 8,070 of the Scottish Limited Partnerships ('SLPs') on the register to be active as at 31st October 2021. Of these, 213 SLPs have not filed PSC information. This compares to 948 in January 2020 and 2,019 in January 2019.

■ Small Businesses: Energy Supply

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[72383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support small businesses affected by rising energy prices.

Greg Hands:

Ministers and officials continue to engage constructively with businesses to understand, and to help mitigate the impacts of, high global gas prices. The Government's priority is to ensure costs are managed and energy supplies maintained.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Business Appointments Advisory Committee

Jon Trickett: [\[75817\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing measures to (a) make compliance with Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACOBA) rulings mandatory and (b) provide powers of sanction for non-compliance with ACOBA rulings.

Jon Trickett: [\[75819\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what requirement there is on each Department to oversee the application of business appointment rules.

Michael Ellis:

As set out in Written Statement HCWS185, the Government is working with the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments to improve the operation and efficacy of the Business Appointment Rules.

The recommendations from Nigel Boardman's report into the development and use of supply chain finance in government, as well as the Standards Matter 2 report from

the Committee on Standards in Public Life, will be considered as a part of this work with an update to be published later this year.

The Civil Service Management Code requires departments to make appropriate arrangements that reflect the Business Appointment Rules for Civil Servants. Departments should provide an assurance statement outlining their application of the Rules. Departmental Audit and Risk Committees are required to consider the implementation of the Rules in their departments. Departments are also required to publish summary information in respect of individuals at director and deputy director grades, including special advisers of equivalent standing.

Jon Trickett:

[75818]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing measures to make the membership of Advisory Committee on Business Appointments more representative of society.

Michael Ellis:

The Advisory Committee on Business Appointments is an advisory non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Cabinet Office. It considers applications under the business appointment rules about new jobs for former ministers, senior civil servants and other Crown servants. Political and independent members are appointed for five year, non-renewable terms.

Political members are nominated on the recommendation of the leader of the relevant political party.

In accordance with the Governance Code for Public Appointments, the appointments of Independent Members to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments are made on merit following an open and fair competition.

As outlined in its 2019 Public Appointments Diversity Action Plan, the government remains committed to ensuring that public appointees are drawn from all aspects of the society that they serve and this includes those on the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments.

■ **Cabinet Office: Hikvision**

Alicia Kearns:

[76034]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether Hikvision CCTV or other surveillance software or equipment from Hikvision, is used on any property owned or administered by his Department.

Michael Ellis:

As has been the case under successive administrations, it is not government policy to comment on the security arrangements of government buildings. Specific details regarding the make and model of security systems are withheld on national security grounds.

■ Cabinet Office: Meetings

Seema Malhotra: [\[76697\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many meetings have been held of the Supply Chain Advisory Group announced on the 8 October 2021; what the dates of those meetings were; and if he will publish the minutes of those meetings.

Michael Ellis:

Last month, the Prime Minister appointed Sir Dave Lewis to advise HM Government on supply chains to identify both immediate improvements and any necessary long-term changes. He has spoken with over 100 businesses from across 14 sectors since his appointment. We understand the importance of working closely with businesses to help them solve these issues and to help us understand what more the Government can do to support all sectors of our economy. It is important that these are open conversations and that businesses feel able to provide, often commercially sensitive, information to Government without fear of compromise.

■ Coronavirus: Public Inquiries

Dan Carden: [\[76814\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether procurement will be included in the scope of the public inquiry into the Government's response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Michael Ellis:

On 12 May, the Prime Minister confirmed that a public inquiry into COVID-19 will be established on a statutory basis, with full formal powers, and that it will begin its work in spring 2022. Further details, including the terms of reference, will be set out in due course.

■ Lobbying

Jon Trickett: [\[75814\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to amend the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014 to include in-house employees engaged in lobbying.

Jon Trickett: [\[75815\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to amend the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014 to include contact made by individuals or organisations engaged in lobbying with any employee of government.

Jon Trickett:

[\[75816\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to amend the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014 to expand the reporting requirement to include (a) the specific nature of the lobbying engagement, who is being targeted and what policy areas are under discussion, on behalf of whom; (b) the estimated value of the lobbying activity registered and (c) a list of current employees engaged in lobbying that have worked in the public sector in the five years prior to registration.

Michael Ellis:

The Government is currently undertaking post-legislative scrutiny of the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014 (the Lobbying Act). The outcome of this process will look to take into account any relevant findings of the Boardman review and Standards Matter 2, and will be set out in due course.

■ Members' Interests

Angela Rayner:

[\[76703\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to implement Recommendation 9 of the report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life on MPs' Outside Interests, published in July 2018.

Michael Ellis:

The Government broadly supports the recommendations contained in the 2018 report. We welcome the fact that the House of Commons has endorsed asking the Standards Committee to consider how to implement the Committee on Standards in Public Life recommendations that Members should be banned from any paid work to provide services as a Parliamentary strategist, adviser or consultant and that outside work should be undertaken only within "reasonable limits."

As the Prime Minister's letter on [16 November](#) stated, the House may also wish to consider the wider recommendations of the report, the broad intentions of which the Government supports.

■ Ports: Finance

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[76672\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing further funding in port infrastructure following the Ports Infrastructure Fund.

Michael Ellis:

Ports are commercial enterprises and would normally be expected to fund any infrastructure required to comply with legislation on border controls.

However, in recognition of the unique circumstances of EU Exit, the UK Government made £705 million of funding available to support border readiness.

This included the £200 million Port Infrastructure Fund which has been allocated; there are no plans to invite further applications.

Going forward, as commercial enterprises, it is for ports to make business decisions about which services they provide and how these are financed.

■ Supply Chains

Seema Malhotra:

[\[76698\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to tackle delays in the UK supply chain of (a) raw materials and (b) goods.

Michael Ellis:

HM Government is taking several steps to ease the pressures on supply chains in the UK across different sectors, including raw materials and goods. For example, the Government has expanded and streamlined testing for HGV drivers, increasing capacity by 90% from pre-pandemic levels. The Government has also introduced temporary visas where needed to bolster our food supply chain workers and HGV drivers.

■ Travel: Civil Servants and Ministers

Helen Hayes:

[\[75043\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the number of domestic flights taken by (a) Ministers and (b) civil services for the purposes of conducting official Government business in each of the last 12 months; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of alternative ways of conducting that business that do require using domestic flights.

Michael Ellis:

Details of Ministers' travel are published quarterly on GOV.UK.

The Cabinet Office is committed to minimising travel costs and reducing the environmental impact of journeys. Ministers and Civil Servants are advised to travel by the most efficient means of transport and to use public transport where possible.

Ministers and Civil Servants are also encouraged to consider alternative ways of conducting business to minimise travel. For example, using video and telephone conferencing facilities where possible and appropriate.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ **Baptism: Asylum**

Chris Loder:

[\[76831\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, how many services the Church of England has conducted specifically for the purposes of Baptising people seeking asylum in each of the last five years.

Andrew Selous:

Data are not kept on the nationality or migration status of those who seek Baptism. The content of the rite of Baptism remains the same for all. Clergy are required by canon law to ensure that all who come to Baptism as adults are given appropriate teaching on the tenets of the faith and in encouragement to private spiritual devotion. Therefore, the preparation process may require specific, lengthier input and instruction of some groups of candidates before the clergyperson is confident of the independent faith of each individual.

■ **Christianity: Asylum**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[76650\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, whether he has had recent discussions with the Church of England on the number of asylum seekers who have converted to Christianity in the last year.

Andrew Selous:

Specific discussion on that issue has not taken place. Data are not kept on the nationality or migration status of those who seek Baptism. Baptism is a sacrament ordained by God and must always be open to anyone regardless of race, nationality or status, so long as they meet the requirements set out in Canon law.

COP26

■ **Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action**

Patrick Grady:

[\[73892\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, if he will make it his policy to sign the UN Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action on behalf of the UK.

Alok Sharma:

The UK has long recognised the unequivocal threat that climate change and environmental degradation pose to the lives and wellbeing of individuals and communities across the world, including the most marginalised and vulnerable.

The UK has been committed to amplifying the voices of young people from across the world through our COP26 presidency and domestic frameworks.

In the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' 25 Year Environment Plan, the Government sets out a plan for how the natural environment will be

protected and enhanced for our, and future, generations. One of the actions it commits to is to help children and young people from all backgrounds engage with nature and improve the environment.

We support many of the principles in the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action and will carefully consider how to engage with it.

■ **UN Climate Conference 2021: Glasgow South West**

Chris Stephens:

[75916]

To ask the President of COP26, how local community groups and charities in Glasgow South West constituency may be able to apply for some of the 6000 items of furniture donated by IKEA which were used for COP26.

Alok Sharma:

The UK Government, IKEA and Glasgow City Council are working closely together to ensure these donations are responsibly distributed amongst community groups and third sector organisations such as NGOs, voluntary organisations and cooperatives within Glasgow and the wider region.

We are working on a platform to facilitate this process. In the meantime organisations can get in touch through COP26Enquiries@glasgow.gov.uk to register their interest.

DEFENCE

■ **Afghanistan: Refugees**

John Healey:

[76573]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many applicants to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy programme are still in Afghanistan.

James Heappey:

The ARAP scheme is not time limited and remains open. As such we continue to receive a high volume of applications to the scheme, and it is not possible to quantify how many of those will ultimately meet the eligibility criteria. We do not attempt to collate data on current location until eligibility is confirmed. All those who worked for HMG in qualifying roles remain eligible. In addition, those who worked in meaningful enabling roles alongside HMG in extraordinary and unconventional contexts will also be considered. Efforts to support all eligible Afghans and to help them to come to the UK are continuing.

John Healey:

[76574]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Afghans nationals have been relocated to the UK under the ARAP scheme since the end of Operation Pitting on 28 August 2021.

James Heappey:

375 ARAP eligible individuals have been relocated to the UK. Our commitment to those who are eligible under ARAP, and the process to deliver it, is not time-limited and will endure. The scheme remains open and we are working with international partners to establish routes for all those eligible for ARAP to relocate to the UK since 28 August 2021.

John Healey:[\[76575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Written Ministerial Statement on 15 November 2021, HCWS389 on Afghan Relocations Assistance Policy Data Breach Investigation - Update, whether any further data breaches occurred, connected to the ARAP scheme, beyond the three confirmed.

James Heappey:

No further data breaches connected to the ARAP Scheme have been identified, beyond the three confirmed in the Written Ministerial Statement, laid by the Defence Secretary on 15 November 2021. Procedures have been changed in order to prevent similar incidents occurring again.

■ Armed Forces: Carbon Emissions**Ian Murray:**[\[76641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of levels of direct emissions from the operations of the armed forces.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence reports its carbon emissions in line with the guidance provided by Central Government, publishing emissions associated with energy consumption on the UK defence estate, domestic business travel and global operational fuels consumption in its Annual Report and Accounts. The total figure for 2019-20 was 2,609,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

Ian Murray:[\[76643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the proportion of UK emissions emitted by armed forces operations.

Jeremy Quin:

In 2019, net territorial emissions in the UK of the basket of seven greenhouse gases covered by the Kyoto Protocol were estimated to be 454.8 million tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent. The proportion of UK emissions emitted by and in support of the Armed Forces as currently reported is 0.6%

■ Armed Forces: Scotland**Drew Hendry:**[\[75016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many full-time (a) regular, (b) civilian and (c) full-time reservist personnel are stationed permanently at each of his Department's facilities in Scotland.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence produces personnel statistics by region, but not by individual establishments. Full-time regular and civilian personnel stationed in Scotland can be found in table 1.1a and table 1.1b of the MS Excel Annual Location Statistics publication published 1 April 2021 at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/location-of-uk-regular-service-and-civilian-personnel-annual-statistics-2021>

Table 1.1a

SERVICE	TOTAL
Military	10,120
Civilians	4,000
Total	14,120

Table 1.1b

SERVICE	TOTAL
RN/RM	4,270
Army	3,790
RAF	2,060

Table (2) provides a breakdown of Full-time Reserve (FTRS) Personnel ¹ in Scotland ² :

The figures for FTRS have the potential for errors because the stationed location data has not been verified for this population.

SERVICE	TOTAL
Royal Navy / Royal Marines	90
Army	280
RAF	110
Grand Total	480

1. Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) personnel are personnel who fill service posts for a set period on a full-time basis (this is different from mobilisation) while being a member of one of the Reserve Forces, either as an ex-regular or as a volunteer.

2. Based on region as recorded in Joint Personnel Administration (JPA). The figures are based on Service Personnel's stationed location and not their location of residence.

Personnel deployed on operations to an area away from their stationed location are shown against their most recent stationed location. The Royal Navy/Royal Marines personnel on sea service are included against the local authority containing the home port of their ship.

■ **Armed Forces: Smoking**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[73746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which other Government departments were consulted before the publication of the Defence Smoke-free Working Environment Directive by his Department.

Leo Docherty:

Defence is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for its personnel. This includes protecting personnel from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke and supporting those personnel who want to give up smoking. As at 1 April 2020, 18% of the Armed Forces were recorded as smokers; although smoking prevalence is falling, it is still higher than the UK population of 14.1%.

Officials in the Ministry of Defence routinely consult with colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to ensure that Defence health and wellbeing policies are consistent with DHSC policies. Defence aims to reduce smoking prevalence by implementing a Defence Smoke-Free Working Environment by 2022.

■ **Defence Equipment: Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Ian Murray:

[\[76642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the greenhouse gas emissions emitted by UK military equipment manufacturers in each of the last five years.

Jeremy Quin:

The emissions associated with military equipment manufacture in the UK are captured by BEIS, the lead Department for UK greenhouse gas emissions reporting, as part of the UK carbon budget sector figures.

■ **Merlin Helicopters: Expenditure**

John Healey:

[\[76577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 172 of his Department's Annual Reports and Accounts 2014-15, how an incorrect recording of Merlin aircraft component lives resulted in a fruitless payment of £20,995 million.

Jeremy Quin:

The fruitless payment of £20.995 million referenced in the Department's Annual Report and Accounts 214-15 reflected additional costs incurred under the Integrated Merlin Operational Support contract including a period of reduced aircraft availability in delivery of the Merlin Capability Sustainment Programme. There were underlying issues with some aspects of data and asset management on this platform within the Department leading to additional costs under the support contract and as a result of limiting availability of aircraft for a capability sustainment programme.

The Ministry of Defence subsequently undertook a thorough review of Merlin procedures and engineering and asset management software, in order to automate the application of data recording and significantly reduce the risk of incorrect data entry. Additional training and quality assurance checks were also introduced to assure the integrity of recorded data.

■ Ministry of Defence: Aviation**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[76876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on charter air transport from private companies since January 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

Accurate from 18 November 21, UK Government has spent £21 million on air charter in support of Defence tasking since 1 January 2021.

■ Ministry of Defence: Stonewall**Tim Loughton:**[\[76548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 1 November 2021 to Question 61052 on Ministry of Defence: Stonewall, if he will publish a detailed breakdown of funding given by his Department to Stonewall over each of the last five years, including listings of every project to which those funds were allocated.

Leo Docherty:

It will take time to collate the information needed to produce the breakdown requested and I will write to the hon. Member with an answer in due course.

■ Royal Yacht: Contracts**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[58311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the proportion of the £250 million Royal Yacht contract that will be reserved for payments for the interior design of the vessel.

Mr Ben Wallace:

[Holding answer 21 October 2021]: The National Flagship is not a direct replacement for HMY Britannia and will not therefore be a Royal Yacht.

A competition is underway to procure a world-class design for the National Flagship. It will be for the successful bidder in this competition to determine the proportion of value in its firm price contract that is allocated to interior design. A separate competition will be conducted for the construction of the National Flagship. It will be for the successful bidder in that competition to determine how construction contract costs are broken down.

■ Unmanned Air Vehicles: Costs

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[76875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2021 to Question 69017 on Unmanned Air Vehicles: Costs, what the (a) whole life cost, (b) in year RDEL costs, (c) serviceability and availability rates, (d) flight per hour costs and (e) number of in training flight crew for Watchkeeper as of 16 November 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

The whole life cost of Watchkeeper is £2.124 billion. This includes currently defined and approved Mid-Life enhancements.

The in-year RDEL costs are £35.46 million

I am withholding the availability and serviceability information, as its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

The in-year cost per flying hour is being withheld as its release would prejudice commercial interests.

The number of flight crew in training is currently four.

■ Veterans: Pensions

David Linden:

[\[75986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent steps he has taken with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to resolve the matter of frozen overseas pensions for veterans; and what progress he has made on reciprocal agreements with (a) Commonwealth (b) other nations on that matter.

Leo Docherty:

It is longstanding Government policy that the UK State Pension is not uprated annually for those not resident in the UK, unless the pensioner resides in a country where there is a legal requirement to uprate, such as when a reciprocal social security agreement is in place.

This is a matter for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), who are also responsible for social security agreements with other countries, and it would not be appropriate for the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to seek to interfere or intervene in a non-Defence matter. This is not a veteran-specific issue, with veterans living overseas in the same position as non-veterans, and, therefore, this does not represent a disadvantage under the Armed Forces Covenant to such veterans on

account of their Service. As such, no discussions have taken place between the MOD and DWP concerning this matter.

When a member of the Armed Forces reaches their retirement age, they receive one of the most generous pensions available in the UK. This fairly reflects the unique sacrifice they have provided their country throughout their career. Armed Forces pensions are entirely separate from the State Pension and there is no comparable provision to freeze Armed Forces pensions. Armed Forces pensions are claimed and paid in the same way no matter where a veteran chooses to live and uprated in-line with the consumer price index.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Charities: Lotteries

Ian Murray:

[\[76645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans the Government has to increase the charity lottery annual sales limit from £50 million to £100 million.

Nigel Huddleston:

The government increased the annual sales limit for society lotteries from £10 million to £50 million in July 2020, as part of a package of reforms designed to enable both the National Lottery and society lotteries to thrive, and consequently to grow overall returns to good causes.

We have committed to reviewing these reforms, and that is now under way. We want to understand the impact of these changes, before we consider looking again at the case for a £100 million lottery licence and any additional conditions that may accompany that.

■ Loneliness

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[76714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the levels of loneliness and social isolation in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England; and what (i) financial and (ii) other steps her Department is taking to tackle loneliness and social isolation in those areas.

Nigel Huddleston:

DCMS collects data on levels of loneliness in England through its annual [Community Life Survey](#). In addition, the Department commissioned a Community Life Survey Re-Contact Survey last year, to provide data on the period April 2020 to March 2021. These sources suggest that prevalence of loneliness has remained similar to pre-COVID levels, with 6% of adults reporting that they are always or often lonely.

The Department does not collect robust data on loneliness in local areas. However, DCMS works closely with experts such as the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to monitor other data sources and build our understanding. ONS recently published the first estimates of loneliness at a local authority level. As the [ONS report](#) states, because of small sample sizes and large confidence intervals, local authorities should not be ranked against each other.

The Department continues to take action to tackle loneliness through public communications to get people talking about loneliness, and supporting organisations across different sectors. This includes:

- Awarding £260,000 to 9 organisations through the Loneliness Engagement Fund, to deliver communications and engagement activity that reaches groups at a higher risk of loneliness, including young people and people with disabilities.
- Continuing to deliver and expand our Tackling Loneliness Hub, which provides a space for over 70 organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors to share expertise and develop innovative ways to tackle loneliness on an online platform.
- Sharing practical tips and signposting to support through our public communications activity. During Loneliness Awareness Week in June, we partnered with organisations including TikTok, BT and the Royal Mail to reach more people than ever.

Copies of the [first](#) and [second](#) reports on the government's work on tackling loneliness are available in the Libraries of the House and online. A third annual progress report will be published in February 2022.

■ Unemployment: Young People

Rachael Maskell:

[73903]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, whether funding from the expanded Youth Offer can be spent on social infrastructure in addition to capital projects.

Nigel Huddleston:

Following the 2021 Spending Review, we are investing £560 million in youth services in England over the next three years, including the Youth Investment Fund and ongoing support for the National Citizen Service.

Access to youth facilities is not felt equally, with young people in many parts of the country struggling to gain access to them. The Youth Investment Fund will seek to remedy this, creating up to 300 youth facilities to level up opportunity in left behind places, giving young people access to support from youth workers and enabling them to engage in beneficial activities.

Full details of the YIF's eligibility criteria will be announced in due course.

EDUCATION

■ Childminding and Pre-school Education

Tulip Siddiq: [\[75061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) childminders and (b) group-based early years settings (i) in total, (ii) rated good and (iii) rated outstanding by Ofsted have left the Early Years Register in each month of the last three years.

Will Quince:

This is a matter for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman. I have asked her to write to the hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Children in Care

Tulip Siddiq: [\[75068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will set out the process by which data covering the outcomes of placements of looked after children from England in (a) other nations of the UK and (b) overseas is collated and evaluated.

Will Quince:

I refer the hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn to the answer given on 6 September 2021 to Question [41094](#).

Local authorities are responsible for collating and evaluating data on the outcomes of placements of the looked after children for whom they are responsible. Whilst local authorities do submit an annual return covering all looked after children for whom they are responsible, including information on placement types and some information on the locality of placements, there is no central monitoring of placements outside of England.

■ Civic University Network

Rachael Maskell: [\[75917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support the Civic University Network.

Michelle Donelan:

The government supports and is grateful for the key role universities play as anchor institutions within their locality, and of their importance to the economic, social, and cultural wellbeing needs of the surrounding community. In the financial year 2020-21, the department provided grant funding of £50,000 towards establishing the peer-led Civic University Network. This helped to increase the quality and sustainability of civic engagement through the creation of Civic University Agreements.

■ Department for Education: Hikvision

Alicia Kearns:

[76036]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether Hikvision CCTV or other surveillance software or equipment from Hikvision, is used on any property owned or administered by his Department.

Michelle Donelan:

As has been the case under successive administrations, it is not government policy to comment on the security arrangements of government buildings. Specific details regarding the make and model of security systems are withheld on national security grounds.

■ EqualiTeach: Finance

Tim Loughton:

[76565]

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

Will Quince:

During Anti-Bullying Week, the department announced funding to five leading organisations, including EqualiTeach, to deliver new anti-bullying projects which are aimed at preventing and tackling bullying of all children and young people, including those with protected characteristics. EqualiTeach has been offered £163,765.54 grant funding for the period from 10 August 2021 to 31 March 2022.

In addition to this, across financial years 2016-2020 the Government Equalities Office (then part of the Department for Education) provided £105,016.00 to Equaliteach as part of the 2019-20 extension of the anti-homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (anti-HBT) bullying programme. Further details can be found here:

<https://equaliteach.co.uk/equaliteach-statement-on-geo-and-free-to-be/>.

■ Family Hubs

Tulip Siddiq:

[75066]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his oral contribution of 1 November 2021, Official Report column 615, if he will publish the data source which lists the 3,000 family centres referred to in his reply; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, was referring to the 3,000 children's centre sites. The data source for this is the department's Get Information about Schools database <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>.

■ Pre-school Education

Tulip Siddiq: **[75069]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to make changes to the required child to staff ratios in early years settings.

Will Quince:

Any changes to ratios would be subject to consultation and the department would fully engage with the sector on this if any changes to ratios were planned.

Ministers are committed to working with the sector to support recovery from the COVID-19 outbreak and broader concerns about affordability in the childcare market. As part of our education recovery package, the department announced a £153 million investment in evidence-based professional development for early years practitioners, including through new programmes focusing on key areas such as speech and language development.

The department's investment in early years education will build a stronger, more expert workforce, enabling settings to deliver high quality teaching and help address the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the youngest children, particularly those in the most disadvantaged areas.

■ School Leaving

Colleen Fletcher: **[75902]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of school leavers have participated in higher education in (i) Coventry North East constituency, (ii) Coventry, (iii) the West Midlands and (iv) England in each of the last five years.

Michelle Donelan:

The department publishes the number and proportion of 15 year old students from state funded and special schools who entered Higher Education by age 19 over the past five years. This is shown in the table below.

Figures are not available at parliamentary constituency level.

TABLE 1: NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF 15 YEAR OLD STUDENTS FROM STATE FUNDED AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS WHO ENTERED HIGHER EDUCATION BY AGE 19

		2015/16	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2016/17
Coventry	HE Progression Rate	39.6%	40.5%	40.7%	41.4%	41.7%
	Number of HE Students	1,433	1,474	1,417	1,433	1,475

TABLE 1: NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF 15 YEAR OLD STUDENTS FROM STATE FUNDED AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS WHO ENTERED HIGHER EDUCATION BY AGE 19

		2015/16	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2016/17
West Midlands	HE Progression Rate	40.3%	40.5%	41.5%	41.9%	42.1%
	Number of HE Students	25,630	26,237	26,006	25,897	25,560
England	HE Progression Rate	40.7%	41.2%	42.2%	42.5%	43.1%
	Number of HE Students	229,082	236,233	236,154	235,871	233,407

Source: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education/2019-20>.

■ Special Educational Needs: Admissions

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[76790]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will publish the average wait times for SEN school places as at 17 November 2021.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[76791]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of waiting times for places in SEN schools on families.

Will Quince:

The department does not collect information on waiting times for places in special schools.

Where a local authority identifies that a pupil requires a special school place (through the statutory education, health and care assessment process), they are statutorily required to secure the placement under the Children and Families Act 2014. Local authorities have a duty to arrange suitable education for any pupil of compulsory school age who, because of illness, permanent exclusion or other reasons, would not get a suitable education without such provision. Local authorities are required to keep the sufficiency of special educational provision in their area under review.

On 27 October 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced that an additional £2.6 billion has been made available over the next three years to deliver new places and improve existing provision for pupils with

special educational needs and disabilities or who require alternative provision. The government continues to invest in the Free Schools programme, through which 74 special and 50 alternative provision free schools have opened across the country since 2010, with 70 similar projects in the pipeline.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Leeds**

Hilary Benn: [\[73735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason Leeds local authority received £20.8 million less for High Needs between 2018-19 and 2021-22 than indicated by the National Funding Formula.

Hilary Benn: [\[73736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will remove the cap on gains under the High Needs Block within the National Funding Formula.

Hilary Benn: [\[73737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish High Needs Block funding per pupil for every local education authority in England in each of the last five years.

Will Quince:

High needs funding is the money the department distributes, mainly to local authorities, for children and young people with the most complex needs. The department announced in summer 2021 that high needs funding will increase nationally by £780 million, or 9.6%, in 2022-23 compared to the 2021-22 financial year; this follows the increase of more than £1.5 billion over the previous two years. This will bring the total high needs funding we allocate to £8.9 billion, an increase of over a third since 2019-20.

On top of this, the 2021 Spending Review settlement includes an additional £1.6 billion for schools and high needs in the 2022-23 financial year, on top of the funding we previously announced. The department will confirm in due course how we will allocate this additional funding for 2022-23, and what local authorities' high needs allocations for 2023-24 and 2024-25 will be.

The increase next year that we announced in the summer means that every local authority will attract an increase of at least 8% per head of 2-18 population, with some local authorities seeing increases of up to 11%. Leeds Council will be receiving a maximum increase of 11% per head on the amount of high needs funding allocated in the 2021-22 financial year. This amounts to a provisional high needs funding allocation of over £108 million in 2022-23, and that does not yet include an allocation of the additional funding the department has available from the 2021 Spending Review.

In setting the limit on gains, the department considers the distribution of funding across all local authorities, including how many are on the minimum percentage increase. This distribution balances improving fairness according to the high needs national funding formula (NFF), with ensuring that every local authority attracts a

significant increase to help with the cost pressures they are facing. The table below shows the significant year-on-year increases that Leeds Council has been receiving since 2018-19 and the reducing impact of the limit on their NFF gains, as well as how the £20.8 million adds the differences each year between the provisional NFF allocations with and without the formula gains capped.

SEE NOTE 1 BELOW [1]	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
A. Limit (cap) on per head gains (year-on-year)		6%	17%	12%	11%
B. NFF provisional allocation before gains cap	£73.4m	£75.0m	£90.0m	£101.3m	£110.4m
C. NFF provisional allocation after gains cap	£66.3m	£69.8m	£85.3m	£97.4m	£108.5m
D. Difference between allocations with and without gains capped [2] (B-C)	£7.1m	£5.1m	£4.7m	£3.9m	£1.9m
Total difference between allocations with and without gains capped 2018-19 to 2020-21	= £20.8m				

Notes to table:

1. The high needs NFF provisional allocations shown in the table are to provide the explanation of the £20.8 million requested in Question 73735. They do not include additional funding that was made available to all local authorities in 2018-19 and 2019-20, and do not include any of the deductions for academies and colleges' place funding, or other adjustments that are made in the final allocations of high needs funding to authorities.
2. All the numbers have been rounded so the differences may not add up precisely.

Finally, the department are unable to publish the high needs block funding per pupil for every local authority in England in each of the last five years. This is because the department does not collect information on the number of pupils who attract to their school the different types of high needs funding, or the level of funding that an individual pupil attracts. In addition, there is a wide range of practice in the proportion of children awarded an Education, Health and Care Plan, for example, across

different local authorities, which make such comparisons difficult. It is possible to make a range of other local authority comparisons using the data in the department's published high needs benchmarking tool. That tool is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-benchmarking-tool>.

■ Students: Finance

Darren Jones: **[75978]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what financial support the Government is providing to students with visa applications for studying within the UK; and what recent progress has been made on the processing of delayed Erasmus grants to UK students studying in the UK.

Michelle Donelan:

International students are required to demonstrate their ability to financially support themselves during their studies as part of the visa application process. The UK government does not offer financial support to students applying for a visa to study in the UK.

Students that have a UK visa and are studying full-time on a course at degree level or above at a higher education provider with a track record of compliance are able to work 20 hours per week during term time and full-time during vacation periods.

In specific cases, immediate hardship funding can be made available by universities for students in need. Students should speak to their providers if they find themselves in need of hardship support.

The UK government funds several programmes offering scholarships and bursaries to support international students looking to study in the UK. The UK National Agency for Erasmus+ confirms that there have been no delays in disbursement of funds to existing beneficiaries.

■ Students: Loans

Jim Shannon: **[74983]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the financial effect of lowering the student loan repayment threshold on graduates (a) low, (b) middle and (c) high income households.

Michelle Donelan:

The student loan system in England removes financial barriers for those hoping to study higher education courses while sharing its costs between learners and the general taxpayer, which is fair. After finishing study, monthly student loan repayments are linked to income, not to interest rates or the amount borrowed. Repayments are made only on earnings above the repayment threshold, and borrowers are protected; if their income drops, so do their repayments. Any outstanding debt is written off after the loan term ends at no detriment to the borrower.

As part of the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding we are carefully considering a range of options to ensure that student finance continues to deliver value for money for both students and the taxpayer. The interim conclusion of the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding was published on 21 January 2021, and we will conclude the Review in full in due course. Full information about this review and the interim conclusion can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-18-education-and-funding-review-interim-conclusion>.

Sarah Olney:

[75090]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of interest rate changes on student loans on graduate income.

Michelle Donelan:

The student loan system in England removes financial barriers for those hoping to study higher education, while sharing its costs between learners and the general taxpayer, which is fair. After finishing study, monthly student loan repayments are linked to income, not to interest rates or the amount borrowed. Repayments are made only on earnings above the repayment threshold, and borrowers are protected. If their income drops, so do their repayments. Any outstanding debt is written off after the loan term ends at no detriment to the borrower.

As part of the review of post-18 education and funding, we are carefully considering a range of options to ensure that student finance continues to deliver value for money for both students and the taxpayer. The interim conclusion of the review of post-18 education and funding was published on 21 January 2021, and we will conclude the review in full in due course.

■ Summer Schools: Secondary Education

Wes Streeting:

[75937]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of secondary school pupils who attended a face-to-face summer school in summer 2021.

Wes Streeting:

[75938]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of secondary school pupils on free school meals who attended a face-to-face summer school in summer 2021.

Wes Streeting:

[75939]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to provide funding for face-to-face summer schools in summer 2022.

Mr Robin Walker:

The 2021 summer schools programme was part of the education recovery response to help pupils catch-up on lost education. School participation and pupil attendance were optional.

Over the summer, almost 2,800 secondary schools across England signed up to host a summer school, to help pupils catch up on lost education caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as helping to improve mental health and wellbeing.

The window for claims from schools for running summer schools closed on 1 November 2021. The department is currently processing claims and analysing the figures, including numbers of attendees.

The department intends to evaluate the summer schools programme in due course, the findings of which will inform our decisions on future summer schools.

■ Universities: Antisemitism

Matt Vickers:

[\[75173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to tackle rising levels of anti-Semitic abuse on university campuses.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is clear that antisemitism is abhorrent, and we expect higher education (HE) providers to be at the forefront of tackling the challenge of it.

The department has pushed for several years for greater action from HE providers in addressing antisemitism. This has included encouraging institutions to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, in order to have clarity of what constitutes antisemitic behavior. This in turn enables providers to better understand and recognise incidences of antisemitism and take action to address them.

As part of this work, the former Secretary of State for Education wrote out to all HE providers urging adoption of the IHRA definition, stating that we would consider further action if institutions did not adopt. A follow-up letter was sent in May 2021, reinforcing the government's expectation that providers adopt the IHRA definition, stressing the even greater importance of doing so in light of an increased number of antisemitic incidents recorded as a result of the conflict in the Middle East.

In response to this, on 10 November 2021, the Office for Students published a list of providers who have adopted the definition. I am pleased to report good progress in the last year, an increase from around 30 to over 200 providers having adopted. This includes the vast majority of universities. I will continue to urge all providers to adopt.

Adoption of the IHRA definition is only a first step towards ridding HE of antisemitism. I want to be very clear that, while the government considers that adoption of the definition is crucial, it is not enough on its own. I will continue to work with the sector to ensure it better understands antisemitism and does more to end it. I intend to bring together key stakeholders from the sector to examine what more can be done to make Jewish students and staff feel safe on campus.

I will continue to work tirelessly to ensure it is eradicated from our world-leading providers.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Animals: Exports****Andrew Rosindell:****[73747]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential harm to animal welfare as a result of the export of live animals to countries with poor animal welfare records.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government recognises the long-standing public concern with live animals being exported for slaughter and fattening, in particular, the concern that these journeys are unnecessary and that is why The Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill will ban exports of livestock and equines for slaughter and fattening from, or transiting through, Great Britain to anywhere outside the British Islands.

The Government remains committed to promoting high animal welfare standards nationally and internationally. We will continue to work with the World Organisation for Animal Health to raise international standards more generally and will use our independent seat at the World Trade Organisation to advance the issue of animal welfare standards globally.

■ Dairy Farming**Mr Richard Holden:****[73997]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support the development of value-added operations within the dairy sector.

Victoria Prentis:

Dairy is the largest agricultural sector playing a vital role in the British economy and we want to see it produce, sell, and export more of our great British dairy products. The sector is world renowned with a strong reputation for quality, built on high animal welfare standards, strong environmental protection, traceability, and sustainability. This is a strong basis on which to sell more of our produce at home and abroad, increasing overall value in the sector.

Our new £27 million Farming Investment Fund also opened on 16 November. This will provide grants to farmers so that they can invest in the equipment, technology and infrastructure that will help their businesses to prosper, while improving their productivity and further enhancing the environment. The Fund will help them to focus on more efficient production methods, to reduce resource costs, to improve yields, and to provide a better return. We intend future rollout of the Fund will support producers who want to process and add value to their products, to create new products, or to sell their produce directly to consumers.

More information on the Fund is available at the following link.

[The Farming Investment Fund launches today - Future Farming \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://www.blog.gov.uk/2021/11/16/the-farming-investment-fund-launches-today-future-farming/)

■ Deposit Return Schemes

Gareth Thomas: [\[73698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his timetable is for the Government's planned Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) to begin operation; whether that DRS will be an all-in scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas: [\[73699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he or his Cabinet colleagues at COP26 had with their international counterparts on the impact of deposit return schemes on tackling plastic pollution.

Jo Churchill:

The consultation held earlier this year proposed the scheme would go live in late 2024, subject to views from the consultation. Final details of the timeline for bringing the deposit return scheme (DRS) into operation, as well as the scope of the scheme for material and size of drinks containers to be included, will be presented in a Government response which will be published in due course.

No specific discussions were had by the Secretary of State or Cabinet colleagues at COP26 regarding DRS. However, we know that successful international schemes have achieved upwards of 90% collection rates for drinks containers which can play a big part in tackling plastic pollution.

■ Floods: Greater London

Felicity Buchan: [\[74001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions officials in his Department (a) have had and (b) plan to have with OFWAT on the performance of water companies during the flooding events in London in 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

During heavy rain in London in July and early August, the Met Office recorded over a month's worth of rainfall in a few hours in certain areas. The intensity and duration of the rainfall overwhelmed the drainage infrastructure, causing surface water flooding to parts of London.

Under section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, a lead local flood authority (unitary authorities and county councils) is required to investigate, to the extent that it considers it necessary or appropriate, flooding incidents, including whether flood risk management authorities have exercised their functions. Once completed the report must be published and the relevant risk management authorities notified.

Following the summer surface water flooding in London, Thames Water has also commissioned an independent review into the performance of its network, including its Maida Vale and Counter's Creek flood defence schemes. The Government expects all relevant risk management authorities, especially lead local flood

authorities and water companies, to consider and act upon the outcomes and lessons learnt.

Surface water flooding is a local flood risk; managing this risk alongside flooding from groundwater and ordinary watercourses is the responsibility of lead local flood authorities. This includes ensuring the risk of flooding is identified and managed, as part of a local flood risk management strategy, ensuring contingency arrangements and support for local communities are in place. In managing these local risks, the lead local flood authority will work with other risk management authorities. This includes the local highways authorities, who are responsible for highway and gully maintenance, and the water and sewerage companies who operate and maintain the public sewer network.

Water and sewerage companies are regulated by Ofwat, the independent economic regulator for water. Ofwat will hold the companies to account for the delivery of affordable, secure and resilient water services, and will take enforcement action where necessary e.g. where a water company has breached a duty.

■ Hemp

Daisy Cooper:

[\[73968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the potential for British grown hemp to expand sustainable agricultural and industrial production.

Victoria Prentis:

Hemp is a long-standing crop in UK agriculture with a variety of uses, and Defra has an interest in exploring the benefits to UK farmers.

Defra has commissioned a research project "Review of opportunities for diversifying UK agriculture through investment in underutilised crops", which includes industrial hemp. This will examine hemp cultivation from a grower and consumer standards perspective, alongside its environmental benefits. We are also considering the role of industrial hemp in the bioeconomy and the opportunities for our agriculture sector.

An enhanced evidence base will help us to better understand how novel crops can contribute to achieving environmentally sustainable actions and make informed decisions about hemp cultivation.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Forests

Rachael Maskell:

[\[69141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will have discussions with the Secretary of State for Transport on the planned destruction of ancient woodlands to build HS2 and to ensure that future routes for HS2 do not destroy any ancient woodlands.

Rebecca Pow:

In 2018, the protection of ancient woodlands, ancient trees and veteran trees was strengthened through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), recognising them as irreplaceable habitats. The NPPF also outlines that any development resulting in the loss or deterioration of such irreplaceable habitats should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and only if a suitable compensation strategy exists. HS2 is considered a wholly exceptional reason. Where effects on ancient woodland cannot be reasonably avoided then HS2 Ltd has committed to provide a range of compensation measures in response to these losses.

HS2 Ltd has sought to avoid impacts on ancient woodlands wherever possible. Where there is unavoidable loss of ancient woodland due to HS2, this will be addressed through a range of compensation measures. These include planting new native broadleaved woodland to enhance linkages between ancient woodlands, and by salvaging ancient woodland soils and seed banks to be used in new sites. On top of this, HS2 Ltd is working with the Forestry Commission to deliver a £7 million Woodland Fund (Phase 1 & 2a), which has been offering grants to support landowners and communities to create new native woodland and restore plantation on ancient woodland sites. This is expected to create hundreds of additional hectares of woodlands over and above the core mitigation works required and improve the condition of existing ancient woodland sites.

More broadly, in response to the Dasgupta Review the Government outlined our aim to deliver a net gain in biodiversity on the Crewe-Manchester HS2 leg.

■ **Livestock: Animal Welfare**

Kate Osamor: [\[73933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of banning the caging of farmed animals by 2027, following the recent commitment by the European Commission to take similar action.

Jo Churchill:

The Government shares the public's high regard for animal welfare. We are delivering a series of ambitious reforms, as outlined in the Action Plan for Animal Welfare. We wish to improve the welfare of farm animals and are considering the case for introducing further reforms, in areas such as the use of cages for laying hens and farrowing crates for pigs.

In coming to an assessment of the potential merits of banning cages we will wish to consult all interested organisations.

■ **Pollinators**

Sir John Hayes: [\[73701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent estimate his Department made of the size of the UK's pollinator species populations.

Sir John Hayes: [\[73702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to (a) maintain and (b) increase the understanding within his Department of pollinator species' (i) health and (ii) needs.

Sir John Hayes: [\[73703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the species diversity and sustainability of the UK's current wild bee population.

Sir John Hayes: [\[73704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the geographic distribution of honey bee populations in the UK.

Sir John Hayes: [\[73705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the biggest risk factors to UK pollinator species.

Sir John Hayes: [\[73706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an impact assessment of the associated risks posed by a significant decline in UK pollinator species.

Sir John Hayes: [\[73707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the health of the habitats of UK pollinator species.

Sir John Hayes: [\[73708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to work with (a) landowners, (b) farmers and (c) growers to facilitate pollinator-friendly environments.

Sir John Hayes: [\[73709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to further pollinator-friendly policies in urban spaces.

Sir John Hayes: [\[73710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the risk of pesticides to pollinator species population; and what methodology was used for that assessment.

Sir John Hayes: [\[73711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what weighting is given to pollinator population health in the pesticide approval and use process.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[73712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to assess the risk posed by non-native pollinator species to native species, regarding (a) pest, (b) disease and (c) displacement.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[73713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the revised national action plan for the sustainable use of pesticides will recognise pollinator sustainability as a core principle.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra's indicator of the status of UK pollinating insects shows that overall distribution has declined since 1980, but with little change over the short term. Although not yet definitive, there are encouraging signs; for example the average distribution of wild bees has shown some stability over recent years. While indicators of the abundance of UK butterflies show long term declines since 1976, there has also been no significant change since 2015.

Of the 148 species of bee and 229 species of hoverfly in our pollinating insects indicator, over the long term, 19% of species became more widespread (7% showed a strong increase), and 49% became less widespread (24% showed a strong decrease). By contrast, over the short term, a greater proportion of species were increasing (46%, with 34% exhibiting a strong increase) than decreasing (43%, with 36% exhibiting a strong decrease).

The size of the honey bee population is dependent to a large extent on the numbers of beekeepers. Defra has performed an annual hive count since 2015 and the latest count, at the end of the 2020 season, indicated a total UK population of approximately 260,000 honey bee colonies. As the calculations rely on several assumptions, the hive count figure is termed an experimental statistic. Distribution of hives is determined by where beekeepers arrange to locate their apiaries. The National Bee Unit collates information on apiary location by county, for example, but no formal assessment of geographic distribution has been made.

In 2019, alongside academic partners, we published evidence statements on what is known about the status, values, drivers of change, and responses to management of UK insect pollinators. This concluded that the service of pollination, provided by wild and managed insects, is dependent on insect numbers, and can be improved by diverse pollinator communities, therefore it is possible that pollination services to crops and wild plants have declined in the long term.

The review also highlighted the biggest risk factors to UK pollinator species, such as habitat loss and fragmentation, invasive species, pests and disease, climate change and risks from pesticide use. We continue to act on these issues while keeping other threats under review alongside our partners on the National Pollinator Strategy. For managed honey bees, current major risks are from endemic pests and disease, on which we act alongside our partners on the Healthy Bees Plan 2030.

Our 2019 review showed that historical declines in nectar resources across Great Britain have slowed since the 1970s. While they remain below 1930 levels, total potential nectar resources increased by 25% between 1998 to 2007. Our annual indicator of the extent and condition of priority habitats, many of which are crucial for supporting pollinators, shows that in 2021, almost 1.23 million hectares, or 65.6% of all priority habitats, were in a favourable or unfavourable recovering condition. We are taking a range of actions to improve this position and to restore and create further pollinator habitat.

For example, between 2014 and 2019, Natural England estimates that the area of farmland covered by agri-environment scheme options delivering food and fuel for pollinators increased by 30,000 hectares, largely driven by Countryside Stewardship's Wild Pollinator and Farm Wildlife Package, while pollinators also benefited from managing existing habitat such as protected sites or hedgerows.

We are also working with landowners, farmers and growers alongside conservation bodies, to facilitate pollinator-friendly environments outside agri-environment schemes, for example through Natural England's 'Back from the Brink' species recovery programme and most recently, our Green Recovery Challenge Fund, including Butterfly Conservation's project to restore habitats at 18 woodland sites in the Morecambe Bay area to promote the recovery of threatened butterfly species.

We are building on these measures and projects in the design of our new environmental land management schemes, which will enable many more farmers and land managers to take positive action for pollinators.

In urban spaces, managing public land such as parks or roadside verges for pollinators will be one way that authorities can discharge their biodiversity duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, a duty which the Environment Act 2021 strengthens. We are working across Government on ways to support them, such as by providing guidance. Local planning authorities and other designated public authorities will also be required to produce regular Biodiversity Reports setting out the action they have taken, and these reports will provide a valuable source of good practice.

Research also shows that urban gardens are a significant source of nectar provision and can support substantial pollinator populations. We established and coordinate 'Bees' Needs Week', an annual event working alongside our many partners to raise awareness of the steps that everyone can take to protect pollinators in gardens, allotments, window boxes or other community spaces. We work with our partners to provide year-round guidance and to celebrate examples of best practice in schools, community groups and local authorities through our 'Bees' Needs Champions Awards'.

Pesticides are strictly regulated and only authorised pesticides can be used. Authorisation is only given if, among other requirements, there are expected to be no unacceptable effects on non-target species.

Linking pesticide usage directly to changes in wild bees and other pollinators remains challenging because of the range of pressures which affect pollinators, in addition to the complexities of assessing and attributing pesticide usage and risk to impacts.

We have funded research into the exposure of honeybees to pesticides through analysing pesticide residues in honey samples from across the country and using metabarcoding to understand how honeybees are exposed to these pesticides. We are also currently funding research looking at how we could develop our monitoring to better understand the effects of pesticides on pollinators, as well as routes of exposure.

The draft 'National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides' (NAP) sets out the key ambition to support the development and greater uptake of Integrated Pest Management to reduce pressures on biodiversity and the natural environment. It also set out the intention to improve indicators of pesticide usage, risk and impacts and to ensure those who use pesticides do so safely and sustainably. This includes working in line with the National Pollinator Strategy. The draft NAP was the subject of a public consultation.

The key risk posed by non-native pollinator species is from the non-native pest Asian hornet, whose diet includes honey bees and other pollinating insects. A pest risk assessment and contingency plan were developed as the spread of the species in parts of Europe became clear. Since 2016 there have been small numbers of confirmed UK sightings, and the National Bee Unit has delivered a successful response in each of these cases. There is no evidence to suggest that Asian hornet has become established in the UK.

There are also risks to managed honey bees from other non-native species such as Small hive beetle. Imports of honey bees into the UK are only accepted from approved countries and are subject to rules relating to notification and health certification to ensure that imports are free of key pests and diseases. Post-import checks, including follow-up inspections, are also carried out.

We continue to work within Defra and across Government to maintain and increase the understanding of pollinator species' health and needs through our collaborative work under the National Pollinator Strategy and the Healthy Bees Plan 2030, to integrate action for wild pollinators and managed honey bees across Government policy.

■ **Sewage: Northwich**

Mike Amesbury:

[71448]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of raw sewage discharges on the river Weaver at Northwich; and what steps he is taking to reduce those discharges.

Rebecca Pow:

The impact of the storm overflows that discharge to the River Weaver, including those in Northwich, was last assessed through modelling in 2013. This led to three

storm overflow discharges being improved in United Utilities Water improvement programme for 2015-20, and a further storm overflow discharge is being improved during the current, 2020-25, programme.

In addition, monitors that record the duration of spills were installed on the majority of storm overflows in Northwich during 2015-20. Data from these monitors will inform United Utilities Water's work to investigate further action that may be taken in the current price programme (2020-25).

The Government has been clear that the current level of sewage discharges from storm overflows is unacceptable. That is why earlier this year, the Government consulted on a draft of its new strategic policy statement to the industry's independent regulator Ofwat, which set out that we expect it to incentivise water companies to take steps to "significantly reduce the frequency and volume of sewage discharges from storm overflows, so they operate infrequently". This publication strongly influences investment decisions and is one of Government's key tools in driving action from water companies. The Environment Act now contains a new duty directly on water companies to reduce progressively the adverse impacts of storm overflow discharges, making the expectation we have already set out in the draft policy statement unequivocal in law.

■ **Sewage: Swansea Bay**

Stephen Doughty:

[\[72464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much raw sewage has been released without treatment from English coastal towns on the Severn estuary and Bristol Channel in each of the last three years.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency does not hold the data for the volume of sewage released by storm overflows.

Working with water companies, the Environment Agency has concluded a programme to install Event Duration Monitors on the vast majority of storm overflows, just over 80% of the overflows in England by the end of 2020. These monitors provide a robust and consistent way of monitoring how often and for how long storm overflows are used, but do not measure volume. This underpins the Environment Agency planning, compliance and enforcement work. By the end of 2023, the remaining number will be monitored to provide a complete picture of permitted storm overflows in England.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Cyprus: Peace Negotiations

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[73811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking with her international counterparts to help resume peace talks between the informal 5 +1 over the reunification of Cyprus; and if she will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

The UK remains committed to supporting the UN process to reach a Cyprus Settlement in line with UN parameters based on the model of a Bi-zonal, Bi-communal Federation with political equality - a model that we believe to be broad enough to address the concerns of both sides. UK Ministers and Officials continue to engage all sides to urge flexibility and compromise to that end.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[75964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many former (a) Foreign and Commonwealth Office and (b) Department for International Development staff were in her Department in (i) September 2020 and (ii) November 2021.

Amanda Milling:

The number of former Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department for International Development (DFID) staff in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in September 2020 and November 2021 are as follows:

	FCDO - LEGACY FCO STAFF	FCDO - LEGACY DFID STAFF
1st September 2020	5000-5499	2500-2999
31st October 2021	4500-4999	2000-2499

■ Harold Ordoñez Botero

Rachel Hopkins: [\[74020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the (a) detention of the former FARC combatant and signatory to the peace agreement Harold Ordoñez Botero on 29 August 2021 and (b) implications for his ongoing legal security.

Wendy Morton:

The FCDO is aware of the arrest, and subsequent release due to lack of evidence, of former FARC combatant Harold Ordoñez Botero.

The UK has been a leading international advocate of Colombia's peace process, and supporting the Colombian Government in its commitment to implement the 2016 Peace Accords will remain a top priority. We will continue to support the Colombian Government's commitment to assisting former combatants in transitioning to civilian life, as agreed in the 2016 peace agreement. We have committed more than £68 million over 5 years through our Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund to support reintegration, rural development, and security across conflict-affected regions. We have done this through programmes designed to build state capacity to ensure the safety of former combatants, and of other vulnerable individuals and groups, including outside of official reincorporation zones.

■ **India: Visas**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[76675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her Indian counterparts on the eligibility of UK citizens for an e-visa for India.

Amanda Milling:

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office officials have raised our concern with the Government of India (GoI) about its e-visa services suspension for British nationals. It is for the GoI to determine the types and validity of the visas, and services it offers. However, we will continue to work closely with the GoI on this issue and update the India Travel Advice with the latest information on any changes to India's visa rules.

■ **Iran: Political Prisoners**

Theresa Villiers:

[\[76606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the matters raised in EDM 615 on Recognising the 1988 massacre in Iran.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government takes any allegations of extrajudicial killings seriously, and we have always been clear that Iran must uphold its international legal obligations, including conducting thorough and independent investigations into suspected human rights violations, both past and present. We strongly support the work done by the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran and urge Iran to allow him access to the country, so that he can also conduct research and investigations into human rights concerns reported there, including the events of 1988.

■ **Land Mines**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[73967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2021 to Question 68468 on Landmine Clearance

Funding, if she will make it her policy to include in her funding and country allocation plans commitments to (a) maintain levels of funding at the equivalent of £125 million for the next three years and (b) maintain UK support for landmine clearance in (i) South Sudan, (ii) Zimbabwe, (iii) Myanmar, (iv) Iraq, (v) Lebanon and (vi) Vietnam.

James Cleverly:

As I stated in my previous answer, we remain committed to continuing our support to mine action across the globe. The Global Mine Action Programme 3 (GMAP3) is due to begin in 2022 and we are working towards finalising funding and country allocation and hope to share our plans for the programme in due course.

■ **Madagascar: Climate Change**

Harriett Baldwin:

[\[72409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what projects her Department is (a) funding or (b) helping to fund to support the people of Madagascar to adapt to the impact of climate change.

Vicky Ford:

As COP26 Presidents, the UK is committed to driving action to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees and support countries most vulnerable to climate change, such as Madagascar, adapt to its impacts. The UK is a long-standing supporter of adaptation to climate change in Africa, with around half of the UK's £2.7 billion adaptation budget between 2016 and 2020 spent across the continent. Ahead of COP26, we have contributed £175 million to the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership, operating across Africa, which aims to make 1 billion people safer from disasters globally by 2025 through expanding early action financing, improving early warning systems and building the capacity to act on the risks they identify. At COP26, the UK has strengthened these commitments, joining African nations and other donors in contributing £20 million to the Africa Adaptation Acceleration Programme - an African-owned initiative which aims to support at-risk communities in countries such as Madagascar build resilience to extreme weather - as well as an additional £42m for adaptation through our flagship Africa Regional Climate and Nature programme. The UK is also a major contributor to the World Bank International Development Association (IDA)'s large-scale infrastructure programme operating in Madagascar, which will support longer-term adaptation through the creation of multi-use water systems throughout the country's three southern regions.

The UK also remains deeply concerned by the humanitarian crisis in southern Madagascar, which is driven by multiple factors including climate shocks. We are working closely with the UN, Government of Madagascar and other donors to ensure aid reaches those in need. In 2021, the UK has allocated £5 million to UN humanitarian agencies to provide life-saving food assistance, nutrition and health interventions, access to safe water and to reinforce humanitarian system coordination in southern Madagascar. This UK funding will reach 250,000 people, including the provision of food assistance in the form of emergency cash transfers to 132,000 people. In addition, the UK is a core contributor to the UN Central Emergency

Response Fund which has allocated approximately £5.78 million to the international response this year.

■ **Moldova: Natural Gas**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[73794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations she has made to her Russian counterpart on that country's recent interference in gas supplies to Moldova.

Wendy Morton:

On 15 November, I discussed Moldova's energy security and the 5 year gas supply deal through Gazprom with Moldovan Prime Minister Gavrilita. The Foreign Secretary has not discussed this bilaterally with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, but we are looking at other ways to support Moldova's energy diversification. We want Europe to be less dependent on Russian gas, and are in favour of more investment in renewables.

■ **Myanmar: Armed Conflict**

Rushanara Ali:

[\[73835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the warning from the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar on the risk of further mass atrocity crimes by the military in that country.

Amanda Milling:

The UK shares the concerns of the UN Special Rapporteur regarding the risk of further mass atrocity crimes in Myanmar. The UK has developed strong mechanisms, in consultation with civil society experts, to monitor emerging atrocity risks. The UK has set up the Myanmar Witness programme which is gathering and reporting open-source information on serious human rights violations. The UK is closely monitoring the situation on the ground, particularly in North West Myanmar and Rakhine, and released a statement on 15 October regarding troop build ups in Chin, Sagaing and Magwe, calling on the military to cease the violence. We convened a UN Security Council on 8 November and secured a press statement on violence, protection of civilians, humanitarian access and vaccines.

Rushanara Ali:

[\[73836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will convene an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council in response to the military escalation in Myanmar.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is gravely concerned at escalating conflict across the country, particularly in Chin, Sagaing and Magwe. Significant troop movements by the Myanmar Armed Forces and multiple civilian casualties have been reported in these areas.

The UK is calling for a peaceful and inclusive resolution to the crisis. In response to escalating conflict we convened the Council again on 8 November, securing a strong press statement on violence, humanitarian access and the role of ASEAN. We reiterate our support for the ASEAN Five Point Consensus, noting in particular the call for a cessation of violence. We will continue our engagement with the wider international community to support a lasting solution for the people of Myanmar.

■ Myanmar: Human Rights

Rushanara Ali:

[\[73837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the recommendations made by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar in his Annual Report to the UN General Assembly.

Amanda Milling:

The UK strongly supports the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar which are in line with the UK's strategic objectives to resolve the crisis. In particular, the UK has been at the forefront of the international effort to target the military's access to money and arms. The UK has announced seven tranches of sanctions since the coup, targeting the regime's credibility and their revenue streams, we are working with partners to consider further measures. The UK is clear that the international community should work to prevent the flow of arms to Myanmar. To this end we have secured a G7 commitment and a UN General Assembly Resolution which reaffirm this commitment. We are working with partners to put pressure on those who continue to sell arms to the military. The UK is clear in our condemnation of the coup and will continue to work to deny the regime credibility. We will continue to support the voices of those who oppose the coup, including the National Unity Government of Myanmar (NUG) who have a strong democratic mandate from the November 2020 election.

As set out in the UN Special Rapporteur Report, meeting humanitarian needs remains a major priority. 70% of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's aid spend in Myanmar is being used to respond to health and humanitarian issues. As ASEAN's newest Dialogue Partner, the UK pledged a further \$100k in Technical Assistance to support the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Centre in its response to the crisis in Myanmar and to support regional stability. The UK has provided humanitarian assistance to over 500,000 people since the coup. Our humanitarian assistance includes water and sanitation, nutrition and lifesaving food. This is delivered by the UN, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and international and local Non-Governmental Organisations.

■ Myanmar: Politics and Government

Hilary Benn:

[\[73738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will recognise the National Unity Government of Myanmar.

Amanda Milling:

The UK has a longstanding policy and practice, held by successive Governments, of according recognition to states, not governments. Nevertheless, the UK is clear in our condemnation of the coup and stand in solidarity with those calling for a return to democracy, including the National Unity Government of Myanmar (NUG) who have a strong democratic mandate from the November 2020 Election. The UK has supported representatives from the NUG to amplify their voice on the international stage. They have briefed the UN Security Council in informal "Arria" meetings on 9 April and 29 July. We are also clear that we the wider international community must engage with the NUG.

Both I and my predecessor have met with members of the National Unity Government, most recently meeting with Daw Zin Mar Aung on 4 November. Officials are engaging regularly with senior figures in the NUG.

Refugees: Afghanistan**John Healey:**[\[76576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that Afghans who are (a) not eligible under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and (b) at risk of harm from the Taliban in Afghanistan are given assistance before the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme opens.

James Cleverly:

We have committed to provide £286 million in humanitarian and development support and continue to explore the best ways to provide support to the Afghan people. The Prime Minister's Special Representative for the Afghan Transition, Sir Simon Gass, and Chargé d'Affaires of the UK Mission to Afghanistan in Doha, Dr Martin Longden, travelled to Afghanistan on 5 October to hold talks with the Taliban. Sir Simon and Dr Longden stressed the need to ensure continued safe passage for those who wish to leave the country and respect human rights, including the rights of minorities and women and girls.

During Op PITTING we were able to get approval for evacuation of a number of Afghan nationals, to whom the Home Secretary agreed to grant Leave Outside the Rules to enter the UK, in addition to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy contingent and British nationals. These people were identified as being particularly at risk and not all were able to leave before the end of the Operation. Providing assistance to those individuals eligible for HMG support remains our priority.

Sub-Saharan Africa: Safe to Be Me Conference**Stephen Doughty:**[\[72454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which sub-Saharan countries have (a) been invited to and (b) agreed to attend the Safe to be Me Global Equality Conference to be hosted in London in June 2022.

Stephen Doughty:

[\[72455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which UK Overseas Territories have (a) been invited to and (b) agreed to attend the Safe to be me: Global Equality Conference to be hosted in London in June 2022.

Wendy Morton:

The Safe To Be Me: Global Equality Conference team is working hard with a range of domestic and international stakeholders to shape its programme and delivery. No formal invitations to the event have issued yet, but we are planning on a wide range of global participation, recognising that countries are at different stages of the journey towards LGBT+ equality. We welcome attendance from any country who wants to make progress towards that goal.

■ Sudan: Teachers

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[76786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her counterpart in Sudan on the recent arrest of teachers in that country.

Vicky Ford:

We strongly condemn the actions of the Sudanese military on 25 October, including the continued detention of Prime Minister Hamdok and members of the civilian government, as well as the unilateral appointment of a new Sovereign Council on 11 November. I condemned the military's actions in the strongest terms in the House of Commons on 25 October and called for Sudanese people be able to meet to protest without fear of violence, a message I have since publicly reiterated. The Foreign Secretary made a statement on 5 November calling for the release of all those unlawfully detained and restoration of the civilian-led transitional government. We also reiterated that all detainees should be released as part of condemnation of the coup at UN Security Council meetings on 26 October and 11 November and at the UN Human Rights Council on 5 November.

We are deeply concerned by recent reports of many teachers being arrested by the Sudanese military whilst protesting against the military coup. On 9 November Troika (UK, Norway and US) Ambassadors met with General Burhan, where they pressed him to release all detainees and urged the military to reverse their actions. With our international partners we continue to maintain public international pressure on the military to return to the democratic transition in order to deliver the freedom, peace and justice called for by the Sudanese people.

■ UNRWA: Finance

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[76783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much the Government has (a) pledged to UNRWA in the financial year 2021-22 and (b) dispersed to UNRWA as of 17 November 2021.

James Cleverly:

In Financial Year 2021/22 the United Kingdom (UK) has provided £11m to United Nations Relief and Works Agency's (UNRWA) core programme budget to help UNRWA provide basic education to more than 533,000 children a year (half of which are girls), access to health services for 3.5 million Palestinian refugees and social safety net assistance for around 255,000 of the most vulnerable across the region. The UK also provided £3.2m to the UNRWA's emergency appeal in May 2021 to help provide basic services, such as healthcare and clean water following the Gaza conflict.

Preet Kaur Gill:[\[76784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her international counterparts on increasing financial support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Preet Kaur Gill:[\[76785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the impact of the continued funding gap for UNRWA following the annual pledging conference on the 16 November 2021 on (a) UNWRA and (b) Palestinian refugees.

James Cleverly:

The United Kingdom (UK) is a long-term supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). We recognise UNRWA's unique mandate from the United Nations General Assembly, to provide protection and core services including health and education to Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. The UK's annual contribution to UNRWA's programme budget helps UNRWA to provide basic education to more than 533,000 children a year (half of whom are girls), access to health services for 3.5 million Palestinian refugees and social safety net assistance for around 255,000 of the most vulnerable across the region. The UK is working with UNRWA and other donors to improve UNRWA's financial viability. This includes broadening UNRWA's donor base, encouraging the full disbursement of pledges and encouraging support through multi-year funding. I reiterated this at the International Ministerial Conference on UNRWA in Brussels on 16 November.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Abortion****Scott Benton:**[\[73990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many women seeking abortion in England and Wales who had a consultation decided not to proceed with the termination since 1 April 2020; and how many of those consultations took place in person.

Maggie Throup:

The Department does not collect this information.

■ Cardiovascular Diseases: Coronavirus**Sir John Hayes:**[\[73716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of potential changes needed for the NHS to meet its cardiovascular disease ambitions as outlined in the Long Term Plan, following the covid-19 outbreak.

Maria Caulfield:

The National Health Service promoted restoration of services as a priority, including diagnostic and treatment services for patients with heart disease, as soon as the peak of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic began to decline. The NHS Operational Planning Guidance for 2021/2022 set out the requirement that all people with cardiovascular disease risk factors are to be reviewed and managed before winter 2021.

■ Carers**Stuart Anderson:**[\[73964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support is available for (a) young carers and (b) people who have become carers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

Local authorities have a duty to assess the needs of young carers, under the Children and Families Act 2014, which has remained in place throughout the pandemic. Local authorities must ensure young carers are identified and referred to appropriate support if needed and that the young carer is not taking on excessive or inappropriate care and support responsibilities. Adult carers also have legal rights to an assessment of and support for their needs where eligible from their local authority under the Care Act 2014.

We have also provided funding to a number of charities to support carers, produced guidance for carers, provided access to personal protective equipment and priority access in phase one of the COVID-19 vaccination programme. In addition, we have invested nearly £5 billion towards education recovery, which includes £1 billion for schools to support young carer's mental health and wellbeing alongside academic recovery. We will work with the sector, including unpaid carers, to develop our future plans to support carers and will publish further detail in a white paper for reform later this year.

■ Coronavirus: Ivermectin

Mr David Jones:

[\[73752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 29 June 2021 to Question 21839 on Coronavirus: Ivermectin, what further assessment he has made of the efficacy of the use of Ivermectin as a treatment for covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

The Department continues to monitor any new evidence for ivermectin as a treatment for COVID-19. While we are aware that although some clinical trials have shown positive signals for the potential efficacy of ivermectin, there are no supportive randomised control trials and insufficient evidence to support use for COVID-19. Results from the PRINCIPLE clinical trial platform, launched in June, are expected in early 2022 and we will monitor data from worldwide clinical trials on the efficacy of ivermectin.

■ Coronavirus: Quarantine

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[73750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing an exemption from pre-hospital admission covid-19 isolation for people with mental health needs who have been assessed by a doctor.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency has made no such assessment.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Daisy Cooper:

[\[75135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the estimated number of covid-19 lateral flow tests being taken compared to the number of lateral flow test results being reported, in each of the last six months.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 18 November 2021]: We have not made a specific assessment. However, the UK Health Security Agency has received over 186 million result registrations from lateral flow tests in England to date. The Office for National Statistics estimates that approximately 22% to 25% of test users register results.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[75136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness and ease of use of the Government's covid-19 lateral flow test reporting platform.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 18 November 2021]: The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) continually assesses the effectiveness and ease of use of the lateral flow test reporting platform. NHS Digital has worked closely with the UKHSA to identify and

implement improvements based on user research and data analysis. The service has been peer reviewed with the Government Digital Service and received an accessibility audit, showing that the service is compliant and meets the standards for user friendly services, inclusive to those with accessibility needs.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Rachael Maskell: [\[69652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason there are delays in the administration of the covid-19 vaccine through the schools programme; and what steps he is taking to address that matter.

Maggie Throup:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have confirmed they are not aware of any system-wide delays to the administration of the COVID-19 vaccines through the school age vaccine process. Thousands of schools have held vaccination clinics and more than 823,000 12 to 15 year olds in England have already received one dose as of 7 November.

The National Health Service is ensuring that the programme is administered efficiently to increase the scale and pace of delivery and targeting communications to parents and young people. Since 22 October, the National Booking Service is open for appointments for young people to provide an additional method for parents to book a vaccination for their child, alongside the existing schools programme.

Kim Johnson: [\[71503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government will update its covid-19 vaccine delivery plan, published on 13 January 2021.

Maggie Throup:

There are no current plans to update the COVID-19 vaccine delivery plan. We have published different plans subsequently for other aspects of the programme, such as the UK COVID-19 vaccine uptake plan, published 13 February 2021, and the COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan 2021, last updated 14 September 2021, which also covered vaccine deployment.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[73843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the explanation that the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation gave him for changing their advice on eligibility for the covid-19 booster vaccination between their interim advice of 30 June 2021 and updated advice of 14 September 2021.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 17 November 2021]: The information requested is not available as no such explanation was required. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) updated its interim advice of 30 June 2021 on the categorisation of groups eligible for vaccination in the COVID-19 vaccine booster programme when

further evidence became available. The JCVI published its final advice on 14 September based on the latest available evidence.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[73894]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that elderly and clinically vulnerable hospital inpatients are provided with the covid-19 booster jab if more than six months have passed since their second vaccine dose.

Maggie Throup:

NHS England and NHS Improvement's letter of 15 September 2021 to COVID-19 vaccination providers sets out that hospital hubs are expected to support the opportunistic vaccination of inpatients who require a COVID-19 booster vaccination.

Daisy Cooper:

[73973]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has issued to (a) GPs and (b) hospitals on which type of covid-19 vaccine should be given as a (i) third dose and (ii) booster vaccine.

Maggie Throup:

Information on the type of COVID-19 vaccine should be given for third doses for immunosuppressed individuals and booster doses is contained in the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's statements and the Green Book COVID-19 chapter, which are available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/third-primary-covid-19-vaccine-dose-for-people-who-are-immunosuppressed-jcvi-advice/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation-jcvi-advice-on-third-primary-dose-vaccination ;

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-booster-vaccine-programme-for-winter-2021-to-2022-jcvi-statement-november-2021/update-to-jcvi-advice-on-booster-vaccination-in-adults-15-november-2021

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-the-green-book-chapter-14a

The UK Health Security Agency produces training materials, information and guidance for vaccinators, detailing which vaccines are recommended for third and booster doses. NHS England and NHS Improvement circulate these materials with additional guidance to general practitioners, hospitals, pharmacies and all healthcare staff involved in delivering the COVID-19 vaccine programme.

Alberto Costa:

[74026]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to recognise covid-19 vaccines administered to British citizens residing in Mexico.

Maggie Throup:

Vaccine certification from all countries and territories must meet the minimum criteria taking into account public health and wider considerations. We are taking a phased approach to the inbound vaccination programme to other countries and territories, including Mexico and we will keep this under regular consideration.

Helen Hayes:

[75048]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the uptake of the third covid-19 vaccine dose among people who are severely immunosuppressed.

Dan Carden:

[75115]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the uptake of the third covid-19 dose programme amongst severely immunosuppressed people.

Maggie Throup:

Data on the combined number of third primary doses and booster vaccinations is published daily by NHS England at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/>

However, it is not currently possible to disaggregate third doses from booster vaccinations.

Daisy Cooper:

[76833]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 September 2021 to Question 47056, what progress he has made on enabling UK residents who have received one or more vaccinations overseas to demonstrate their vaccination status through the NHS Covid Pass.

Maggie Throup:

Following the completion of a pilot, a service has been in place since 11 October for United Kingdom residents who received Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Moderna and Janssen vaccines in the United States of America, European Union, Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Australia or Canada to record their vaccination in the National Immunisation Management Service (NIMS). Once an individual has a NIMS record, they can gain access to an NHS COVID Pass.

The service currently has seven sites, with 13 further locations pending to support improved geographical coverage. Further expansion of the service is planned in due course.

■ Dementia: Air Pollution

Ruth Cadbury:

[73877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants has conducted research on the potential link between air pollution and dementia.

Maggie Throup:

The Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) has evaluated the evidence linking exposure of ambient air pollution to cognitive decline and dementia risk in adults. A COMEAP sub-group has undertaken a review of the relevant epidemiological evidence and examined aspects of the evidence related to possible

mechanisms by which ambient air pollutants could cause or contribute to these effects. This evidence has been discussed by the main Committee. Work to finalise the report for publication is currently on-going.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Hikvision**

Alicia Kearns:

[76035]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether Hikvision CCTV or other surveillance software or equipment from Hikvision, is used on any property owned or administered by his Department.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 19 November 2021]: Hikvision CCTV and equipment is used in the core Departmental estate.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**

Dr Julian Lewis:

[65343]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to provide a substantive response to Question 56714, on the inclusion of the vaccination status of victims of the covid-19 outbreak as part of the statistics broadcast daily, which was due for answer on 20 October.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 2 November 2021]: I refer the Rt hon. Member to the answer of 3 November to Question 56714.

Emily Thornberry:

[67104]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 58327 tabled by the hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 November 2021]:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer of 10 November to Question [58327](#).

Munira Wilson:

[70321]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to Question 58525 tabled on 18 October 2021, when his Department plans to respond to hon. Member for Twickenham regarding 111.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 15 November 2021]: I refer the hon. Member to the answer of 19 November to Question 58525.

■ **Drugs: Licensing**

Munira Wilson:

[73983]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in the context of the reduction of Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) licensing assessors,

what role the (a) European Medicines Agency, (b) USA's Food and Drugs Administration and (c) British standards institutions will have in approving new drug licences from 2022.

Edward Argar:

Following the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has offered a range of new routes to market, including a rapid 150 day assessment procedures for new drugs and the Innovative Licensing and Access Pathway which aims to accelerate the time to market, facilitating patient access to medicines for life-threatening or seriously debilitating conditions or those where there is a significant patient or public health need. If companies already have a licence granted by the European Commission through the European Medicines Agency, they may request the MHRA to rely on the decision of the European Commission in granting an authorisation for Great Britain and the final decision to authorise is made by the MHRA. The European Commission's authorisation is automatically valid for Northern Ireland.

The MHRA is now participating in two international work sharing collaborations, including Project Orbis, co-ordinated by the Food and Drug Administration to review and approve promising cancer treatments. However, each country remains fully independent on its final regulatory decision. Applications submitted to the MHRA within a Project Orbis procedure are national marketing authorisation applications and variations.

■ **Gambling: Public Health**

Rachael Maskell: [\[75033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on the public health aspects of gambling as part of the review of the Gambling Act 2005.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 18 November 2021]: Ministers met recently to discuss the recent Public Health England evidence review of gambling-related harms and public health priorities for the Review of the Gambling Act 2005.

Rachael Maskell: [\[75035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what public health approaches he is taking to prevent gambling and gambling addiction.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 18 November 2021]: The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport is leading the wide-ranging Review of the Gambling Act 2005 to ensure that the protections in place are appropriate. The Department of Health and Social Care ensures individuals experiencing problem gambling receive the right care and works with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to further understand and address gambling-related harms.

On 30 September 2021, Public Health England (PHE) published a comprehensive review of the evidence on gambling-related harms and their impact in England. This will be considered carefully in the Review of the Gambling Act 2005. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities will work with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to develop effective and practical responses to tackling the gambling-related harms identified by PHE and support a strengthened public health approach.

■ General Practitioners

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[76620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure patients can access their GP.

Maria Caulfield:

On 14 October, we published 'Our plan for improving access for patients and supporting general practice' which included an additional investment of £250 million in a Winter Access Fund to improve the availability of general practitioner (GP) practices and increase the number of face-to-face appointments, while also investing in technology to make it easier for patients to see or speak to their GP.

We have committed additional funding to NHS England to implement the adoption of cloud-based telephony technology across all practices. These systems can benefit patients by making more phone lines available and providing automated queueing.

■ General Practitioners: Coronavirus

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[76619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the increase in GP waiting times since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Maria Caulfield:

No assessment has been made as data on waiting times for general practitioner appointments is not held centrally.

■ General Practitioners: North West

Navendu Mishra:

[\[76846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of in person appointments with GPs available for patients in (a) the North west, (b) Greater Manchester and (c) Stockport.

Maria Caulfield:

No such estimate has been made as the numbers of general practitioner (GP) appointments are not collected in advance.

However, the most recent data suggests that the number of in person appointments with GPs recorded in these regions in September 2021 was 840,000 or 24% of the

total in the North West region, 320,000 or 24% of the total in Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) and 50,000 or 29% of the total in Stockport Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Nationally, 25% of appointments with GPs were face-to-face in September 2021.

The number of appointments recorded in practices overall was 2,082,230 or 59.2% of the total in the North West region, 755,792 or 57% of the total in Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership STP and 104,457 or 61.7% of the total in Stockport CCG. Nationally, 60.8% of appointments in practices were face-to-face in September 2021.

■ Global Health Insurance Card

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[75104]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Global Health Insurance Card applications (a) are in progress, (b) are awaiting processing and (c) have been received in each month of 2021.

Edward Argar:

As of 15 November 2021, there were 176,533 Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) applications which the NHS Business Services Authority would categorise as currently 'in progress' and where more information is required from the applicant. As of 15 November 2021, 11,191 applications are classed by the NHS Business Services Authority as 'awaiting processing' where the applicant is awaiting a response.

The following table shows the total number of applications received in each month of 2021.

JANUARY	239,808
February	226,271
March	141,534
April	82,367
May	151,300
June	130,313
July	311,139
August	338,121
September	274,236
October	240,673
November	54,196

Note:

From June 2021, the new GHIC portal included additional residency checks aimed at preventing fraud.

■ Health: Disadvantaged

Colleen Fletcher:

[73866]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 on health inequalities in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England; and what (i) financial and (ii) other steps his Department is taking to reduce health inequalities in those areas.

Colleen Fletcher:

[73867]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of covid-19 on life expectancy in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Maggie Throup:

We regularly review progress against a range of indicators, including life expectancy. The COVID-19 Health Inequalities Monitoring for England tool provides provisional estimates of life expectancy in England and the English regions for 2020 and the preceding five years and is available at the following link:

<https://analytics.phe.gov.uk/apps/chime/>

Life expectancy in England and the West Midlands fell between 2019 and 2020. These falls in life expectancy in 2020 were almost entirely a result of deaths from COVID-19. Comparable estimates for local authorities are not available.

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities was established on 1 October to reduce such health disparities. It brings together expert advice, analysis and evidence with policy development and implementation, including regional capability which will work with local areas to deliver on national priorities, strengthen local and regional public health systems, and bring local innovation and insights to policy development.

■ Healthy Start Scheme

Rachael Maskell:

[73904]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason a healthy start card can only be used for the purchase of milk, fruit, vegetables, pulses and infant formula as outlined on the NHS Healthy Start website.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 17 November 2021]: Healthy Start is a statutory scheme as set out in legislation which allows the purchase of foods which encourage a healthy diet for pregnant women, babies and children aged under four years old.

HIV Infection: Drugs

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[76787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of (a) the availability of the HIV prevention drug PrEP, (b) levels of uptake across the UK and (c) equity of access amongst different groups.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has not made an assessment on the availability of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Local authorities are responsible for the supply of PrEP through specialist sexual health services in their area.

The UKHSA is analysing data on the uptake of PrEP among different population groups. The GUMCAD STI Surveillance System collects data on PrEP eligibility, offer and use and the number of tablets prescribed. Data on PrEP need and use will be published in routine sexually transmitted infections and human immunodeficiency virus surveillance outputs beginning in 2022.

HIV Infection: Health Services

David Mundell: [\[76614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce the number of people who leave sexual health services without being offered or taking up a HIV test.

David Mundell: [\[76615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he will take to tackle HIV stigma in the health service through improved training for the workforce.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[76788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support those living with HIV who are not engaged in care to access successful HIV treatment.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[76789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government's planned HIV Action Plan will ensure that equitable progress is made in reducing and ending HIV transmissions amongst all population groups and ensure that current health disparities are tackled.

Maggie Throup:

The HIV Action Plan is planned for publication on 1 December 2021. The Government's policy on issues related to HIV, such as equitable access to testing and treatment and tackling HIV-related stigma and health disparities, will be addressed in the Action Plan.

■ Horses: Slaughterhouses

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[71475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many equines were slaughtered in UK abattoirs in 2020; and how many of those equines held horse passports issued by Weatherbys passport issuing agencies.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 15 November 2021]: The Food Standards Agency (FSA) holds the responsibility for delivering Official Controls in abattoirs in England and Wales. Official Controls in Northern Ireland are delivered by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on behalf of the FSA. No equines have been slaughtered in Northern Ireland in 2020. We are unable to provide figures on the slaughter of equines in Scotland as this is a matter for Food Standards Scotland. The number of horses slaughtered in England and Wales in 2020 is 1,314.

The FSA is unable to provide the information requested regarding Weatherbys passport issuing agency as it would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of Weatherbys as a Passport Issuing Organisation.

■ Immunosuppression: Coronavirus

Henry Smith:

[\[69064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which (a) Minister in his Department and (b) senior official in NHS England have specific responsibility for policy relating to people who are immunosuppressed during the outbreak of covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

I have responsibility for policy relating to people who are immunosuppressed during the COVID-19 outbreak. For NHS England and NHS Improvement, the Chief Executive has this responsibility.

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Jim Shannon:

[\[74985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of permanently expanding eligibility for the seasonal flu vaccine to all people aged 50 and over, beyond 2021-22.

Jim Shannon:

[\[74986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to request the JCVI to carry out an evaluation of the potential merits of extending eligibility for the seasonal flu vaccine to all people over aged 50 and over.

Maggie Throup:

Advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) noted that it was advisable to continue the vaccination of the 50 to 64-year-old cohort as these

individuals are at a greater risk of being hospitalised as a result of COVID-19 and the result of co-infection with flu is likely to be more severe. No decision has been made on whether the eligibility of this cohort will be made permanent.

The Department will continue to consider the advice of the JCVI in decisions on which cohorts are recommend for a flu vaccine in the future. However, the Department has no current plans to request a further evaluation.

■ **Mechanical Thrombectomy: Finance**

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[76664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the allocation of £5.9 billion capital investment in the NHS included in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, if he will make it his policy to allocate part of that sum to capital investment in mechanical thrombectomy.

Edward Argar:

The Department and NHS England are conducting a detailed planning exercise following the Spending Review, including funding allocations to specific services, which will be made available in due course.

■ **Medicine: Training**

Derek Twigg:

[\[76592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Royal College of Physicians' 2020 census which found 44 per cent of advertised consultant posts were unfilled in the North West, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of expanding the number of medical school places in England.

Edward Argar:

We have funded an additional 1,500 undergraduate medical school places each year for domestic students in England – a 25% increase over three years. This expansion was completed in September 2020 and has delivered five new medical schools in England, including one in Lancashire. We have temporarily lifted the cap on medical school places for students who completed A-Levels in 2020 and 2021 and who had an offer from a university in England to study medicine, subject to their grades. We currently have no immediate plans to further increase the number of places.

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

Munira Wilson:

[\[73982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) planned and (b) estimated percentage reduction is to (i) staff at the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and (ii) licensing and assessment staff from 2019 through to March 2022.

Edward Argar:

The transformation programme at the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency will lead to a reduction in the workforce of approximately 20%. The current proposed structure is currently being reviewed in light of feedback following staff consultation and will be communicated to the organisation in the week commencing 22 November.

Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency: Small Businesses

Daniel Zeichner: [\[58906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency on building strong links with global regulators to position the UK as a route to international markets.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[58907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the regulatory assistance the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency provides to UK-based SMEs compared to the European Medicines Agency's SME office.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[58908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with stakeholders on the potential merits of expanding the scope of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's Innovation Office to support UK-based SMEs in a similar way to the European Medicines Agency's SME office.

Edward Argar:

There are regular discussions between the Department and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) relating to ongoing work with global regulators. The MHRA is committed to continuing cooperation with international fora, including the International Council for Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use and the International Coalition of Medicines Regulatory Authorities.

The MHRA currently has no plans to establish a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) office, as there are a number of incentives that provide benefits and assistance to SMEs. The MHRA's Innovation Office provides free, high level regulatory advice designed to be accessible to small product developers, such as SMEs, academic institutions and individuals, which are unfamiliar with the regulatory system.

Mental Health Services

Colleen Fletcher: [\[76715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) adequacy of mental health service provision in (i) Coventry, (ii) the West Midlands and (iii) England and (b) effect of the covid-19 outbreak on mental health

services in those areas; and what steps his Department is taking to improve (A) funding for, (B) provision of and (C) access to mental health services in those areas.

Gillian Keegan:

We continually assess mental health services in England, including Coventry and the West Midlands. We have committed £2.3 billion of additional funding each year by 2023/24 to allow a further two million people to access mental health care.

The Mental Health Recovery Action Plan, published in March 2021, provided an additional £500 million in 2021/22 to ensure the right support is in place in England, including in Coventry and the West Midlands. The Plan aims to respond to the impact of the pandemic on mental health, specifically targeting groups which have been most affected including those with severe mental illness, such as young people and frontline staff.

■ **NHS and Social Services: Finance**

Mr Mark Harper:

[\[76617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the additional funding announced for health and social care over the next three years in paragraph 8 of the policy paper, Building Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social care, published in September 2021, what assessment his Department has made of the process for determining how this funding will be allocated between acute trusts and mental health trusts.

Edward Argar:

The process for determining further allocations within the National Health Service settlement for the coming years will be confirmed to NHS trusts in due course, through the usual planning guidance process.

■ **NHS: Coronavirus**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[73748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has included provision for extenuating circumstances in the implementation of compulsory covid-19 vaccination for NHS staff.

Maggie Throup:

The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) (No.2) Regulations 2021 provide for a 12 week grace period to allow Care Quality Commission registered persons to work with health and care workers in meeting the requirements. There is no specific provision for extenuating circumstances.

■ Osteoporosis: Drugs

Rachael Maskell:

[\[75025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to exclude all medication for osteoporosis exempt from prescription charges.

Edward Argar:

We currently have no plans to do so. Approximately 89% of prescriptions are already dispensed free of charge and extensive arrangements are in place to help those most in need. To support those who do not qualify for an exemption, the cost of prescriptions can be spread by purchasing a prescription pre-payment certificate. A holder of a 12-month certificate can get all the prescriptions they need for just over £2 per week.

■ Pharmacy

Peter Dowd:

[\[76724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has he made of the sustainability of (a) pharmacists and (b) the wider community pharmacy workforce.

Peter Dowd:

[\[76725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the (a) adequacy of the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework and (b) sustainability of pharmacies.

Peter Dowd:

[\[76726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has he made of the capacity of community pharmacies to provide all services they are contracted to provide.

Maria Caulfield:

The Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework outlines a transformational programme to integrate community pharmacy into the National Health Service, delivering more clinical services, such as treatment for minor illnesses. The Department and NHS England agree with the sector representative body what community pharmacies will deliver within the £2.592 billion committed annually. Workforce and capacity considerations form part of these negotiations.

Health Education England carried out a community pharmacy workforce survey between 7 May 2021 and 18 June 2021. The survey will provide an updated insight into the size and skill set of the workforce and inform future planning and investment decisions. The results of the survey are being analysed, and anonymised and aggregated data will be published in due course.

■ Smoking: Health Hazards

Mr David Jones:

[\[73753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 28 October 2021 to question 61122 on WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and with reference to the 2017 conclusion of the Independent Committee on Toxicity that heated tobacco may be less harmful than conventional cigarettes, whether he has commissioned or plans to commission further research on the health impacts of heated tobacco products.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 17 November 2021]: The next Vaping in England report published by the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities will include a chapter with a summary of the Cochrane Collaboration's systematic review of the health effects of heated tobacco products and analysis of data on patterns of use. The report is due to be published early next year.

■ Social Services: Coronavirus

Navendu Mishra:

[\[76848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor on the potential merits of increasing funding for the social care sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Navendu Mishra:

[\[76852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the adequacy of funding for social care in the context of the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

Ministers and officials from the Department meet frequently with HM Treasury regarding the social care system.

Since May 2020, we have made available more than £2.5 billion to support the adult social care sector and prevent the transmission of COVID-19. From March 2020, we have committed over £6 billion to councils through un-ringfenced grants to tackle the impact of COVID-19 on services, including adult social care. These pressures are kept under review and the need for further support will be assessed through the winter.

■ Social Services: Disability

Helen Hayes:

[\[76771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government plans to take to help ensure that additional funding for social care can be accessed by people with complex disabilities who use those services.

Helen Hayes:

[\[76772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government plans to take to help ensure that reforms to adult social care benefit working-age people with complex disabilities.

Gillian Keegan:

On 28 July we published the National Disability Strategy which sets out the vision to improve the lives of people with disabilities. On 7 September we also committed to investing an additional £5.4 billion to begin a comprehensive programme of reform for adult social care and the cap on care costs and more generous means testing announced will benefit all adults. An extension of the established Disabled Facilities Grant will enable more people with disabilities to live independently in their own homes. We are working with care users, providers and other partners, including disabled people and disability-led organisations, to develop our plans for reform of adult social care and will publish further detail in a white paper for reform later this year.

■ Surgery

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[73741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department collects on the number of NHS Trusts that are having to cancel priority two elective procedures because of capacity limitations.

Edward Argar:

The Department does not collect this data. While the collection of data on cancelled elective operations has been paused due to the pandemic, it is set to resume for Quarter 3 2021/22. However, this will not include data on operations by priority groups.

■ Thromboembolism: Research

Jim Shannon:

[\[74987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the clot-tracking technology developed by the British Heart Foundation Centre of Research Excellence at the University of Edinburgh.

Maria Caulfield:

No assessment has been made. We welcome the research in this area and look forward to the technology being tested on a wider cohort of patients to provide more data and evidence for strokes and heart attacks.

■ Travel: Coronavirus**Mr Steve Baker:****[R] [73824]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to require unvaccinated UK citizens returning from abroad to take two PCR tests as an alternative to the ten day quarantine.

Maggie Throup:

There are no plans to do so at present, although we continue to keep all policies under review.

Thangam Debbonaire:**[73895]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to provide under-16s with an NHS Covid Pass for travel overseas.

Maggie Throup:

A small proportion of children over 12 years old have or will receive full vaccination following the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's advice.

International standards for travel require a full course to be recognised as 'fully vaccinated'. We are exploring ways to provide fully vaccinated 12 to 15 year olds with a travel NHS COVID Pass.

HOME OFFICE**■ Antisocial Behaviour: Courts****Karin Smyth:****[73898]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether meetings have been held between (a) the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategic Board and (b) HM Courts and Tribunal Service since publication of the Civil Justice Review report into Anti-social Behaviour and the Civil Courts in October 2020.

Karin Smyth:**[73899]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether (a) she and (b) officials in her Department have held meetings with the Liaison and Diversion Service since publication of the Civil Justice Review report into Anti-social Behaviour and the Civil Courts in October 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

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

The Home Office chairs the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategic Board which brings together key partners from agencies and other Government departments, including to catalyse joint working and share best practice on ASB.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) meets regularly with HM Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS), including on the recommendations in the Civil Justice Council's report on

'Anti-social Behaviour and the Civil Courts'. The MoJ is also working with the Civil Procedure Rules Committee (CPRC) to consider how to address recommendations in the report.

The Home Secretary meets regularly with her Cabinet colleagues to discuss government priorities, which include crime and anti-social behaviour.

■ Asylum: Applications

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[76798]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average time taken is between the submission of an application seeking asylum and her Department's initial decision.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office is unable to state what the average time taken is between the submission of an application seeking asylum and her department's initial decision as the Home Office does not publish this information and to do so would incur disproportionate cost.

However, the Home Office does publish data on the number asylum applications awaiting an initial decision by duration, for main applicants only. Available breakdowns include whether cases have been waiting less or more than 6 months. This data can be found at Asy_D03 of the asylum and resettlement detailed datasets:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets>

■ Asylum: Children

Peter Kyle:

[76768]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time was for an initial decision on an asylum case made by an unaccompanied minor in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019, (d) 2020 and (e) the first six months of 2021.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office is unable to state what the average waiting time was for an initial decision on an asylum case made by an unaccompanied minor in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019 and (d) 2020 and (e) the first six months of 2021 as the Home Office does not publish this information and to do so would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Counter-terrorism: UK Relations with EU

Stephen Morgan:

[72581]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the impact of the UK's departure from the EU on her Department's counterterrorism powers.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 19 November 2021]: The safety and security of our citizens is the Government's top priority. The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement delivers a comprehensive package of capabilities that ensures we can work with counterparts across Europe to tackle serious crime and terrorism— protecting the public and bringing criminals to justice.

We are fully committed to working together with European partners, including the EU, to counter the threats we all face, within Europe and beyond.

■ **Crimes of Violence: Offensive Weapons**

Colleen Fletcher: **[73870]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the (a) number and (b) proportion of violent crimes that involved the use of a (i) firearm and (ii) knife in (A) the West Midlands and (B) England in each of the last three years.

Kit Malthouse:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes information on the number of selected violent offences involving a knife or sharp instrument recorded by the police at the Police Force Area. Information on the number of these offences, and the proportion of selected violent crimes that involved a knife, can be found in the Police Force Area tables, available here: [Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/crime-in-england-and-wales/police-force-area-data-tables)

The ONS publishes information on the number and proportion of violent offences that involved a firearm at the England and Wales level only. Information for West Midlands and England for the last three available years is given in the table.

■ **Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre: Females**

Kate Osborne: **[73988]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's planned timescale is for Derwentside immigration removal centre (IRC) to start holding women who are detained under immigration powers; and what the (a) certified normal accommodation and (b) operational capacity of that IRC will be.

Kate Osborne: **[73989]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the (a) certified normal accommodation and (b) operational capacities are of (i) Colnbrook, (ii) Harmondsworth and (iii) Brook House immigration removal centres.

Tom Pursglove:

The new Derwentside immigration removal centre (IRC) will provide modern, decent and secure accommodation for around 80 women and we expect that the IRC will start holding women who are detained under immigration powers by the end of the year.

Unlike prisons, IRCs do not operate 'certified normal accommodation'. In order to meet operational needs and demands, we operate the immigration removal estate in a flexible manner.

The table below sets out the operational capacity for each requested immigration removal centre (if all rooms and beds are in use) on 1st November 2021.

IRC	TOTAL OPERATING CAPACITY 2021
Brook House	448
Colnbrook	330
Harmondsworth	635
Total	1413

■ Drugs: Misuse

Crispin Blunt:

[R] [\[76545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2021 on Drugs: Misuse, if she will provide details of the (a) key partners and (b) external experts in the drugs field that have been consulted.

Kit Malthouse:

The new Drug Strategy will respond in full to Dame Carol Black's review and set out our long-term ambition to combat drugs. Parts one and two of Dame Carol Black's review include comprehensive lists of the experts and wider partners in the drugs field who she engaged with to gather evidence and seek advice.

We have continued to engage external experts to inform the development of the new Drug Strategy, including Dame Carol Black in her role as independent advisor, Dr Ed Day our National Recovery Champion, and the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs. We also continue to engage wider partners in the drugs field, including the National Police Chiefs Council and substance misuse treatment providers and commissioners.

We will undertake further engagement with experts and partners in the field to support the implementation of the Strategy and to inform annual reports to Parliament.

■ Health Services: Migrant Workers

Steve McCabe:

[\[904283\]](#)

What progress her Department has made on the reimbursement of the Immigration Health Surcharge for foreign healthcare workers in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

This government remains committed to fulfilling the PM's commitment to exempt health and care staff from the Immigration Health Surcharge.

Thousands of our hardworking health and care workers and their dependents have already received and continue to receive the Immigration Health Surcharge refunds and reimbursements they are entitled to.

Human Trafficking: English Channel**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[76797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with her French counterpart on tackling human trafficking gangs that operate across the English Channel.

Tom Pursglove:

The UK and France maintain a longstanding relationship on tackling illegal migration at the shared border. The UK has committed several funding packages to supporting this work. Most recently, a bilateral funding arrangement was reached between the UK and France on 20 July 2021.

The Home Secretary maintains regular contact with her French counterpart, Interior Minister Darmanin, on the issue of illegal migration and small boats crossings. They last spoke on 15th November where they agreed to accelerate the delivery of the commitments made in the joint statement of July 2021.

The statement following the call can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

Imports: Customs**Bridget Phillipson:**[\[76670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of HMRC staffing at UK ports to ensure efficient throughput of goods in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

Damian Hinds:

Border Force has implemented a sustained recruitment campaign to uplift the number of permanent Border Force staff, including 2,000 staff specifically for EU Exit, alongside recruitment for other 'business as usual' operational requirements. It maintains a flexible and dynamic approach to recruitment, that takes account of expected staff attrition and churn within the organisation.

Furthermore, Border Force regularly reviews its capacity plans and resources, redeploying and recruiting staff where necessary to help meet and maintain service standards for individual services. There is an established and dedicated internal operation to ensure additional contingency resources are available to deploy in support of short-term operational pressures at the border.

Border Force is confident that resources to meet anticipated overall operational requirements are in place; recruiting sufficient additional frontline staff and continuing to build staffing levels during 2021/2022.

■ Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation: Annual Reports

Conor McGinn:

[\[76736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she will publish the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation's annual report, Terrorism Acts in 2020.

Damian Hinds:

The Government is grateful to the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation for his recently submitted annual report on the Terrorism Acts in 2020. The report will be published in due course.

■ Interpol: Public Appointments

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[74887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what representations her Department has received in support of the candidacy of Ahmed Naser Al-Raisi for the presidency of Interpol.

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[74888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what representations her Department has received in support of the candidacy of Ahmed Naser Al-Raisi for the presidency of Interpol.

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[74889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what representations she has received on the upcoming election to the presidency of Interpol from (a) former ministers and former officials in her Department and (b) the former Minister for the Middle East, Rt Hon. Alistair Burt.

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[74890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what representations she has received on the upcoming election to the presidency of Interpol from (a) former ministers and former officials in her Department and (b) the former Minister for the Middle East, Rt Hon. Alistair Burt.

Kit Malthouse:

Officials are continuing to assess the suitability of all candidates for the INTERPOL Executive Committee elections on 25 November, and a decision on voting intentions, including the presidency, will be taken in due course.

As is commonplace in multilateral elections, representations have been made to the Department by both countries presenting candidates for the presidency.

■ Migrant Workers: Wind Power**Karl Turner:** [\[76668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October 2021 to Question 58819 on Migrant Workers: Wind Power, when her Department plans to reach a decision on (a) renewing or (b) ending the concession before the expiry of the current concession on 1 July 2022; and when UK Visas and Immigration plan to consult employers on that matter.

Kevin Foster:

The offshore wind farm worker concession was extended earlier this year on 2 July until 1 July 2022, to allow foreign nationals to work in the construction and maintenance of offshore wind projects in UK territorial waters.

The government is committed to promoting job opportunities for local labour and always encourages employers to look to the domestic workforce first.

We regularly review all concessions and will be considering the future of this concession and its place in the wider immigration system. We will confirm our intentions in due course.

■ National Crime Agency: Finance**Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[72534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the budget was for the National Crime Agency's Financial Intelligence Unit in each of the last five years.

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[72535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many staff there were in the National Crime Agency's Financial Intelligence Unit in each of the last five years.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 19 November 2021]: Budget: The UK Financial Intelligence Unit (UKFIU) is part of the NCA called the National Economic Crime Centre (NECC). Overall annual expenditure for the NECC is available in the NCA's Annual Reports for the past three years (since it has been formed).

2018/19 - Gross expenditure for the Prosperity Command - £22.0m (Note the NECC was formally launched on 31 October 2018, before which the NCA's Prosperity Command fulfilled some of the same functions. In the 2019/20 Annual Report, an apportionment of £6.7m in 2018/19 was made for the NECC.)

2019/20 - Gross expenditure for the NECC - £30.0m

2020/21 – Gross expenditure for the NECC - £35.5m

Number of UKFIU staff:

The most recent information on the number of staff within the UKFIU can be found in the Economic Crime Plan Statement of Progress available here: [Economic crime plan 2019 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/98442/economic-crime-plan-statement-of-progress-2019-to-2022.pdf).

■ Nationality and Borders Bill

Ian Murray:

[76644]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when will she publish results of the public consultation that took place prior to the introduction of the Nationality and Borders Bill.

Tom Pursglove:

The New Plan for Immigration was open to people and organisations across the UK to share their views. The Government has published its findings, which can be found on the GOV.UK website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/new-plan-for-immigration>.

■ Offenders: Deportation

Matt Vickers:

[74004]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to facilitate the deportation of foreign criminals.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government is clear foreign nationals who abuse our hospitality by committing crimes should be in no doubt of our determination to deport them.

We make every effort to ensure that a Foreign National Offender's (FNO) removal by deportation coincides, as far as possible, with their release from prison on completion of sentence. Since January 2019 we have removed 8,441 FNOs and since April 2020, we have utilised over 99 charter flights to deport FNOs and other immigration offenders to countries across Europe and around the rest of the world.

The Home Office operates the Facilitated Return Scheme (FRS) which offers non-European Economic Area FNOs the opportunity to volunteer to return to their country of origin early. From 1 April 2021, this has been extended to allow more FNOs to benefit from reintegration support which will lead to an increase in take up and the speedier removal of FNOs accepted onto the scheme, including any immediate qualifying family members.

Our New Plan for Immigration will make it easier to remove foreign criminals and those with no right to be in the UK and keep our citizens safe. The Nationality and Borders Bill will extend the period an FNO can be removed from prison under the early removal scheme (ERS) from a maximum of 9 months to 12 months, providing the minimum requisite period has been served. The Bill will also streamline the appeals process by introducing an expanded one stop process aimed at reducing the extent to which people can frustrate removals through sequential or unmeritorious claims, appeals or legal action. The Bill will also create a new power to impose visa penalties on countries who do not cooperate with the UK on the removal of their nationals who do not have a right to be in the UK.

Further information can be found in the [New Plan for Immigration Policy Statement](#) and the factsheet [Nationality and Borders Bill: - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

■ Passports

Catherine West:

[75950]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the expected increase in passport applications and renewals in 2022 as travel reopens.

Kevin Foster:

Since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 5 million people have delayed applying for a passport.

Customer surveys have indicated 2022 will see a relatively strong recovery in international travel, however the continued impacts of the pandemic upon customer behaviour means forecasts for 2022 could be subject to significant change.

HM Passport Office has a range of tried and tested contingency arrangements available to help passport applications to be processed as quickly as possible during the periods of very highest demand, including the flexing of resources from across the Home Office and other government departments.

In addition, since April 2021 passport applicants have been advised to plan to wait up to 10 weeks before they receive their passport. This advice will remain in place until the potential demand for passports returns closer to normal levels.

■ Passports: Applications

Catherine West:

[75951]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress she has made in clearing the backlog of passport applications and renewals; and what proportion of applications are taking longer to process than the advised 10 week processing time.

Kevin Foster:

Since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 5 million people have delayed applying for a passport.

With the potential demand for passports higher than ever before, since April 2021 passport applicants have been advised to plan to wait up to 10 weeks before they receive their passport. There are no plans currently to change the advice about how long to allow when applying for a passport until the level of potential demand returns closer to normal levels.

HM Passport Office continues to process application within this time period. Between August and October, including the most complex cases, over 98% of UK applications were processed within ten weeks. Typical processing times for applications completed in the previous week are published on GOV.UK.

■ Police

Dr Matthew Offord:

[73810]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the ratio is of members of the public to the number of police officers in England and Wales as at 12 November 2021.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the number of police officers in post as well as the number recruited as part of the Police Officer Uplift Programme on a quarterly basis. The latest data, covering the situation to 30 September 2021, are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-officer-uplift-statistics>.

These data show that there were 139,908 officers in the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales as at 30 September 2021.

Using the latest mid-year population estimates published by the Office for National Statistics (for mid-2020), there were 234 police officers for every 100,000 population. The latest mid-year population estimates are published at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/mid2020>

■ Police: Expenditure

Dr Matthew Offord:

[73809]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much was spent from the public purse on law enforcement services in England and Wales as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product in the latest period for which figures are available.

Kit Malthouse:

On the 4th February 2021, the Government published a total police funding settlement of up to £15.8 billion in 2021/22, an increase of up to £600 million compared to 2020/21. Overall police funding available to Police and Crime Commissioners increased by up to £668 million (5.1% in cash terms) this year. The Government is committed to continued investment in policing.

■ Probation: Costs

Ms Lyn Brown:

[68163]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate she has made of the resource impact for (a) police services and (b) Home Office Immigration Enforcement of increases in the population under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements supervision.

Tom Pursglove:

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements ("MAPPA") are a framework of statutory arrangements, under which the Police and Prison and Probation Services, with the co-operation of other agencies, are required jointly to assess and manage

the risk presented by known sexual and violent offenders in order to reduce re-offending and protect the public.

We have provided the police with the resources they need to fight crime and protect the public, which would include their responsibilities under the MAPPA framework. In 2021/22, we increased funding for policing by up to £636 million compared to the previous year. This follows the largest increase in funding for more than a decade in 2020/21. Moreover, Home Office Immigration Enforcement (HOIE) are responsible for supporting MAPPA in the management of certain foreign national offenders and remain committed to meeting their ongoing obligations. This includes representation at MAPPA meetings or providing updates where requested, and allows any issues to be raised and escalated, if needed.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[72476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support her Department has provided to (a) local authorities in London, (b) The Mayor of London and (c) voluntary organisations in London to support their work in supporting refugees from Afghanistan.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 19 November 2021]: The Home Office have provided a funding offer to support all local authorities who have bridging accommodation in their areas. For example, to provide enrolment in schools, integration into the community, handling of donations and registering with GPs.

Frequent and regular engagement is continuing between Home Office officials and Local Authorities with bridging hotels.

The Home Office worked closely with Voluntary Sector Communities Emergency Partnership to provide crisis support in the first few weeks supporting Afghans just arriving into the UK and settling into local communities.

We are grateful for the continued support of Local Authorities, voluntary organisations and all those involved in the joint efforts as we work in partnership to fulfil our moral duty to those who have fled Afghanistan, many of whom have stood shoulder to shoulder with our armed forces and now seek a new life in the UK but ask local authorities who are able to consider what additional support they can provide so that all evacuated Afghans can be resettled.

■ Visas: Afghanistan

Caroline Lucas:

[\[73800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to Afghan family members of British nationals who have fled Afghanistan to neighbouring countries, if she will make it her policy to (a) waive fees for family member visa applications, (b) commit to expedite those applications in the context of their exceptional nature, (c) offer flexibility on English language and income requirements and (d) show discretion on the provision of documents; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

Family members of British citizens and settled persons, including those with humanitarian protection in the UK, who were not called forward for evacuation as part of Op PITTING, or who are not offered resettlement under the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme, will need to apply to come to the UK under the existing economic or family migration and reunion rules. They will be expected to meet the eligibility requirements of their chosen route, which may include paying relevant fees and charges, and providing their biometrics.

Those Afghans who are outside of Afghanistan and able to get to a Visa Application Centre to provide their biometrics can make an application in the usual way.

Under the current Rules an applicant can already apply for their fee to be waived, for their case to be expedited, to be exempted from the English language requirement, if there are exceptional circumstances, and for evidential flexibility to be applied if they are unable to submit a specific document.

■ Visas: EU Nationals**Charlotte Nichols:****[73996]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason there is not a service standard for EU Settlement Scheme Family Permit and Travel Permit; and if she will make it her policy to introduce a service standard for this type of visa.

Kevin Foster:

The published service standards for EEA and EUSS family permits can be found at Visa decision waiting times: applications outside the UK - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

It states;

If you are applying for an EEA family permit or an EUSS family permit you will get a decision as soon as possible after proving your identity and provided your documents.

The [withdrawal agreement](#) at article 13(3) states;

'Where the host State requires family members who join the EEA EFTA national or United Kingdom national after the end of the transition period to have an entry visa, the host State shall grant such persons every facility to obtain the necessary visas. Such visas shall be issued free of charge as soon as possible, and on the basis of an accelerated procedure.'

Therefore, there are no time-bound service standard attached to these routes

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ **Parliamentary Estate: Coronavirus****Mrs Maria Miller:**[\[75837\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, how many confirmed positive covid-19 tests there have been among Parliamentary pass holders who work on the Parliamentary estate for each of the last 10 weeks; and what estimate the House Authorities have made of the number of Parliamentary pass holders who were working on the Parliamentary estate for each of the last 10 weeks.

Sir Charles Walker:

Following further review of cases linked to the estate, UKHSA have identified 143 positive cases occurring between the 4th October–16th November. However, due to delays in reporting, additional cases may yet be identified that tested positive between 12th November and 16th November.

This review identified that over 50% of positive cases had not been reported by members of the Parliamentary community to the Parliamentary test and trace team.

Data recorded by the House is held solely for the purpose of supporting test and trace and is only recorded for 21 days where an individual notifies us.

Details on weekly cases are held for the last five weeks only following the UKHSA review. The maximum number of passholders working on the estate for any day in the relevant week are included for the equivalent periods.

WEEK	POSITIVE CASES	MAXIMUM DAILY NUMBER OF PASSHOLDERS
5/11 – 11/11	20	4018
29/10 – 4/11	28	4364
22/10 – 28/10	43	4398
15/10 – 21/10	21	4504
08/10 – 14/10	12	3158
01/10 – 07/10		2204
24/09 – 30/09		2108
17/09 – 23/09		3644
10/09 – 16/09		4280
03/09 – 09/09		4261

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Department for International Trade: Telephone Services****Emily Thornberry:****[74931]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the contract agreed by her Department on 26 August 2021 for provision of an Export Support Services Contact Centre, how many callers to the contact centre made complaints between 1 October and 12 November 2021; and what proportion of those complaints were resolved within five working days.

Mike Freer:

We have not received any formal complaints.

Emily Thornberry:**[74932]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the contract agreed by her Department on 26 August 2021 for provision of an Export Support Services Contact Centre, how many callers to the contact centre made requests for information between 1 October and 12 November 2021; and what proportion of those requests were actioned within one working day.

Mike Freer:

All callers to the Export Support Service Contact Centre are provided with relevant information to answer their query either during the call or via an email following the call. Complex queries are referred to the Digital Enquiry Service immediately following the call.

■ Exports**Emily Thornberry:****[76621]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to her Department's export plan published on 17 November 2021, what 10 UK (a) goods and (b) services referred to in that strategy does she project will be at the greatest increased demand in the period 2022-50 as a result of the growth in the global middle classes.

Mike Freer:

There is a clear positive relationship between the size of the middle class overseas and demand for exports from the UK's sectors of comparative advantage (as set out on pages 32 and 34 of the Department for International Trade's [Global Trade Outlook](#) published in September 2021). Among the UK's sectors of specialism, demand for: life sciences; financial services; business services; intellectual property, recreation and media; travel services; aerospace and other transport; construction; and digital services are all projected to grow faster than the global average in the years ahead.

■ Manufacturing Industries: Israel**Neil Coyle:**[\[76707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that British manufacturers that make products for Israeli distributors are not being used to demolish homes in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

For items that are subject to an export licence, HM Government takes its strategic export responsibilities seriously and will continue to assess all export licences in accordance with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the 'Consolidated Criteria').

HM Government will not grant a licence authorising the supply of controlled items anywhere in the world, if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria, including if there is a clear risk that the items might be used for internal repression.

We continue to monitor the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories closely, and we will take action to suspend, refuse or revoke licences – in line with the Consolidated Criteria – if circumstances require.

■ Trade Promotion**Stuart Anderson:**[\[73963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to increase awareness of the role of Trade Envoys and business opportunities in new and emerging markets.

Mike Freer:

The Prime Minister's Trade Envoys support British business overseas and help attract investment into the UK. The programme works in collaboration with other trade promotion activities of the Department's, focusing on emerging and high growth markets where additional senior interactions can be valuable. We engage with key stakeholders, chambers of commerce, trade associations and business organisations to ensure they are aware of Trade Envoys and have access to them.

JUSTICE**■ Criminal Proceedings: Young People****Stuart Anderson:**[\[73962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to build trust in the criminal justice system among young people.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government is taking action to reduce crime and put victims at the heart of the criminal justice system, and we listen closely to young people's voices and perspectives as we do so.

The Beating Crime Plan sets out a clear plan for less crime, fewer victims and a safer country, including for example £45m for specialist teams to support young people at risk of involvement in violence to re-engage in education, as well as new plans to support victims including tackling violence against women and girls and child sexual exploitation.

On engagement we are making the system more representative of our diverse society and work with the Youth Justice Board's Youth Advisory Network Ambassadors to understand children's concerns and inform policy.

■ Magistrates' Courts: Closures**Damien Moore:**[\[73953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the closure of magistrates' courts on the court backlog.

James Cartlidge:

The decision to close any court is not taken lightly. It only happens following full public consultation and only where sufficient capacity exists in other nearby courts to accommodate the work of the closing courts. Courts that have closed were either underused, dilapidated or too close to one another.

The magistrates' courts have made excellent progress in responding to the pandemic. The measures that we have put in place as part of our 5-Point Plan have already produced results, with the outstanding caseload having fallen from c.436,000 in June 2020 to c.364,000 in September 2021 - a reduction of 17%. Where additional accommodation has been required in order to assist recovery, we have utilised Nightingale Courts – four temporary Nightingale magistrates' courtrooms were opened during the pandemic.

The settlement in the recent Spending Review, which includes 477m for the criminal justice system, will help it to meet the increased demand from the additional police officers and to recover performance following the pandemic. Analysis suggests this new investment could both improve waiting times and significantly reduce the number of outstanding cases by the end of the spending review period, ensuring that we do right by victims of crime.

■ Ministry of Justice: Stonewall**Tim Loughton:**[\[76546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 16 November 2021 to Question 72346 on Stonewall: Ministry of Justice, for what reason the amounts given in that Answer for MoJ conference attendance in the 2017-18 Financial Year and Office of the Public Guardian conference attendance in the 2019-20 Financial Year are different to

the amounts given in the Answer of 1 November 2021 to Question 61053 on Stonewall: Ministry of Justice.

James Cartlidge:

Due to an administrative error, the incorrect answer was provided in response to this question. At the time of responding to that question, a typing error occurred, and one cost excluded VAT.

For 2018-19 Financial Year, the previous amount cited for Ministry of Justice conference attendance was £358.00 and has been corrected to £358.80.

For 2019-20 Financial Year, the previous amount cited for Office of the Public Guardian conference attendance was £460.00 and did not include VAT and has been corrected to £552.00.

The response to PQ 61053 has been corrected so that the amounts given are the same as PQ 72346.

Tim Loughton:

[\[76547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Answers of 1 November 2021 and 16 November 2020 to Questions 61053 and 72346, for what reason the figures for the amount his Department has spent on Stonewall is different to the FOI Answer from his Department, reference 210303018.

James Cartlidge:

Due to an administrative error, the incorrect answer was provided in response to this question. At the time of responding to that question, a typing error occurred, and one cost excluded VAT.

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

2016-17 Financial Year (HR Services)

£354.00: MOJ conference attendance

2017-18 Financial Year (HR Services)

£3,000.00: MOJ Stonewall Diversity Champions Membership

£3,768.00: MOJ Role Models Cluster Programme

£358.80: MOJ conference attendance

2018-19 Financial Year (HR Services)

£3,000.00: MOJ Stonewall Diversity Champions Membership

2019-20 Financial Year

£3,000.00: MOJ Stonewall Diversity Champions Membership

£552.00: 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 £17,870.40 with costs inclusive of VAT.

The response to FOI 210303018 is in process of being corrected so that the amounts given are the same as PQ 72346.

■ Prisoners: Self-harm and Suicide

Carolyn Harris:

[\[73906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many women known to be pregnant from July 2020 to March 2021, as reported in the HMPPS Annual Digest 2020/21, were under Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) monitoring for risks of self-harm and/or suicide.

Carolyn Harris:

[\[73907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many women known to be pregnant from July 2020 to March 2021, as reported in the HMPPS Annual Digest 2020/21, were (a) sentenced (b) on remand, at the point at which they were first recorded as being pregnant.

Victoria Atkins:

The specific information requested is not collected centrally, and therefore could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

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. The policy requires increased both local and central data collection on self-declared pregnant women in our care, to ensure individuals are receiving the relevant support and to ensure policy is more informed.

We publish some of this data in the HMPPS Annual Digest of statistical information. We published the first of these on 29 July 2021, which showed that during the period July 2020-April 2021 an average of 26 women self-declared as pregnant each week. Data on how many of these women were subject to Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) or self-declared as pregnant on first reception into custody is not centrally collected, however this data is reviewed locally.

This is a dynamic area of policy and we will continue to consider our central collection as it develops.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Council Tax: Arrears

Colleen Fletcher: [\[73865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on the number of households in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England that have fallen into Council Tax arrears.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government does not collect data on the number of households that have fallen into council tax arrears. As part of its response to the pandemic, the Government has provided £670 million of new funding in 2021-22 to help councils in delivering their local council tax support schemes.

■ Council Tax: Multiple Occupation

Sir Peter Bottomley: [\[73697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, on what date he was informed of the change in (a) policy or (b) practice of the Valuation Office relating to council tax for homes in multiple occupation and for bedsitting rooms.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Valuation Office Agency acts independently of Government and is responsible for the banding of dwellings for council tax purposes, including property which involves a degree of shared living space. Its listing officers make their decisions based on the facts of each individual property, with reference to legislation and case law.

■ Elections: Reform

Hywel Williams: [\[76598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing a citizen's assembly to discuss electoral reform.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is aware of various proposals to establish citizens' assemblies. We have carried out significant engagement throughout the development of the Elections Bill and we will continue to do so to support its ongoing delivery.

■ Elections: Wales

Cat Smith: [\[73896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent discussions he has had with Ministers from Senedd Cymru on provisions in the Elections Bill that apply to elections in Wales.

Kemi Badenoch:

I recently met with the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution as part of the Interministerial Group on Elections and Registration to discuss the Elections Bill and wider matters relating to elections and registration. My predecessor met regularly with Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution both bilaterally, and as part of the Interministerial Group on Elections and Registration. Details of the Inter Ministerial Group are published on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

Ground Rent**Theresa Villiers:****[76607]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent discussions he has had with the professional building owner sector on proposals to abolish ground rents.

Eddie Hughes:

Leaseholders pay ground rent on top of their property purchase price and service charges, yet there's no clear service provided in return. The Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Bill currently in Parliament will put an end to ground rents for new residential leasehold properties as part of the most significant changes to property law in a generation. The Bill's provisions will lead to fairer, more transparent homeownership for thousands of future leaseholders.

Following a consultation exercise, the Government announced its plans to restrict ground rents on new lease agreements in December 2017. The technical consultation Implementing Reforms to the Leasehold System in England ended on 26 November 2018 and we responded to it in June 2019. This received responses from a wide range of people, including professional building owners. On 7 January 2021, we announced that legislation would be brought forward in the upcoming session of Parliament, to set future ground rents to zero.

Since the announcement in 2017, ministers have met many professional owners and their representatives, as well as investors and developers. Details of Ministers' official meetings with external organisations are published and can be found on Gov.uk.

Theresa Villiers:**[76608]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of abolishing ground rents on the effectiveness of the Building Safety Bill in ensuring accountability for building safety.

Theresa Villiers:**[76609]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the abolition of ground rents on leaseholders' ability to ensure that building owners take responsibility for (a) building safety and (b) responding effectively to fire safety problems.

Eddie Hughes:

The Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Bill currently in Parliament will put an end to ground rents for new residential leasehold properties as part of the most significant changes to property law in a generation. The Bill's provisions will lead to fairer, more transparent homeownership for thousands of future leaseholders. Leaseholders pay ground rent on top of their property purchase price and service charges, yet there's no clear service provided in return.

The Ground Rent Bill is focused entirely on the issue of ground rents. The role of ensuring that the fabric of the building is maintained and safe for residents is an essential part of the relationship between freeholder, leaseholder and in some cases a managing agent. The cost of complying with these obligations is usually recoverable from the leaseholders through the service charge fund. In most cases the lease will allow the freeholder to recover the actual costs of the works, and the freeholder may also pass on the cost of managing or overseeing the works.

The Government is committed to bringing about the biggest improvement in building and fire safety for a generation. The Building Safety Bill contains measures to protect leaseholders by providing a legal requirement for building owners to prove they have tried all routes to cover the cost of essential safety works, along with evidence that this has been done. If this does not happen, leaseholders will be able to challenge these costs in the courts.

■ Homelessness: Finance**Stephen Timms:**[\[76566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which initiatives his Department will prioritise for the £640 million homelessness funding outlined in the comprehensive spending review.

Eddie Hughes:

The Spending Review earmarked over £2 billion to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping over the next three years. This includes resource funding rising to £639 million by 2024-25, an increase of 85% in case terms compared to pre-pandemic levels.

The settlement demonstrates the Government's continued commitment to build on recent progress in ending rough sleeping, with multi-year funding enabling local partners to plan services more effectively and efficiently.

This additional funding will enable us to continue to support frontline services through the Rough Sleeping Initiative, support local authorities to fund their statutory duties to prevent homelessness and complete delivery of the 6,000 longer-term homes for rough sleepers under the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme.

The detail of how this funding will be allocated to individual programmes will be determined in due course.

■ Leasehold: Ground Rent

Theresa Villiers:

[\[76610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 26 October 2021 to Question 58318, what his Department's definition is of marriage value.

Eddie Hughes:

In January 2021, the Government announced a package of reforms on enfranchisement valuation. This included removing marriage value, which as set out in the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993, is where leaseholders with less than 80 years should pay extra value when the landlord's and leaseholder's separate interests are 'married' into single ownership.

■ Local Government Finance

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[73825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an announcement on the local government finance settlement to ensure that councils are notified of that settlement before Christmas 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Department intends to publish the next provisional Local Government Finance Settlement later this year.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper:

[\[73786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire dated 8 September 2021 regarding local government funding, reference ZA57600.

Kemi Badenoch:

A response has been sent to the Hon Member.

■ NHS: Pay

Daisy Cooper:

[\[73974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November to Question 62870 on NHS: Pay, whether principal local authorities in England have been included as public sector employers for the purposes of compensating the increased payroll costs of employer national insurance liabilities.

Kemi Badenoch:

Yes.

■ Private Rented Housing

Sir George Howarth:

[73743]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the impact of buy-to-let policy changes on the effectiveness of that sector since 2010.

Eddie Hughes:

Since 2010, there have been a number of policy changes affecting private landlords. These include tax changes for buy-to-let landlords, changes to the Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT), tightening lending criteria on buy-to-let mortgages and the growing role of the build-to-rent sector.

These changes were made as part of the Government's commitment to support first time buyers and wider efforts to make the housing market work for everyone. While it is right that people should be free to purchase a second house or invest in a buy-to-let property, the Government is aware that this can affect other people's ability to get on to the property ladder.

In April 2016, the Government introduced higher rates of SDLT for those purchasing additional properties. The higher rates are three percentage points above the standard SDLT rates and are part of the government's commitment to support first time buyers and ensure an efficient use of housing.

The tax relief on finance costs for landlords is restricted to the basic rate of income tax. This restriction was introduced in 2017 and phased in over four years. We estimate that only 1 in 10 landlords are affected by this change.

The Private Rented Sector remains an important part of the housing market, with 4.4 million households currently in the Private Rented Sector. According to the English Private Landlord Survey (2018) over half (55%) of landlords had a buy-to-let mortgage, representing 61% of tenancies, indicating that buy-to-let landlords continue to invest. Almost two thirds (63%) of those who had been a landlord for three years or less had used a mortgage to fund their first rental property and about half (49%) of those who had been a landlord for three years or less had a buy-to-let mortgage.

■ Regional Planning and Development

Mr Steve Baker:

[73826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it his policy to ensure that assessments of the areas to be tackled by the Government's levelling up agenda are conducted on a geographical basis no larger than a Middle Layer Super Output Area; and if he will make a statement.

Neil O'Brien:

Levelling up is about addressing disparities within and between regions. It means empowering local leaders and communities to seize their own destiny; boosting living standards, particularly where they are lower; spreading opportunity and improving public services, particularly where they are weak; and restoring local pride across the

UK. The Government is taking a data-driven approach to assessing geographic areas, ensuring that we are focusing our efforts on the places that need the most support. Each place and its requirements are unique, and therefore the support it receives must reflect this.

Carla Lockhart:

[\[74007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when awards made in the first tranche of the Levelling Up Fund must be spent by.

Neil O'Brien:

On 27 October, the Government announced £1.7 billion of investment into 105 infrastructure projects across the UK. Funding provided from the Fund should be spent by 31 March 2024, and exceptionally, into 2024-25 for larger schemes.

Sarah Olney:

[\[76778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of setting up a national just transition commission to facilitate Levelling Up in the transition to net zero by coordinating regional bodies with devolved powers for identifying local needs.

Eddie Hughes:

The upcoming Levelling Up White Paper will build on the actions Government is already taking to both deliver net zero and level up across the country. This will include those set out in the Net Zero strategy and set out new interventions to improve livelihoods and drive economic growth in all parts of the UK. The Net Zero Strategy sets out our commitments to enable local areas to deliver net zero - this includes the intention to continue the Local Net Zero Programme to ensure that all local areas have the capability and capacity for net zero delivery. Almost £22 million has been invested through the programme to date. The Strategy also states that we will establish a Local Net Zero Forum to bring together representatives from national and local government on a regular basis to discuss policy and delivery options on net zero.

■ Rents: Arrears

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[73864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on the number of households in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England that have fallen into rent arrears with (i) private landlords and (ii) social housing providers.

Eddie Hughes:

The Household Resilience Study is a follow up study to the 2019-20 English Housing Survey. It examines how household and housing circumstances have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Household Resilience Study Wave 3 results are based on surveys conducted between April-May 2021.

In England, 93% of private renters and 87% of social renters were up to date with rent payments.

Geographical findings are available at regional level. 80% of private sector renters and 88% of social renters in the West Midlands are up to date with rent payments.

Data on households by region is available in Table 15a and by tenure in Table 15b of the Household Resilience Study: Wave 3 tables:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/household-resilience-study-wave-3>

■ Shops: Empty Property

Colleen Fletcher:

[73868]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of the number of vacant shops on high streets in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England; and what assessment he has made of the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on the number of vacant retail units in those areas.

Neil O'Brien:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Special Educational Needs: Finance

Barbara Keeley:

[76631]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the announcement in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, how much and what proportion of the £4.8 billion in new local authority grants he plans to designate to tackling the backlog in Education, Health and Care Plan assessments.

Kemi Badenoch:

High needs funding is part of the core schools budget. The 2021 Spending Review announced a further £4.7 billion in the core school budget by 24/25 compared to previous plans, including £1.6 billion in 22/23 on top of already planned increases from the 2019 Spending Review. This takes the total core schools budget to £56.8 billion in 24/25.

The additional LGDEL funding announced at the 2021 Spending Review will support councils to meet pressures across the range of their responsibilities. We will say more about the distribution of this funding at the provisional settlement.

■ UK Community Renewal Fund: Northern Ireland

Carla Lockhart:

[74006]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many applications have been received from Northern Ireland for the UK Community Renewal Fund; and how many of those applications were successful.

Neil O'Brien:

The UK Community Renewal Fund received 83 applications from organisations to deliver projects in Northern Ireland and 31 applications were successful.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Abortion: Northern Ireland****Stephen Farry:**[\[71520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference the Written Statement of 22 July 2021, HCWS238, what progress has been made on the commissioning of abortion services in Northern Ireland.

Brandon Lewis:

The delay in the implementation of abortion services is entirely unacceptable. Parliament has decided that women should have access to these services and this decision must be respected

I recently requested a timetable for the Health Minister's bringing of proposals before the Executive Committee to commission abortion services. The direction I issued in July states that abortion services must be commissioned and delivered by March 2022, and this request is part of continued monitoring to ensure that services are delivered in line with that direction.

I am keen to work with the Health Minister to ensure that the rights of women and girls are protected in Northern Ireland. However, if it becomes clear at any stage before the March 2022 deadline that the Department of Health, or indeed the Executive, are not making sufficient progress, or are intent on blocking this issue, then I will have no alternative but to take further steps to ensure that women and girls have access to abortion services as decided by Parliament, and to which they have a right.

Stephen Farry:[\[71521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the Written Statement of 22 July 2021, HCWS238, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on the (a) workforce and (b) training requirements associated with the commissioning of abortion services in Northern Ireland.

Brandon Lewis:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the medical professionals who have ensured that women and girls have had some local access to abortion services in Northern Ireland to date. These medical professionals have, however, not been properly supported by the commissioning of services in Northern Ireland.

The lack of workforce planning and training for abortion services in Northern Ireland reflects the ongoing failure to commission these services since the UK Government set out a framework that they should be delivered under in 2020. This delay is unacceptable and in July, I directed the Department of Health to commission abortion services in Northern Ireland by March 2022.

If it becomes clear at any stage before the March 2022 deadline that the Department of Health or Executive are not making sufficient progress, or are intent on blocking this issue, then I will have no alternative but to take further steps to ensure that

women and girls have access to abortion services as decided by Parliament, and to which they have a right.

TRANSPORT

■ Air Pollution: Enfield

Feryal Clark:

[\[75157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps he has taken to provide adequate resources to help Enfield Council tackle air pollution by (a) delivering clean air zones, (b) encouraging the use of electric vehicles with recharging points, (c) encouraging cycling and walking and (d) delivering borough-wide air pollution monitoring networks.

Trudy Harrison:

The Mayor of London is responsible for air quality in the capital and has reserve powers under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 to reflect this.

In 2020, London Boroughs received £25 million via the Active Travel Fund (ATF) to deliver safe cycling and walking routes in their areas. They have also received £13m through the Go Ultra Low City Scheme (GULCS) to drive the uptake of ultra-low emission vehicles.

Over the last two financial years, London Borough of Enfield have been awarded a total of £117,000 through the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme, which will see 44 EV chargepoints installed across the Borough.

■ Airports: Staff

Sarah Olney:

[\[75088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to help ensure that airport staff are able to commute to work via bicycle.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department has published various forms of practical advice and guidance for employers on how to enable more of their employees to walk and cycle to work, and in May 2021 I chaired an event with a number of major employers and delivery partners, including Heathrow Airport Limited, to discuss what steps we could all take to make this happen. The Department encourages airport operators to set targets in their Surface Access Strategies for the numbers of passengers, visitors and staff who arrive at their airports by sustainable transport modes including cycling, but ultimately it is a matter for each individual airport operator to decide what facilities to provide to enable its staff to cycle to work and how to encourage this. Heathrow Airport, for example, has been working with Sustrans on an initiative to increase the number of staff who cycle to work. Other incentives include the Cycle to Work scheme, which enables employees to hire a cycle and safety equipment from their employer through a salary sacrifice arrangement, effectively providing access to cycles at a discount.

■ Cycleways: Southport

Damien Moore:

[\[76006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council on their recent consultation on cycle lanes in Southport as required under the terms of the Active Travel Fund.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department is in regular contact with authorities across the country to discuss their active travel plans. The most recent meeting with Liverpool City Region, including officials from Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, took place on 5th November, shortly before the consultation results from the Southport Walking and Cycling survey were due to be considered by the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. Following that meeting on 9 November, the Department understands that the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Locality Services has offered to meet with those ward councillors affected by the issue before taking a final decision on this matter.

■ Cycling: Safety

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[76570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to improve road safety for cyclists; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government takes very seriously the safety of cyclists and other vulnerable road users and is committed to reducing the number of cyclists killed or seriously injured on England's roads. In July 2020 the Prime Minister launched ambitious plans to encourage cycling and walking. This includes a £2 billion package of funding for active travel over 5 years, which is the largest ever boost for cycling and walking, and will deliver transformational change and improve safety for people cycling.

In the 2018 Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy Safety Review, Government committed to review The Highway Code to improve safety for cyclists. A consultation on the proposed changes to The Highway Code closed in October 2020, with nearly 21,000 replies received, and the Government response to the consultation was published in July 2021. Given the feedback received, we will be seeking to introduce all the proposed changes which will significantly improve road safety for those most at risk when using the road.

■ Motorways

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[73742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to convert more motorways to smart motorways.

Trudy Harrison:

Since assuming office, the Secretary of State's focus has been to ensure that Smart Motorways are safer than conventional motorways, committing an additional £500 million in infrastructure, technology and communications to make these roads safer.

We welcome the Transport Select Committee (TSC) report *Rollout and safety of smart motorways*, published on 2 November 2021, scrutiny and will now consider its recommendations in detail, providing a formal response in due course. This is a serious piece of work which we will engage with closely in the months ahead. We are pleased that the TSC recognises that reinstating the hard shoulder on all all-lane running motorways could put more drivers and passengers at risk of death and serious injury and that we are right to focus on upgrading their safety.

■ Pedestrian Crossings**Steve McCabe:**[\[74891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of updating the traffic sign regulations and general directions to authorise the use of side road zebra crossings without the need for beacons or zigzag lines.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department is aware of research carried out by Transport for Greater Manchester into the idea of simplified zebra crossings and their request for these to be legalised. The Department is carefully considering the research report and its findings before making any decisions on changing legislation.

■ Ports**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[76835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the principal duties and role is of a Port Authority.

Kenny MacAskill:[\[76836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what scrutiny, review or accountability there is for a Port Authority.

Kenny MacAskill:[\[76837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the rights and powers that (a) local authorities and (b) devolved legislatures have over the operations of Port Authorities.

Kenny MacAskill:[\[76838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what powers (a) devolved legislatures and (b) parliaments have over Port Authorities in their jurisdiction.

Kenny MacAskil:

[\[76839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the ability of a Port Authority to discharge their public duties when the Authority is owned and operated by a Private Port Owner.

Robert Courts:

Policy and legislative responsibility in relation to Statutory Harbour Authorities (SHAs) located in devolved administrations have largely been devolved by statute to the respective governments and legislatures. An exception is in Wales, where reserved trust ports (of which there is one, Milford Haven Port Authority) and cross-border harbours remain the responsibility of the UK government and parliament.

No formal assessment of these arrangements, which are longstanding in the case of Scotland and Northern Ireland, has been made by the Department for Transport. Any rights and powers that local authorities have over SHAs are likely to be included in the local legislation applying to individual SHAs. It should be noted that Local Authorities themselves may be SHAs for harbours and ports that they own and manage. Ministers and officials meet regularly with their DA counterparts to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Statutory Harbour Authorities (SHAs) have their duties and powers to manage a harbour set out in legislation, which is a mix of local legislation specific to that SHA as well as general harbour related legislation. While the specific duties will vary from SHA to SHA, in general terms their purpose is to maintain, manage and improve the harbour which they are responsible for in the broad public interest. In England and for reserved harbours in Wales, SHAs are either private companies, independent statutory bodies known as Trust Ports or owned by Local authorities. All SHAs should act within their powers to meet their statutory duties as set out in the relevant legislation. A failure to act in accordance with those duties could lead to the SHA facing legal challenges (such as judicial review proceedings) for breach of their statutory obligations.. In 2018, the Department for Transport issued Ports Good Governance Guidance applying to all SHAs in England and Wales it has policy responsibility for setting out best practice guidance on governance and a range of other issues.

■ Ports: Standards

Jim McMahon:

[\[76774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what lessons his Department has learnt from the delays at ports in December 2020.

Jim McMahon:

[\[76776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of port infrastructure in the UK.

Jim McMahon:

[\[76777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of (a) the amount of available storage space for imported goods at UK ports and (b) how that compares to (a) each of the previous five years and (b) first six months of 2021.

Robert Courts:

UK ports have invested heavily over the last decade to develop facilities capable of handling the largest ships, many cargo types, and the equipment to handle these efficiently. The UK is also home to many global port groups and has attracted significant inward investment. As such the UK is generally well placed in terms of capability and capacity in normal circumstances.

The current circumstances for the shipping and freight sectors are exceptional and unprecedented. There is increased international demand and disruption due to the pandemic, which combined with the current peak season is seeing operational difficulties on a global level. In the UK these effects are being exacerbated by wider supply chain challenges.

The capacity, volume, and operational factors of storage space at UK ports is not routinely monitored by Government and is a commercial matter for ports and their partners. However, this Department has maintained close engagement with the sector over the last year and through the pandemic to understand their operational pressures. The lessons learned by the sector at the end of 2020 have meant that the ongoing international issues have been handled with more stability throughout this year and peak period approached in a better position, but wider factors have negated that benefit.

■ Public Transport: Antisocial Behaviour

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[76711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of anti-social behaviour incidents on public transport in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England in (i) each of the last three years and (ii) during the Covid-19 outbreak; and what steps his Department is taking to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour on public transport in those areas.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

From British Transport Police (BTP) data, from November 2018 to October 2021, a total of 100,488 incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) on public transport occurred across England. 4% of which occurred in the West Midlands (4,152), while 0.4% occurred in Coventry (422). A breakdown of this data by year is shown in the attached table.

Further, from March 2020 to October 2021, 51,929 incidents of ASB on public transport occurred across England. 4% of which were in the West Midlands (2,155) and 0.4% were in Coventry (217).

The data provided covers National Rail, London Underground, Docklands Light Railway, Midland Metro Tram, Croydon Tramlink and Glasgow Subway as these are the only transport modes BTP have jurisdiction over. More specific data in regard to Taxis (including Plug-in Hybrid Vehicles) and Trams is not held because this data is not collected. Similarly, no relevant data is held in regard to Buses because this data is collected and held by the Home Office.

Attachments:

1. Table of ASB on public transport - BTP data [\[Table - ASB on public transport - BTP data.docx\]](#)

■ **Railways: Electrification**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[76800]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the priority given by his Department to rail electrification has changed as a result of the Autumn 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As set out in 'Decarbonising Transport – A Better, Greener Britain', we are committed to delivery of a net zero railway network by 2050. Electrification, hydrogen and battery trains will all play a part in achieving this commitment. We will continue to ensure that electrification schemes deliver value for money for taxpayers and that the industry is able to deliver a decarbonisation programme in a sustainable way.

We have delivered hundreds of miles of electrification since 2010 and we continue to expand the electrified rail network. For example, we recently confirmed £78m to electrify the route between Wigan North Western and Bolton. It will enable greener electric trains, with more seats to serve passengers across Greater Manchester. The scheme is on track and targeted for completion in 2024.

The Integrated Rail Plan announcement also confirmed that we will complete the electrification of the Midland Main Line from London to Nottingham, Derby and Sheffield, and deliver full electrification and upgrade of the Transpennine Main Line between Manchester, Leeds and York.

■ **Railways: Finance**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[76801]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department's release timeline has changed for the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We remain committed to publishing the RNEP update, we want to provide as much clarity and certainty as possible on rail enhancements and will set out our plans shortly.

■ Railways: Freight**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[76802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has had discussions with supermarket representatives on (a) strategies to encourage the use of rail freight over road freight in their supply chains and (b) potential challenges in adopting rail freight in supply chains.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government supports the modal shift of freight from road to rail wherever possible and would encourage supermarkets to consider carrying more of their goods by rail. Rail freight customers, including supermarkets, increasingly view rail as a critical part of their operations, and we hold regular meetings with representatives across industry, including supermarket representatives, to understand the challenges and opportunities of using rail freight as part of supply chain operations.

The Government continues to work closely alongside Network Rail (NR) and the rail freight industry and have taken several urgent steps to enable rail freight to support resilient supply chains. NR has increased the number of freight train paths available from key ports, such as Felixstowe, and NR and the Freight Operating Companies are currently running longer, heavier freight trains to increase capacity. The Government has also increased the 2021/22 Mode Shift Revenue Support scheme budget by £500,000 to reduce the number of HGV journeys by an additional 29,000. We will continue to work at pace with NR and the rail freight industry to explore what steps can be taken to support resilient supply chains and increase the number of rail freight services, the length of trains and utilisation of existing services.

■ Railways: North of England**Chi Onwurah:**[\[76681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many miles of high speed track north of Birmingham there (a) are as of 17 November 2021 and (b) will be in 2031 under his Department's plans.

Andrew Stephenson:

There is currently no track north of Birmingham enabling high speed trains operating at more than 140mph. We expect to have constructed 55 miles of this track north of Birmingham by 2031.

■ Trailers: Driving Tests**Karin Smyth:**[\[76731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Statutory Instrument on Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2021, what discussions he has had with the DVSA on the legal status of drivers towing light trailers whose B+E tests were cancelled from 20 September 2021.

Karin Smyth:

[\[76732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Statutory Instrument on Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2021, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the withdrawn statutory instrument.

Karin Smyth:

[\[76733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Statutory Instrument on Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2021, what plans he has to implement changes to the testing process for B+E tests.

Karin Smyth:

[\[76734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Statutory Instrument on Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2021, by what date he plans to resolve the situation for people who would have been obliged to take the B+E test have had their tests cancelled.

Karin Smyth:

[\[76735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to resume mandatory testing for people towing light trailers.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency will continue to encourage people who want to drive a car and trailer to get professional training to promote road safety and support those businesses.

There are no plans to resume mandatory testing for people towing light trailers.

Legal processes must be followed, and legislation is currently going through the parliamentary process. The change will be introduced at a later date, and as soon as possible. Drivers must continue to follow the current rules until the law changes.

The legislation being proposed specifically states that a review must be conducted three years after the law comes into force and again at five years to ensure the safety of our roads has not been compromised by these changes.

No assessment has been undertaken of the cost to the public purse. A new statutory instrument with an amended coming into force date will be laid in Parliament shortly.

■ Unmanned Air Vehicles

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[76792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to bring forward an independent review on the (a) economic, (b) safety, (c) privacy and (d) environmental impacts of the proposed expansion in domestic drone use for (i) civil, (ii) military, (iii) commercial and (iv) other purposes.

Robert Courts:

The Department is currently considering recommendations from two separate independent reports from the Regulatory Horizons Council (RHC) in November 2021

and the Taskforce on Innovation Growth and Regulatory Reform (TIGRR) in May 2021. These independent reports reviewed domestic drone use.

In addition, the Department is currently consulting on the future of flight that includes domestic drone use. This builds on the Air Traffic Management and Unmanned Aircraft Act 2021 that included provisions to ensure safe drone use. The future of flight consultation will close on 22 November 2021 and will give consideration of the responses, alongside the recommendations of the reports, to develop a legislative and regulatory framework to allow for wider market and public use of new aviation technology (including drones) in a safe, secure and sustainable way.

TREASURY

■ Air Passenger Duty

Dan Carden:

[\[73950\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of proposals to reduce Air Passenger Duty on domestic flights on the Government's ability to meet its net zero targets.

Helen Whately:

Aviation accounts for around 8% of the UK's total greenhouse gas emissions. International aviation is responsible for the vast majority of this contribution and accounted for 37 MtCO₂e in 2019, whereas domestic aviation was responsible for 1.5 MtCO₂e – equivalent to less than 1% of the UK's total emissions in 2019.

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.

Furthermore, domestic aviation is included within the scope of the UK Emissions Trading Scheme, which sets a cap on the total amount of greenhouse gases that can be emitted by sectors covered by the scheme.

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[76602\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the annual change in Government revenue resulting from the (a) reduction in Air Passenger Duty on domestic flights from April 2023 and (b) rise in Air Passenger Duty on ultra-long haul flights from April 2023.

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[76603\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the impact on (a) carbon and (b) non-carbon emissions of the (i) reduction in Air Passenger Duty on

domestic flights and (ii) increase in Air Passenger Duty on ultra-long haul flights from April 2023.

Kerry McCarthy:

[76604]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of impact of the (a) reduction in Air Passenger Duty on domestic flights and (b) increase in Air Passenger Duty on ultra-long haul flights from April 2023, on aviation demand.

Helen Whately:

At Budget, the Government announced that, from April 2023, it will introduce a new reduced domestic band of Air Passenger Duty (APD) set at £6.50 for economy passengers. The new domestic band will cover flights between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, in order to support connectivity across the UK. As a result, around 9 million passengers will pay less APD in 2023/24.

The Government will also 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.

Aviation accounts for around 8% of the UK's total greenhouse gas emissions. International aviation is responsible for the vast majority of this contribution and accounted for 37 MtCO₂e in 2019, whereas domestic aviation was responsible for 1.5 MtCO₂e – equivalent to less than 1% of the UK's total emissions in 2019.

Additionally, domestic aviation is included within the scope of the UK Emissions Trading Scheme, which sets a cap on the total amount of greenhouse gases that can be emitted by sectors covered by the scheme.

The Exchequer impacts of these APD changes are set out in table 5.1 of the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 document, which is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-budget-and-spending-review-2021-documents>

■ Banks: Government Assistance

Dan Carden:

[75106]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the revenue raised by the (a) Bank Levy and (b) Bank Corporation Tax Surcharge since their introduction in 2011 relative to state support for the banking sector over the period since the financial crisis in 2008.

John Glen:

Since the introduction of the bank levy in 2011, total revenue raised by the (a) Bank Levy and (b) Bank Corporation Tax Surcharge up to and including 2020-21 can be found in the ONS monthly public sector current receipts publication.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/governmentpublicsectorandtaxes/publicsectorfinance/datasets/appendixdpublicsectorcurrentreceipts>

These taxes were introduced to ensure that banks make a fair and sustainable contribution, reflecting the risks they pose to the financial system and wider economy.

Further measures have also been taken to raise revenue from the sector including a restriction on tax relief for banks' historic losses and PPI compensation payments.

As a result of the 2007-2008 financial crisis, the Government made a number of interventions in the financial sector with the objective of protecting the financial stability of the UK economy.

In each Economic and Fiscal Outlook, the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) publishes estimates of the net direct effect of these financial sector interventions on the public finances. The latest estimates are set out in Table B.1 of the October 2021 publication:

<https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-october-2021/>

The OBR's estimates do not attempt to compare against a counterfactual scenario where the Government did not intervene. However, as the OBR sets out, the costs of the financial crisis would almost certainly have been much greater in the absence of direct interventions to restore the financial system to stability.

■ Banks: Insolvency

Dan Carden:

[73951]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment has he made of the (a) current financial risks in the banking sector and (b) likelihood of further state bailouts in the next decade.

John Glen:

The Financial Policy Committee (FPC) of the Bank of England is responsible for identifying, monitoring and taking action to remove or reduce systemic risks with a view to protecting and enhancing the resilience of the UK financial system.

In September, the FPC judged that the banking sector remains resilient to outcomes for the economy that are much more severe than the Monetary Policy Committee's central forecast in the August Monetary Policy Report. This judgement is supported by the interim results of the Bank of England's 2021 solvency stress test. HM Treasury is aware of and participates in FPC discussions through its non-voting membership of the Committee.

Since 2008, the UK banking system has been significantly strengthened, and UK banks now hold over three times more capital than they did at the time of the financial crisis. In addition, a resolution regime has also been established which empowers the Bank of England to manage the failure of financial institutions in a way that protects depositors and maintains financial stability, while limiting the risks to public funds. In particular, minimum requirements for own funds and eligible liabilities (MREL) have been put in place to ensure systemically important banks hold sufficient equity and eligible debt so that they can be 'bailed in' should a bank fail.

■ Business: Payments

Jim Shannon:

[\[74981\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that businesses accept cash as a method of payment for goods during the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

The FCA has published research on cash acceptance by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which found that the primary motivation for accepting cash is to provide customers with choice. While it remains the individual retailer's choice as to whether to accept or decline any form of payment, including cash or card, nearly all (98%) of surveyed businesses stated they would never turn away a customer if they needed to pay by cash.

Nonetheless, the Government recognises that the ability to transact in cash remains important to millions of people across the UK and has committed to legislating to protect access to cash.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government has worked closely with the financial regulators to ensure firms maintain branch access for essential services, while balancing the needs of their customers with the safety and welfare of staff. The vast majority of people have continued to have access to cash during the pandemic.

The Government recently consulted on legislative proposals to make sure people only need to travel a reasonable distance to pay in or take out cash. The Government's proposals stand to support the continued use of cash in people's daily lives and to help local businesses to continue accepting cash by ensuring access to deposit facilities.

The Government also made legislative changes to support the widespread offering of cashback without a purchase by shops and other businesses as part of the Financial Services Act 2021. Cashback without a purchase has the potential to play an important role in the UK's cash infrastructure. The financial services industry is already seeking to take advantage of the changes to the law for the benefit of cash users; working with retailers to roll out new services to local communities.

■ Children: Day Care

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[75062\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 28 June 2021 to Question 32460 on Tax-Free Childcare, if he will publish any expenditure forecasts for the tax-free childcare scheme in the financial year 2020-21 made prior to the Spring Budget 2020.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The expenditure forecasts for Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) scheme are published by the Office for Budget Responsibility in the supplementary fiscal tables of the Economic and Fiscal Outlook (EFO).

Forecast expenditure for 2020-21 from the previous seven fiscal events are shown in the table below.

FISCAL EVENT	MARCH 2018	OCTOBER 2018	MARCH 2019	MARCH 2020	NOVEMBER 2020	MARCH 2021	OCTOBER 2021
Forecast Expenditure for 2020-21	£0.71bn	£0.52bn	£0.44bn	£0.34bn	£0.25bn	£0.24bn	£0.24bn
Source	Table 4.7	Table 2.21	Table 2.21	Table 4.7	Table 3.7	Table 3.7	Table 3.7

The earliest published expenditure forecast for TFC for the financial year 2020-21 is November 2015.

■ Debts: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[73862\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on the levels of household debt in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

John Glen:

The Government regularly monitors trends in household debt levels in order to inform policy making to help people manage their money well and access support if they need to get their finances back on track. It does so by working closely with the [Money and Pensions Service](#) (MaPS), the Financial Conduct Authority ([FCA](#)) and engages regularly with a range of other stakeholders on their research and findings.

The FCA conducts a biennial Financial Lives Survey of 16,000 adults which provides a comprehensive insight into the finances of the [UK](#) population. The latest findings from the survey were published in February 2021 and showed that between March and October 2020, the number of people with low financial resilience increased by 3.5 million, from 10.7 million to 14.2 million.

MaPS monitors financial difficulty through the Debt Need Survey of approximately 22,000 people, with data on regional levels of over-indebtedness last published in 2018. MaPS will publish the results of the 2021 Debt Need Survey early next year, which will include a regional breakdown of their new Need for Debt Advice measure.

■ Evergrande Group: Insolvency

Owen Thompson:

[\[75935\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to help protect the economy from the potential economic impact of initiation of bankruptcy proceedings against Evergrande China by DMSA.

John Glen:

The Government will continue to monitor risks to the UK economy, including from significant developments in the Chinese property market. Our monitoring will inform any action needed to mitigate risks.

■ Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero**Owen Thompson:****[73914]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what guidance the Government has issued to the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero on adopting an agreed definition of net zero.

Helen Whately:

The Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (GFANZ) was launched in April 2021 by Mark Carney (the Prime Minister's Finance Adviser for COP26) in partnership with the UNFCCC Climate Action Champions, the [Race to Zero](#) campaign and the [COP26 Presidency](#).

Access to GFANZ is anchored in the UNFCCC's Race to Zero campaign to ensure credibility and consistency. This means GFANZ firms' net-zero commitments must use science-based guidelines to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, cover all emission scopes, include 2030 interim target settings and commit to transparent reporting and accounting in line with Race to Zero criteria. The net zero guidelines and standards used are drawn from UNFCCC's Race to Zero, as well as the conveners and secretariats of the underlying alliances – such as UN Environment Programme, the Science Based Targets Initiative, and the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change. GFANZ facilitates collaboration between practitioners, scientists, academics, the official sector, and NGOs to help to identify, develop, and mainstream best practice in this area. The UK government engages with and supports these initiatives but does not issue formal guidance to them.

Next year, GFANZ will continue to partner with the UNFCCC's Race to Zero, who will continue to set the net zero criteria for entry, alongside the secretariats of the alliances that comprise GFANZ (such as UNEP FI). Further, the Chancellor announced at COP26 that a Taskforce would be established to develop standards for disclosure of transition strategies for companies listed in the UK, which will include industry, academics, and civil society. HMG and GFANZ will therefore continue to collaborate on accelerating the decarbonization of the UK and global financial system.

■ Heating: VAT**Dr Alan Whitehead:****[76540]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to reduce the VAT on heat batteries to five per cent as part of the transition to a net zero energy system.

Helen Whately:

The Government maintains a reduced rate of VAT of 5 per cent on the installation of many Energy Saving Materials, subject to certain conditions.

Going further would impose additional pressure on the public finances, to which VAT makes a significant contribution. VAT raised around £130 billion in 2019/20, and helps to fund key spending priorities, including on health, education, and defence.

The Government keeps all taxes under review.

■ Imports: Customs

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[76669\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps HMRC has taken to help improve the rate at which checks are performed on goods imported into the UK in each of the last twelve months.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government's priority is to keep goods moving and avoid delays at the border. HMRC use a risk based and intelligence-led response to compliance issues, working alongside Border Force.

As the Government has made consistently clear, we will not compromise on the security of the UK at the border. Keeping goods flowing over the border is of vital importance.

HMRC, Border Force and other Government departments make targeted interventions. These are based on intelligence and threat assessment and will typically involve documentary checks and physical interventions, designed, wherever possible, to avoid delaying traffic flows across the border.

HMRC will continue to work closely with industry to ensure interventions are carried out in a way that minimises delays and additional burdens for legitimate trade, while robustly ensuring compliance.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[76671\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what lessons have been learned by HMRC as a result of the time taken for imported good to pass through ports in December 2020.

Lucy Frazer:

December 2020 saw the end of the transition period coinciding with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including requirements for HGV drivers to have COVID tests before entering France. During that time, the Government remained focused on keeping goods moving and avoiding delays at the border.

The Government's priority continues to be to keep goods moving and avoid delays at the border, but as the Government has made consistently clear, we will not compromise on the security of the UK at the border.

HMRC continues to use a risk based and intelligence-led response to compliance issues, working alongside Border Force to ensure interventions are carried out in a way that minimises delays and additional burdens for legitimate trade, while robustly ensuring compliance.

■ Industry: Carbon Emissions

Helen Hayes:

[\[73921\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the tax reliefs offered to carbon intensive industries, including those companies drilling for oil and gas in the North Sea.

Helen Whately:

HMRC have an annual tax reliefs statistics publication which is available to the public. The latest version of this was published in October 2020 and includes outturn cost estimates for tax reliefs for a five-year period up to and including 2019-20. This includes reliefs offered to carbon-intensive industries, including those companies drilling for oil and gas in the North Sea.

The Government keeps all taxes under review.

■ Members: Correspondence

Robert Largan:

[\[76044\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to the enquiry from the hon. Member for High Peak of 12 August 2021, referenced RL25657.

Mr Simon Clarke:

I responded to the honourable member's correspondence on 21 October. A further copy has been sent by email.

■ Multiple Occupation

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[73696\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what (a) policies or (b) practices of the Valuation Office have changed in relation to (i) houses in multiple occupation and (ii) for bedsitting rooms.

Lucy Frazer:

There has been no change in the Valuation Office Agency's (VOA) policy or practices when assessing Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) or bedsitting rooms for Council Tax. The VOA's listing officers make their valuation decisions based on the facts in each case, with reference to relevant legislation and case law. As such, some HMOs are assessed as multiple dwellings and others as a single dwelling.

The VOA has a statutory duty to maintain an accurate Council Tax list. The VOA acts on information received from external sources, including local authorities and other taxpayers, if it is believed that a property's assessment may be incorrect or needs to be reviewed.

Further information is available in the Council Tax Manual, practice note 6: premises in multiple occupation: www.gov.uk/guidance/council-tax-manual/council-tax-practice-notes#PN6

■ Public Sector and Social Services: Finance

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [76701]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government is taking steps to make it easier for (a) charities, (b) local governments, (c) universities and (d) other service providers to remunerate people to give their feedback on public and social services that those people rely on for the purposes of helping to improve those services.

Mr Simon Clarke:

As set out in Managing Public Money, it is good practice to use customer feedback in evaluating the quality of services provided to the public. Spending decisions by central government bodies on remuneration for provision of feedback may be permitted where such spending is regular, proper, feasible and value for money.

At Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 the government published an updated set of priority outcomes and metrics. These capture the real-world impacts for the public that departments have committed to achieve, including metrics that track user satisfaction with public services. The full list of priority outcomes and metrics can be found [here](#).

■ Social Services: Finance

Charlotte Nichols: [73995]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department made of the comparative potential merits of (a) introducing the Health and Social Care Levy and (b) maintaining or increasing other taxes such as the corporation tax surcharge, for the purposes of raising funds for future social care spending.

Lucy Frazer:

Only a broad-based tax base like Income Tax, VAT or National Insurance contributions (NICs) could raise the sums needed for such a significant investment. A levy charged on the NICs base is the fairest way to raise the funds needed to support health and social care.

The highest earning 15 per cent will pay over half the revenues, and 6.1 million people earning less than £9,880 per annum will be kept out of paying the Levy altogether.

In addition, using NICs as the base ensures businesses will also pay the Levy. Businesses benefit from having a healthy workforce, so it is only fair that they contribute.

■ Undocumented Migrants

John Redwood: [74862]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate of the number of migrants entering the UK illegally he used when developing budgets for 2021-22.

Mr Simon Clarke:

As the department responsible for the migration and border systems, the Home Office produces a quarterly publication of immigration statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>.

These immigration statistics do not include information on the total illegal migrant population as the government does not make any official estimates. By its very nature, it is not possible to know the exact size of the illegal migrant population, or the total number of people who arrive to the UK illegally.

HM Treasury uses the latest immigration statistics and forecasts when setting department budgets, including the Home Office budget for 2021-22.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Disability: Candidates****Mr Mark Harper:****[R] [76618]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she plans to reintroduce a fund to help disabled people seek elected office.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is committed to see more disabled people become elected representatives.

Building on the experience of the Access to Elected Office fund and the EnAble fund, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will support a new scheme from April 2022 to support those seeking to become candidates and – as importantly – once they have been elected to public office.

Political parties have primary responsibility for supporting their own disabled candidates, in line with their duties under the Equality Act 2010.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Flexible Support Fund****Tulip Siddiq:****[75064]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many parents have been granted payments through the Flexible Support Fund to pay for (a) the full upfront cost of childcare or (b) part of those costs when they entered employment in England and Wales in the last 12 months.

Mims Davies:

The information requested is not collated centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

The Department is fully committed to supporting parents moving into work and improving their earnings once employed. Universal Credit pays up to 85% of

childcare costs for working parents, compared to 70% in legacy benefits, and childcare costs can be claimed up to a month before starting a job.

In cases where people need to pay for childcare upfront, prior to starting work, Work Coaches may be able to use the Flexible Support Fund for eligible claimants to meet these costs until their first wage is received. Budgeting advances are also available to eligible claimants who require help with upfront costs, for example when altering hours worked or changing childcare providers.

■ Food Banks: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[73863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on foodbank use in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

David Rutley:

No assessment has been made. Foodbanks are independent, charitable organisations and the Department for Work and Pensions does not have any role in their operation. There is no consistent and accurate measure of food bank usage at a constituency or national level. We understand the data limitations in this area, and thus from April 2021 we introduced a set of questions into the Family Resources Survey (FRS) to measure and track food bank usage. The first results of these questions are due to be published in March 2023 subject to usual quality assurance. These questions will allow us to gauge where people in food security are seeking help and over time will allow us to build a time series on the scale of food bank usage.

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 with the cost of food, utilities and wider essentials. 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.

■ Food Poverty

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[76712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to tackle levels of food poverty in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

David Rutley:

This Government is wholly committed to supporting low-income families by spending over £110 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2021/22 and by increasing the National Living Wage by 6.6% to £9.50 from April 2022.

With the success of the vaccine rollout and record job vacancies, our focus now is on continuing to support people into and to progress in work. Our multi-billion-pound Plan for Jobs, which has recently been expanded by £500 million, will help people across the UK to find work and to boost their wages and prospects.

In addition, Universal Credit recipients in work will soon benefit from a reduction in the Universal Credit taper rate from 63% to 55%, while eligible in-work claimants will also benefit from changes to the Work Allowance. These measures represent, for the lowest paid in society, an effective tax cut of around £2.2 Billion in 2022-23, and will benefit almost two million of the lowest paid workers by £1000 a year on average.

We recognise that some people may require extra support over the winter as we enter the final stages of recovery from the impacts of the Covid pandemic, 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. This includes £421 million for the Household Support Fund, which will help vulnerable people in England with the cost of food, utilities and wider essentials. Coventry City Council are receiving £3,224,222.30 of this funding.

To support low income families further we have 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, and we are investing over £200m a year from 2022 to continue our Holiday Activities and Food programme, which is already providing enriching activities and healthy meals to children in all Local Authorities in England.

■ Household Support Fund

Matt Vickers:

[\[74003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what formula her Department used to determine the funding given to each local authority from the Household Support Fund.

David Rutley:

The government has allocated the Household Support Fund according to the population of each local authority, weighted by a function of the English Index of Multiple Deprivation. Taking account of deprivation, as well as population, reflects the fact that the scheme is aimed at vulnerable families and individuals who may struggle to afford the cost of essentials over the Winter.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Newcastle Upon Tyne Central

Chi Onwurah:

[\[76680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many referrals from Job Centre work coaches have been made to the Kickstart scheme in Newcastle upon Tyne Central constituency, by sector type.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pensions does not hold data on referrals to the Kickstart Scheme by work sector at the constituency level. This information is not collated centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Personal Independence Payment: Parkinson's Disease**Helen Hayes:**[\[75944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment has she made of the (a) accessibility of the personal independence payment for people with Parkinson's disease and (b) potential impact of personal independence payment assessments on people living with that disease.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 19 November 2021]: People with Parkinson's disease are able to access PIP in the same way as other people with long-term health conditions or disabilities. A variety of reasonable adjustments can be made to the claims process and associated communications for customers who require them. Claimants are encouraged to attend assessments with a companion should additional support be required.

Entitlement to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is assessed on the daily living and mobility needs arising from a health condition or disability, rather than the health condition or disability itself. The assessment is carried out by qualified healthcare professionals and looks at an individual's ability to carry out everyday activities which are fundamental to living an independent life, including their ability to prepare, cook and eat food, dress and undress, make budgeting decisions, manage and monitor their health condition, and plan and follow journeys. The assessment ensures that the greatest level of support goes to those least able to carry out the activities.

Social Security Benefits: Overpayments**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[73869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people affected by administrative errors made by her Department which led to the overpayment of benefits in each of the last five years.

David Rutley:

Ensuring benefit correctness is a DWP priority and we are focused on paying people their correct entitlement from the outset of a claim. Indeed, despite a period when we have faced the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19, fraud and error in the benefits system remains low, with 95% of benefits, worth more than £200 billion, paid correctly in 2020/21.

In line with this commitment to correctness, we operate a Quality Assurance Framework, which sets out the Department's quality controls in relation to official error. This includes an assurance regime where levels are measured and reported monthly, with lessons learnt helping deliver continuous improvement.

The following table, taken from our National Statistics on Fraud and Error in the Benefit System, shows the percentage of cases overpaid Universal Credit (UC) as a result of Official Error for the Financial Year Ending (FYE) 2017 to FYE 2021.

FINANCIAL YEAR	% OF CASES OVERPAID UC AS A RESULT OF OFFICIAL ERROR
2016/2017	4.9%
2017/2018	5.3%
2018/2019	5.7%
2019/2020	4.1%
2020/2021	2.2%

The National Statistics on Fraud and Error also show that Universal Credit Official Error as a percentage of benefit expenditure fell in 2020/21, from 1.3% to 0.9%.

Further information on fraud and error in the benefits system can be found in the Department's annual statistical publication at:

[Fraud and error in the benefit system: financial year 2020 to 2021 estimates - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://gov.uk/government/statistics/fraud-and-error-in-the-benefit-system-financial-year-2020-to-2021-estimates)

Where Official Error overpayments do occur, the introduction of the 2012 Welfare Reform Act means that all overpayments of Universal Credit, including cases where the overpayment is a result of Official Error, are recoverable.

Where recovery is made by deduction from Universal Credit, there is a limit placed on the overall amount that can be deducted. Formerly 40% of the Universal Credit Standard Allowance, this was reduced from 30% to 25% in April 2021. Moreover, a priority order is applied, which determines the order in which deductions can be made. 'Last resort' deductions, such as rent or fuel costs, are at the top of the priority.

Anyone with overpayment deductions who does experience financial hardship is encouraged to contact the Department's Debt Management unit. Where a person cannot afford the

proposed rate, a lower amount can be negotiated.

**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.

■ State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad**Margaret Ferrier:** [\[73875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the findings of the survey published by the End Frozen Pensions campaign on 2 November 2021 that 28 per cent of British pensioners with frozen overseas pensions are unable to access medication as a result of financial hardship.

Margaret Ferrier: [\[73876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to monitor the impact of its policy on indexing state pensions overseas only for British pensioners in countries with reciprocal uprating agreements.

Guy Opperman:

No assessment has been made. The decision to move abroad is voluntary and remains a personal choice dependent on the circumstances of the individual. This longstanding policy has been in place under successive governments for over 70 years.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Females**Martyn Day:** [\[73920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 10 November 2021 to Question 69664 on State Retirement Pensions: Females, what specific actions have been taken in the last 12 months to support those affected by (a) changes to state pension age for 1950s-born women and (b) the communication of those changes.

Guy Opperman:

The Government put in place a broad range of measures to help everyone financially during the Pandemic. For those who cannot work, the benefit system continues to provide a strong safety net. Support is available to those who are unable to work or are on a low income but are not eligible to pensioner benefits because of their age.

For those who have reached their State Pension age, Pension Credit also provides invaluable financial support for the most vulnerable. We continue to use every opportunity to encourage pensioners to check their eligibility and make a claim. Earlier this year, over 11 million pensioners in Great Britain received information about Pension Credit in the leaflet accompanying their annual State Pension uprating letter. And on 16 June as part of a media day of action on Pension Credit, DWP joined forces with Age UK as well as the BBC to help reach, via national and local media, older people who may be reticent about claiming it.

■ Unemployment: Coventry North East

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[75901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the (a) unemployment and (b) youth unemployment rates in Coventry North East constituency; what assessment her Department has made of the factors that have contributed to those unemployment rates being disproportionately higher in Coventry North East than the equivalent UK rates; and what targeted action her Department is taking to reduce unemployment in Coventry North East constituency.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 19 November 2021]: Estimates of (a) unemployment and (b) youth unemployment in the year to Jun 2021 based on the Annual Population Survey are published and available here. Guidance for users can be found here. No specific assessment has been made of the factors underlying unemployment in Coventry North East and the sample sizes for Coventry North East may make drawing conclusions from this data difficult.

However, we want everyone to be able to find a job, progress in work and thrive in the labour market, whoever they are and wherever they live.

Throughout the pandemic the UK Government has provided historic levels of support to the economy – a total of over £400 billion. This includes key DWP programmes such as Restart and Kickstart alongside other measures to boost work searches, skills and apprenticeships. Our support was in addition to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (Furlough) and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

We recognise that young people's needs will vary depending on where they live and their own individual circumstances.

The Coventry Youth Hub, just 1 of 150 currently open, works with a range of local partners and can help people address and overcome barriers to employment. Our experienced and well-trained Work Coaches have access to tools that help them understand vacancies and skills needs. Work Coaches are prioritising face-to-face activity so we can support them into work, and a year after the first young people started, over 100,000 have now taken-up a Kickstart job. This is an incredible achievement and we have announced a run-on of Kickstart to March 2022, to further support people into jobs.

■ Universal Credit: Harrogate

Helen Hayes:

[\[76769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her oral contribution of 8 November 2021, Official Report, column 8, if she will publish the learnings from the pilot work on the managed migration from legacy benefits to universal credit that took place in Harrogate.

Helen Hayes:

[\[76770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her oral contribution of 8 November 2021, Official Report, column 8, how the Harrogate pilot informed the Government's plan on resuming the managed migration to universal credit.

David Rutley:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave on 1st November to question number [64687](#).

■ **Universal Credit: Rents**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[74000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason deductions are not made directly from Universal Credit and paid to Landlords to cover rent.

David Rutley:

[Holding answer 19 November 2021]: The payment of Universal Credit to claimants is a considered design choice. The Universal Credit assessment period and payment structure are fundamental parts of its design. They help reduce welfare dependency by mirroring the world of work, where the majority of people are paid monthly. Ensuring similarities between paid employment and receiving benefits removes an important barrier which could prevent claimants from moving into paid employment.

For those who cannot manage their single monthly payment, Alternative Payment Arrangements, and more specifically a Managed Payment to Landlord, is available at the start or at any point during a Universal Credit claim.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ FCDO update

Minister for Asia (Amanda Milling):

[\[HCWS407\]](#)

It is normal practice, when a government department proposes to undertake a contingent liability in excess of £300,000 for which there is no statutory authority, for the Minister concerned to present a departmental minute to Parliament, giving particulars of the liability created and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from incurring the liability until fourteen parliamentary sitting days after the issue of the statement, except in cases of special emergency.

I have today laid a Departmental Minute proposing to provide an indemnity that is necessary in respect of a Governor established independent Inquiry in the British Virgin Islands, tasked with establishing whether there is information that corruption, abuse of office or other serious dishonesty in relation to officials, whether statutory, elected or public may have taken place in recent years. The then and current Governors take any such allegations extremely seriously, and the Inquiry reflects their commitment to a full and independent investigation into any wrongdoing. The Governors have the full backing of the UK Government.

Earlier this year (2021), the previous Foreign Secretary announced that the then Governor had established the Commission of Inquiry (Hansard, HCWS716, column 32WS, on 18 January 2021) to be led by the Right Honourable Sir Gary Hickinbottom as Commissioner. On the 14 July 2021 the current Governor announced that he had granted the Commissioner a six month extension, taking the deadline for the Commissioner to report to the Governor to January 2022.

The indemnity will cover the Commissioner and his team against any liability for any act done or omission made honestly and in good faith in the execution of his or her duty as such, or in the purported execution of his duty as such. The indemnity will only apply to acts done or omissions made during the course of or in connection with the Inquiry. If the liability is called, provision for any payment will be sought through the normal Supply procedure.

The Treasury has approved the proposal in principle. If, during the period of fourteen parliamentary sitting days beginning on the date on which this Minute was laid before Parliament, a member signifies an objection by giving notice of a Parliamentary Question or by otherwise raising the matter in Parliament, final approval to proceed with incurring the liability will be withheld pending an examination of the objection.