



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 23 November 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:35 P.M., 23 November 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Coroners

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[74903\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what the average turnaround time has been for inquest applications by the Attorney General to the High Court under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 in each of the last 10 years.

Alex Chalk:

Section 13 of the Coroners Act 1988 permits an application to be made to the High Court for either an order for a fresh inquest into a death, or an order to hold an inquest if one has not already been held. An application under section 13 cannot be brought unless the Attorney General's authority – referred to as her 'fiat' – has been obtained. Once the Attorney General has granted or refused her fiat, the Attorney General's Office does not usually have any further role in the process.

An applicant has six weeks from the grant of the Attorney General's fiat to make an application to the High Court. The High Court will then decide whether to order an investigation to be carried out in accordance with Part 1 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

Neither the Attorney General's Office nor the Ministry of Justice hold data on how long it takes between the Attorney's fiat being granted and the High Court disposing of an application made under section 13.

■ Human Trafficking: Prosecutions

John Redwood:

[\[74863\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many prosecutions are underway or planned of individuals charged with trafficking and smuggling people across the Channel.

Alex Chalk:

The Government stands resolute in its commitment to tackle Organised Immigration Crime. We continue to pursue the Organised Crime Groups who facilitate illegal travel to the UK and who exploit vulnerable migrants, knowingly putting people in life-threatening situations. We are committed to prosecuting those who profit from dangerous and unnecessary Channel crossings in small boats.

We do not hold data relating specifically to the points in the question. However, so far in 2021, 9 people have been convicted for facilitation offences relating to small boat crossings, with sentences totalling over 17 years' imprisonment. Further, the Joint Intelligence Cell activity (UK-France joint investigations) has seen 17 small boat Organised Immigration Crime Groups dismantled since July 2020.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY**■ Aerospace Industry and Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries****Stephen Farry:**[\[75174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 21 September 2021 to Question 48387 on Aerospace Industry and Defence: Manufacturing Industries, if he will extend the SC21 Competitiveness and Growth programme beyond the expiry date of March 2022 to enable the aerospace and automotive sectors to take into account the delays in access as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Lee Rowley:

A decision on continued funding for the Supply Chain 21 Competitiveness & Growth programme will be made as part of the Department's business planning, which will determine future spending priorities following the conclusion of the Spending Review.

■ Air Pollution**Geraint Davies:**[\[77360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the Joint Air Quality Unit on (a) steps it is taking to deliver clean air and (b) how those steps are aligned with the Net Zero Strategy.

Greg Hands:

In the period leading up to the publication of the Net Zero Strategy, there were numerous cross-government discussions, including on air quality, reflecting the contribution that every sector of the UK economy needs to make to climate change mitigation.

As set out in the Strategy, as a principle of the transition to net zero the Government will pursue options that leave the environment in a better state for the next generation by improving biodiversity, air quality, water quality, natural capital, and resilience to climate change where appropriate.

Air quality policy is led by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

■ Business: Carbon Emissions**Sarah Olney:**[\[76779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of lowering thresholds to file shareholder resolutions at annual general meetings for the purposes of encouraging stronger stewardship and wider stakeholder engagement as businesses transition to net zero.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: The right to file resolutions is an important means through which shareholders can exercise effective stewardship, including on environmental matters. The law needs to provide a balance between giving

shareholders such opportunities whilst at the same time ensuring that companies are not burdened with handling resolutions from shareholders who do not represent any significant body of opinion amongst the investor base.

The Department keeps this (and other aspects of company law) under review and is currently considering recommendations made by the Asset Management Taskforce's Stewardship and Stakeholder Working Groups and the Pension Scheme Voting Implementation Taskforce for Government to consider lowering the thresholds for filing shareholder resolutions.

■ Construction: Recruitment

Feryal Clark:

[\[75156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps his Department has taken to (a) help improve recruitment to and (b) tackle a skills shortage in the construction industry.

Lee Rowley:

The Government continues to review matters related to skills on a regular basis. We are working closely with the construction industry to ensure that it can attract, retain and develop the skilled workforce it needs for the future. This includes the introduction of a Talent Retention Scheme, which is now being taken forward by industry, to help workers move into construction jobs; and work with the Construction Industry Training Board and the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) to ensure effective and appropriate support for skills development.

■ Construction: Sustainable Development

Feryal Clark:

[\[75155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with industry leaders on the potential merits of the increased use of sustainable construction materials and methods.

Lee Rowley:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State, BEIS officials and I have regular discussions with construction industry leaders on a wide range of issues, including increasing the sustainability of the sector.

The Government is supporting the sector's move to industrialised offsite manufacturing, digitisation and improved sustainability. The Transforming Construction Challenge, jointly funded with industry is piloting new approaches to construction products and processes to enable the sector to produce safe, efficient, sustainable buildings.

In March, the Construction Leadership Council launched *CO₂ nstructZero*, a cross-industry decarbonisation programme. This prioritises development of innovative, sustainable materials, and it will help to develop sustainable solutions for manufacturing production processes and distribution. The CLC will report regularly to Government on its progress against *CO₂ nstructZero* priorities.

■ Fireworks: Regulation

Catherine West:

[\[75079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to increase funding for local authorities to improve the (a) regulation, (b) sale and (c) use of fireworks.

Paul Scully:

The Government takes the issues associated with the use and sale of fireworks seriously and we understand the importance of ensuring that the comprehensive legislation in place for fireworks is enforced effectively.

Local Authority Trading Standards work with retailers to ensure that fireworks being sold are safe, and they have powers to enforce against those who place non-compliant fireworks on the market. Trading Standards (and local fire and rescue authorities in metropolitan counties) can also enforce against those selling fireworks without an appropriate licence, for example, outside the normal selling periods of November 5th, Diwali, New Year's Eve and the Chinese New Year.

Funding for local authority regulatory services is determined locally and provided as part of the revenue support grant to the local authority. The role of the Office for Product Safety and Standards is to lead and co-ordinate the product safety system, provide national capacity and support local enforcement.

We continue to engage with Local Authorities, as part of our ongoing programme of work on fireworks, to better understand the issues they face and to ensure that the Government is providing the appropriate support.

■ Future Fund

Chi Onwurah:

[\[77452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November 2021 to Question 68262 on Future Fund, what assessment he has made of the regional differences in the (a) per head value of funding from the Future Fund and (b) proportion of companies which had their loans converted into an equity stake; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

The distribution of convertible loans made by the Future Fund broadly follows the pattern of equity investment across the UK. The British Business Bank's 2020/21 Small Business Finance Markets report showed that companies outside London received 44% of equity investment by value in 2020. In the case of the Future Fund, 41% of loans by value were advanced to companies based outside London. As a rules-based scheme, the Future Fund was not set up to address disparities in equity finance across regions. All valid applications were approved, regardless of the location of the company.

Of the 158 companies converted as of 31 August 2021, 68 (43%) were based outside London. No reliable conclusions can be drawn from the small number of conversions that have taken place so far.

■ Heat Batteries: Housing

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[76542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Future Homes Standard to rule out the installation of heat batteries as a future heating system in UK homes.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: The building regulations are themselves technology-neutral; they do not mandate or ban the use of any specific technologies.

■ ICF: Green Homes Grant Scheme

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[76539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 13 April 2021 to Question 173992, on the Green Homes Grant Scheme, if he will now publish the 10 performance indicators listed in the contract to ICF.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: The top three performance indicators have been published in line with BEIS's commitment to transparency on Key Performance Indicators for government's most important contracts.

BEIS will publish the 10 Key Performance Indicators in due course.

■ Innovate UK: Finance

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[75825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that the increase in annual core funding for Innovate UK will help support organisations based in Northern Ireland.

George Freeman:

[Holding answer 19 November 2021]: Innovation is at the heart of the UK's strategy to boost productivity and international competitiveness. Cutting-edge businesses require access to growth capital and funding for high-risk, high-reward innovation activities available to businesses across all economic sectors, value chains and UK regions. Since 2004, Innovate UK has offered over £158 million in grants for R&D to businesses in Northern Ireland.

Spending Review 2021 secures increased funding for core Innovate UK programmes, reaching c.£1 billion per year by 2024/25 (over £300 million more than in 2021/22) to ensure it can support business in bringing innovations to market and drive economic growth. The money will be used to help boost private sector investment across the

whole of the UK, creating the right conditions for all businesses to innovate and giving them the confidence to do so.

Following the Spending Review, BEIS will set R&D budgets through to 2024/25. Further details of how this funding will be allocated will be announced in due course.

■ Life Sciences and Medicine: Finance

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[73873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help ensure equitable distribution of funds between the (a) National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research and (b) broader life science and medical-related research sectors.

George Freeman:

The National Centre for the 3Rs (NC3Rs) receives its core funding from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and since it was launched in 2004, it has committed £100 million through its research, innovation, and early career awards to provide new 3Rs approaches for scientists in academia and industry to use. This funding builds on wider funding by UKRI on development of alternative approaches to the use of animals. UKRI welcomes applications for research into any aspect of human health and is committed to funding excellence.

Between 2015-2019 UKRI's Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council spent over £7 million on research grants aimed at developing and applying innovative methodologies to studying human and animal physiology, including in silico approaches, organ-on-a-chip, organoid and other advanced cell culture systems. Additionally, UKRI's Medical Research Council launched a new Precision Medicine Accelerator to take ideas from discovery science into research using humans, focused on early clinical application. The Experimental Medicine Panel has an annual budget of £10 million.

The recent Spending Review set the total amount of funding available for the next three years. Internal business planning is underway to allocate specific funding for life sciences and broader medical R&D which will be announced soon. As part of this process £95 million of new funding has recently been announced which will support the development and use of the most promising new drugs and technologies, as part of the Government's commitment to the NHS and making the UK a Science and Technology Superpower.

■ Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[73763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on the rate of deployment of the National Manufacturing Competitiveness Levels Automotive programme.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[73764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the National Manufacturing Competitiveness Levels Automotive programme, which is due to expire in March 2022, to 2024.

Lee Rowley:

The pandemic led to a slowdown in the delivery of the industry-managed National Manufacturing Competitiveness Levels programme, with participating businesses pausing or limiting their planned business improvement activity. There has been a positive uplift in the programme's activity in the last six months.

Following the recent conclusion of the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Department is determining its future spending priorities. A decision on continued funding for the National Manufacturing Competitiveness Levels programme will be made alongside other Departmental programmes in the coming months.

■ **Streaming: Copyright**

Patrick Grady:

[\[75913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to reform copyright laws to ensure that (a) performers, (b) musicians and (c) other artists receive equitable remuneration for streaming income.

George Freeman:

[Holding answer 19 November 2021]: The Government has just launched a comprehensive programme of work to investigate the issues raised by the Digital, Media, Culture and Sport Select Committee's inquiry into the economics of music streaming. This includes research into the impact of an equitable remuneration right and extensive stakeholder engagement to strengthen the evidence base needed to determine whether intervention is warranted.

■ **Technology: Research**

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[73872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he is taking steps to contribute to the (a) development and (b) validation of human-on-a-chip and organ-on-a-chip technologies.

George Freeman:

The Government actively supports and funds the development and dissemination of techniques that replace, reduce, and refine the use of animals in research (the 3Rs). This is achieved primarily through funding for the National Centre for the 3Rs (NC3Rs), which works nationally and internationally to drive the uptake of 3Rs technologies and ensure that advances in the 3Rs are reflected in policy, practice, and regulations on animal research.

The NC3Rs receives its core funding from UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) Medical Research Council, and Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC). Since the NC3Rs was launched in 2004, it has committed £100 million in research to develop 3Rs technologies.

In addition to funding the NC3Rs, UKRI also funds a portfolio of research projects involving humans, human materials, animal models, and non-animal technologies. UKRI also encourages grant applicants, including those whose research does not involve animals but could contribute to greater reduction and replacement, to consider further opportunities to advance the 3Rs.

Between 2015-2019, the BBSRC spent over £7 million on research grants aimed at developing and applying innovative methodologies to studying human and animal physiology, including in silico approaches, organ-on-a-chip, organoid and other advanced cell culture systems.

COP26

■ Climate Change: Developing Countries

Catherine West:

[\[75078\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, if he will use the remainder of his time as COP President to establish a process to identify (a) the scale of funding required to address loss and damage and (b) suitable mechanisms to deliver that finance to developing countries.

Alok Sharma:

In Glasgow, COP26 made progress on the issue of loss and damage. It agreed to establish a process to discuss the funding of actions to avert, minimise and address loss and damage. It also recognised that funding for loss and damage already flows from a number of sources and called for this to be scaled up. COP further agreed on practical steps to deliver technical assistance to countries to set the needs they have and the action required on loss and damage.

In our Presidency year, we will be taking forward the decision made at COP, facilitating and encouraging further progress on the issue of loss and damage.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Government

Ruth Jones:

[\[75126\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, which members of the Government attended the COP26 conference in Glasgow.

Ruth Jones:

[\[78501\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, further to the Answer of 18 November 2021 to Question 71459, on UN Climate Conference 2021, if he will publish (a) the names of each of the 33

members of the Government who attended the COP26 Summit in Glasgow and (b) which 15 Government departments those attendees represented.

Alok Sharma:

Alongside the Prime Minister and COP President, 33 Ministers attended COP26 from 15 different Departments across Government. Please see list below:

RT HON RISHI SUNAK MP	HMT
Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP	FCDO
Lord Ahmad	FCDO
Rt Hon James Cleverly MP	FCDO
Rt Hon Amanda Milling MP	FCDO
Vicky Ford MP	FCDO
Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP	BEIS
Rt Hon Greg Hands MP	BEIS
Lord Callanan	BEIS
Lee Rowley MP	BEIS
Eddie Hughes MP	DLUHC
Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith	DEFRA
Rt Hon George Eustice MP	DEFRA
Rebecca Pow MP	DEFRA
Jo Churchill MP	DEFRA
Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP	DfE
Baroness Barran	DfE
Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP	DfE
Alex Burghart MP	DfE
Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP	DHSC
Gillian Keegan MP	DHSC
Trudy Harrison MP	DfT
Robert Courts MP	DfT
Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP	DIT

RT HON RISHI SUNAK MP	HMT
Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP	MoD
Rt Hon Alister Jack MP	SO
Rt Hon Simon Hart MP	WO
Rt Hon Nadine Dorries MP	DCMS
Wendy Morton MP	FCDO
John Glen MP	HMT
Rt Hon Therese Coffey MP	DWP
Helen Whately MP	HMT
Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP	CO

DEFENCE

■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement

Navendu Mishra: [\[76853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what procurement process his Department followed for the commissioning of the Ajax tank programme.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ajax vehicle was selected following a full and open competition in 2010.

Navendu Mishra: [\[76854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what safety assessment his Department undertook of the Ajax tank programme before it was commissioned.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the written statement (HCWS322) I laid in this House on Monday 18 October 2021, which provided a comprehensive update on the Armoured Cavalry (Ajax) programme including health and safety. The MOD Director of Health, Safety and Environmental Protection report will provide a chronology on key safety decisions and I will publish the report once it is finalised.

Attachments:

1. Armoured Cavalry Programme - Ajax Update [HCWS322.docx]

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles

John Healey:

[\[77377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the length of time that the British Army's RWMIK Land Rovers will remain in service.

Jeremy Quin:

The Land Rover R-WMIK Out of Service Date is 2030.

■ Russia: Ukraine

Jim Shannon:

[\[75885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what support is being offered to Ukraine to help counter any military action by Russia.

James Heappey:

Defence has a longstanding relationship with our Ukrainian counterparts and continues to provide support in many areas including security assistance and defence reform. Since 2015, the UK has helped build the resilience and capacity of the Armed Forces of Ukraine through Operation ORBITAL which has trained around 22,000 Ukrainian troops.

We have significant concerns about Russia's aggressive pattern of military build-ups on Ukraine's border and in illegally-annexed Crimea. We remain clear that Russia's threatening and destabilising behaviour is unacceptable and continue to monitor events on the ground closely.

Mark Logan:

[\[76856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to deter Russian aggression towards Ukraine; and what steps he plans to take in the event of an escalation of that situation.

James Heappey:

Defence has a longstanding relationship with Ukraine and continues to provide support in many areas including security assistance and defence reform. Since 2015, the UK has helped build the resilience and capacity of the Armed Forces of Ukraine through Operation ORBITAL which has trained around 22,000 Ukrainian troops. The UK is committed to the stability, prosperity and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

We have significant concerns about Russia's aggressive pattern of military build-ups on Ukraine's border and in illegally-annexed Crimea. We remain clear that Russia's threatening and destabilising behaviour is unacceptable. We will continue to monitor events on the ground closely and call on Russia, alongside our Allies and Partners, to adhere to its international obligations and commitments.

■ Warships

John Healey:

[\[76578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Hunt Class, (b) Sandown Class, (c) Scimitar Class, (d) Archer Class and (e) River Class ships the Royal Fleet Auxiliary has in service.

Jeremy Quin:

The Royal Navy currently has 34 ships in service within the Classes requested. However, these are all based within the Royal Navy fleet rather than the Royal Fleet Auxiliary as requested in the right hon. Member's question.

Hunt Class - 6

HMS BROCKLESBY	HMS CATTISTOCK	HMS CHIDDINGFOLD
HMS HURWORTH	HMS LEDBURY	HMS MIDDLETON

Sandown Class - 5

HMS BANGOR	HMS GRIMSBY	HMS PEMBROKE
HMS PENZANCE	HMS SHOREHAM	

Scimitar Class - 2

HMS SABRE	HMS SCIMITAR
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Archer Class - 13

HMS ARCHER	HMS BITER	HMS BLAZER
HMS CHARGER	HMS DASHER	HMS EXAMPLE
HMS EXPLORER	HMS EXPRESS	HMS PUNCHER
HMS RAIDER	HMS RANGER	HMS TRACKER
HMS TRUMPETER		

River Class - 8

HMS TYNE	HMS MERSEY	HMS SEVERN
HMS FORTH	HMS MEDWAY	HMS SPEY
HMS TAMAR	HMS TRENT	

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Football: Television****Douglas Chapman:**[\[75909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with terrestrial TV stations to raise the issue of their inability to deliver free to air, live broadcasts of international football matches involving each of the four constituent nations of the UK.

Martyn Day:[\[75936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with broadcasters on the potential merits of free to view broadcast of international football matches involving (a) Scotland, (b) England, (c) Northern Ireland and (d) Wales.

Julia Lopez:

The Department has discussions regularly with broadcasters on a range of matters including those related to the broadcasting of Sport.

The Listed Events regime is designed to ensure that sporting events of national significance are accessible to as wide an audience as possible by ensuring that coverage of certain sports are offered to free-to-air broadcasters. Currently, international football matches for the FIFA World Cup Finals Tournament and the European Football Championships Finals Tournament are designated on the listed events regime under Group A - where full live coverage must be offered for free-to-air broadcast. This includes the matches of the home countries that have qualified for the event.

We believe that the current Listed Events regime works well and strikes an appropriate balance between retaining free-to-air sports events for the public while allowing rights holders to negotiate agreements in the best interests of their sport.

■ Social Media: Young People**Jim Shannon:**[\[74982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with social media companies on preventing the exposure of underage children to harmful material.

Chris Philp:

Preventing children's exposure to harmful material is a priority for the government. Under our proposals in the Online Safety Bill, social media companies will be required to assess the risks of children being exposed to harmful content on their services and implement effective safety measures to protect them. They will also have to ensure that only children who are old enough are able to access their service.

The government continues to engage with a wide range of stakeholders as the Bill goes through pre-legislative scrutiny. Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly on the [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website.

■ Swimming Pools: Access

Tulip Siddiq: [\[75946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to increase public access to swimming pools.

Nigel Huddleston:

We recognise the importance of ensuring public access to indoor and outdoor pools and that swimming is a great way for people of all ages to stay fit and healthy.

The government has provided a range of support for swimming pools during the pandemic. The £100 million National Leisure Recovery Fund supported the reopening of local authority swimming pools throughout the country. In addition, Sport England have made 139 Covid support awards to the Swimming & Diving community (totalling £1,178,198).

Beyond Covid, Sport England have awarded £24,190,440 to swimming and diving projects since January 2017, which includes £15,724,500 of funding directly to Swim England.

EDUCATION

■ Adoption

Tulip Siddiq: [\[75070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the adoption letterbox contact system; and what steps he is taking to improve the experience of communication between adoptive and birth families.

Will Quince:

Local authorities have a legal duty to provide a comprehensive adoption service.

This specifically includes “Assistance, including mediation services, in relation to arrangements for contact between an adoptive child and a natural parent, natural sibling, former guardian or a related person of the adoptive child.”

As set out in our recently published ‘Adoption Strategy: achieving excellence everywhere’ we will be working with local authorities and regional adoption agencies to improve support around contact with birth relatives, including that which has started via social media. Further information on this can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-strategy-achieving-excellence-everywhere>.

■ Breakfast Clubs: Contracts

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[75878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of Government contracts for the provision of school breakfasts.

Will Quince:

The government is committed to continuing support for school breakfast clubs in England and is further investing up to £24 million to continue our national programme for the next two years. This funding will support around 2,500 schools in disadvantaged areas in England, including opportunity areas. This means that thousands of children from low-income families will be offered free nutritious breakfasts to better support their attainment, wellbeing, and readiness to learn.

The breakfast clubs programme is operated by our provider Family Action.

Throughout the current contract we will be working with this provider to monitor different aspects of the current programme and its effectiveness on school breakfast provisions. We will consider the best opportunities to share information as it progresses.

The department made a £38 million investment in the National School Breakfast Programme between March 2018 and July 2021. This has helped to set up or improve breakfast clubs in up to 2,450 schools in disadvantaged areas and to sustain them in the longer term.

■ BTEC Qualifications

Rachael Maskell:

[\[75918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he will take to ensure that BTEC qualifications are (a) accessible to students and (b) recognised as legitimate qualifications.

Alex Burghart:

We will continue to fund some BTECs and other Applied General qualifications (AGQs) in future where there is a clear need for skills and knowledge that A levels and T Levels cannot provide and where they meet new quality standards.

Qualifications such as BTECs will continue to play an important role for 16 to 19 year olds and adults. This includes for students combining BTECs and other AGQs as part of mixed programmes alongside A levels, and those taking qualifications such as BTECs as their full programme of study where there is no A level or T Level.

■ Child Rearing

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[77462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether parental alienation is a category on children's services assessments.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[77463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether parental alienation is part of a social worker's (a) initial and (b) ongoing training.

Will Quince:

All social workers in England must meet the professional standards set by the regulator, Social Work England. Providers of initial training must meet the education and training standards, also set by the regulator, to ensure their students can meet the professional standards. The department has also introduced clear post-qualifying standards, setting out the knowledge and skills expected of child and family social workers.

These standards cover working with parents, including managing tensions between parents and family members, the effect of different parenting styles and assessing parental capacity and capability to change.

It is for providers of initial education, ongoing training and local authority employers to decide specific areas of focus, for example, parental alienation, within social worker training, with reference to the relevant standards. This enables training at all levels to be tailored to the needs of individuals, responsive and up to date.

The definitions and risk factor categories defined in the department's data collection on initial and end of assessments are not intended to be exhaustive, and parental alienation is not a specific category. However, all potential risk factors will be assessed including the impact of such behaviours on a child and the extent to which they may be considered harmful.

■ Children in Care

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[75067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 18 August 2021 to Question 41094 on Children in Care, if he will publish the data on how many looked after children from England are placed outside of England, by the country where they are placed.

Will Quince:

For looked after children placed outside England, figures held centrally can only be broken down as being placed in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland or outside the UK.

I refer the hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn to the answer given on 7 September 2021 to Question [41093](#). These are the latest available figures.

Statistics on children looked after in 2020/21 are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions/2021>.

■ Family Hubs

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[75828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the role of charity providers in the roll out of family hubs.

Will Quince:

The voluntary sector will play a vital role in the effective delivery of family hubs.

The National Centre for Family Hubs was launched in May 2021, delivered by the Anna Freud Centre - a leading mental health charity for children and families who have been funded by the department to support the scale up of family hubs across England. The National Centre's role will be fundamental in ensuring local authorities have the right guidance and resources they need to develop their family hubs.

The "Family Hub Implementation Toolkit" published by the National Centre is clear that through family hubs, statutory services and voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners work together to get families the help they need. The toolkit sets out that representatives from the VCS should be involved in the process of developing the local hub model, and highlights the role that the VCS can play in meeting the needs of the local community. The department has already seen innovative partnerships between local authorities and VCS partners who have moved to a family hub model, and we will work with the National Centre to develop and spread effective practice.

■ Family Hubs: Disability

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[70246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the new family hubs are able to meet the specific needs of disabled children, young people and their families.

Will Quince:

The government announced £82 million to create a network of family hubs. This is part of a wider £300 million package to transform services for parents and babies, carers and children in half of the local authorities across England. The family hubs investment is in addition to the £34 million we had already committed to champion family hubs.

Family hubs are a way of joining up locally and bringing existing family help services together to improve access to services, connections between families, professionals, services, and providers, and putting relationships at the heart of family help. Family hubs bring together services for families with children of all ages (0 to 19 years old) or those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) from 0 to 25 years old, with a great Start for Life offer at their core. How services are delivered varies from place to place, but they can include services for disabled children, young people and their families. The decision on how best to meet the needs of the local population will be for the local council concerned. The SEND Review is looking at ways in which to

improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Proposals for consultation will be published in the first three months of next year.

■ Health Services: Babies

Tim Loughton: [\[74876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish details of (a) how the £300 million Start for Life funding, announced in the Spending Review 2021, will be distributed between Departments and (b) the allocation of that funding over the three years of the Spending Review period.

Tim Loughton: [\[74877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much and what proportion of the £300 million Start for Life funding announced in the Spending Review 2021 will be ringfenced when it reaches local authorities.

Tim Loughton: [\[74878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many local authorities will receive funding from the £300 million Start for Life fund announced in the Spending Review 2021.

Will Quince:

The £300 million investment announced by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will transform services for parents, carers, babies and children in half of council areas across England.

This package of support will provide funding for: the creation of a network of family hubs (£82 million), selected local authorities to co-design their Start for Life offer with parents and carers and publish it in an accessible format (£10 million), infant and perinatal mental health support (£100 million), breastfeeding support (£50 million) and parenting programmes (£50 million) in 75 areas. Trials of innovative workforce models for health visitors will also be funded in a smaller number of council areas to test approaches to improve the support available to new parents.

The Budget set out the 2024-25 financial year profile as follows: £18 million to create a network of family hubs to improve access to services for families; £20 million for parenting support; and £66 million for the Start for Life offer for families, including breastfeeding advice and parent-infant mental health support. The Budget is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-budget-and-spending-review-2021-documents>. Further information on funding profiles will be published in due course.

The Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) will work together to deliver this. The Department for Education will oversee the family hubs and parenting programmes, with DHSC overseeing the other components of the package.

We will set out more detail in due course on how this funding will be allocated.

■ Health Visitors: Parents**Tim Loughton:** [\[74879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the (a) Family Nurse Partnership, (b) Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home-visiting program and (c) other programmes delivered by health visiting services or family nurses can be included in the programmes funded from the £50 million for parenting programmes announced in the Spending Review 2021.

Will Quince:

The government has announced a £300 million package to transform services for parents and babies, carers and children in half of local authorities in England, helping to deliver our levelling up ambitions. £50 million will be available for parenting support. The department will set out more detail in due course, including on which parenting programmes will be available in the selected local authorities.

■ Mental Health Services: Schools**Jim Shannon:** [\[74992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to increase the funding provided to schools on mental health support for students.

Will Quince:

Education is a devolved matter, and the response will outline the education reforms for England. The government remains committed to promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges. The department recognises it is more important than ever that children and young people have access to the support they need for their mental health and wellbeing, and we know that funding the right services and provision within education settings is key to ensuring they do so.

On 10 May 2021, as a part of our Mental Health Awareness week, the department announced £17 million towards improving mental health and wellbeing support for children and young people. This included £9.5 million to offer senior mental health led training to around a third of all state schools and colleges in academic year 2021/22, helping them to implement effective holistic approaches to mental health and wellbeing, and £7 million to Wellbeing for Education Recovery, enabling local authorities to continue supporting schools and colleges until the autumn to meet ongoing mental wellbeing needs.

Schools support the mental wellbeing of their pupils as part of their curriculum provision and pastoral support, which is paid for from schools' core funding; the autumn 2021 Spending Review delivers an additional £4.7 billion for the core schools budget by financial year 2024/25, compared to previous plans. This settlement includes an additional £1.6 billion for schools and high needs in 2022/23, on top of the funding we previously announced. It also includes an additional £1 billion for a recovery premium over the next two academic years (2022/23 and 2023/24). Schools will have flexibility to target funding towards those pupils who need it most, and we

will publish further detail around rates, allocations, and conditions of grant in due course.

Beyond this, the department is also investing up to £5 billion to support recovery for children and young people who need it most. This includes the Recovery Premium for this academic year worth over £300 million, weighted so that schools with more disadvantaged pupils receive more funding. Schools can use this funding to deliver evidence based approaches to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their pupils.

This is in addition to the £79 million announced by the Department of Health and Social Care in March 2021 to significantly expand children's mental health services. This will partly be spent on speeding up and expanding the provision of Mental Health Support Teams in schools and colleges, meaning nearly 3 million children in England will access school or college-based support by April 2023.

The department does not expect teachers to be mental health experts. Therefore, for those that need more specialist support, the NHS Long Term Plan is backed by an additional £2.3 billion a year for mental services by financial year 2023/24. This will mean at least 345,000 more children and young people will be able to access support as we aim to ensure that mental and physical health are treated equally.

■ Numeracy: Scotland

John Lamont: [\[75972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to launch the Multiply scheme in Scotland.

John Lamont: [\[75973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of people who will benefit from the Multiply scheme in Scotland.

Alex Burghart:

All local areas in the United Kingdom will receive funding to deliver bespoke adult numeracy programmes from April 2022. Multiply will help people improve their basic numeracy skills through free digital training, flexible courses and tutoring. It will be a new UK-wide offer launching in spring 2022, which will help people build their confidence, remove barriers to learning, and tailor delivery to meet learner and employer needs.

We estimate that up to 500,000 learners across the UK could gain a recognised qualification and/or improve their numeracy skills through Multiply.

■ Pre-school Education: Per Capita Costs

Andrew Rosindell: [\[75829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the impact per child will be of the increase in early years spending announced in the Spending Review 2021.

Will Quince:

I refer my hon. Friend, the Member for Romford to the answer I gave on 8 November 2021 to Question [68396](#).

The universal 15 hours entitlement, available for every child aged 3 and 4, can save parents up to £2,500 per year, and eligible working parents can apply for an additional 15 hours free childcare which can save them up to £5,000 if they use the full 30 hours.

■ Pupils: Protection**Rachael Maskell:****[75919]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that schools have in place a clear plan for safeguarding children (a) within and (b) outside of the school environment.

Will Quince:

The department takes safeguarding extremely seriously.

Schools are under a legal duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of their pupils. As part of this duty, they must have regard to statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in education' (KCSIE).

The statutory guidance sets out what school governing bodies and proprietors should do to keep their pupils safe. This includes all staff receiving safeguarding training, having an effective child protection policy, and having in place a designated safeguarding lead who provides support to staff members in carrying out their safeguarding duties. KCSIE is very clear on the important role schools play in identifying and responding to safeguarding concerns outside of the school. Schools are an important part of the wider child protection system, details of which are set out in the department's statutory guidance. Further information on this guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>.

KCSIE was strengthened and updated in September 2021 following a public consultation and reflects findings from the Ofsted Review into sexual abuse in schools.

■ Sixth Form Education**Kerry McCarthy:****[75838]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential financial benefits for sixth form colleges of converting to academy status as a result of (a) VAT exemptions, (b) VAT refunds, and (c) additional funding opportunities.

Alex Burghart:

Sixth form colleges are independent statutory bodies and it is their responsibility to make an assessment of all the potential benefits and disbenefits of conversion to a

16-19 academy. The department has issued guidance to help inform their assessments: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-academies-application-process-for-sixth-form-colleges>.

■ Special Educational Needs: Reviews

Tulip Siddiq: [\[75072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department plans to publish the SEND review.

Will Quince:

I refer the hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn to the answer I gave on 16 November 2021 to question [71508](#).

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Air Pollution

Geraint Davies: [\[77358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to update the Clean Air Strategy in light of the (a) Environment Act, (b) Net Zero Strategy and (c) Transport Decarbonisation Strategy.

Jo Churchill:

We do not at present plan to update the Clean Air Strategy. The Environment Act 2021 will deliver key parts of the Clean Air Strategy and we continue to work across Government to strengthen our collective action on air quality, including through the measures set out in the Net Zero Strategy and the Transport Decarbonisation strategy. The air quality co-benefits of meeting the sixth Carbon Budget and the Net Zero Strategy are estimated at about £35 billion over 2020-2050.

Geraint Davies: [\[77359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on coordinating the Government's net zero strategy and the provisions of the Environment Bill in respect of pollutant reduction.

Jo Churchill:

The Secretary of State has regular, productive conversations with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy about net zero and the environment.

The Net Zero Strategy enforces the government's commitment to leave the environment in a better state than we found it. As climate change and air pollution have many of the same emission sources, delivering the measures set out in the Net Zero Strategy will significantly benefit air quality and contribute to meeting the targets that will be established under the Environment Act.

We are working closely with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to ensure those benefits to air quality are delivered and any potential impacts managed. We are considering the impact of the net zero policy pathway on air quality as part of our work to set these targets.

Geraint Davies:

[\[77361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, on the additional powers and funding local authorities will need to help tackle air pollution as set out in the Environment Act.

Jo Churchill:

The Environment Act will improve the local air quality management framework to enable greater local action on air pollution by ensuring that responsibility for addressing air pollution is shared across a wider range of partners. It also ensures local authorities have simple to use powers to tackle emissions from domestic burning, a key source of harmful fine particulate pollution.

Defra's Air Quality Grant programme also provides funding to local authorities for projects in local communities to tackle air pollution. The Government has awarded nearly £70 million in funding since the air quality grant started in 1997.

Further, in line with commitments in the Environment Act 2021, we are currently reviewing the National Air Quality Strategy and will be publishing a revised Strategy in 2023. A key objective of this review will be to develop a strong support and capability-building framework to ensure local authorities have the necessary tools to take local action. We are working across government on this Strategy, including with officials at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

■ Anaerobic Digestion

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[77509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has (a) undertaken an assessment of or (b) reviewed a published study on the environmental risk of digestate which includes chicken manure from well-operated anaerobic digestion sites, which are permitted by the regulator, compared to chicken manure spread directly from unregulated farm sites.

Victoria Prentis:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has provided advice on managing farm manures to reduce antibiotic resistance. The guidance from APHA recognises that the anaerobic digestion process destroys bacteria and is considered to be the best approach for reducing spread of bacteria to the environment. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has provided practical advice on how to reduce the risk of contamination of ready-to-eat crops when using farm manures to improve soil fertility.

The FSA guidelines are based on research, largely funded by the FSA, on pathogen occurrence and survival in farm manures during storage and following land spreading.

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[77510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the proposed policy requirement for anaerobic digestion sites to sterilize the muck before releasing it from site on those sites converting to the use of maize feedstock.

Victoria Prentis:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

The Animal by-products regulation classifies manure as a category 2 Animal by-product. However, there is no requirement to use an approved anaerobic digestion site for the disposal of manure (unlike other materials such as food waste). If the Animal and Plant Health Agency (which enforces the ABP regulations in question) does not consider there to be a risk of spreading any serious, transmissible disease, manure can be applied to land without processing (Authorisation B1). Nonetheless, the stacking and storage of manure, composting of manure and/or anaerobic digestion are recommended as best practice and should be adopted wherever possible to reduce the spread of antibiotic resistant bacteria.

■ Aviation: Fuels

Luke Pollard:

[\[76825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reason AVGAS 100 was not placed on the very high concern substance list.

Jo Churchill:

The aviation fuel AVGAS 100 is not listed on the UK REACH Candidate list as a substance of very high concern (SVHC) because it is a mixture of substances. One of these substances is tetraethyllead (TEL), which is listed on the UK REACH Candidate list as an SVHC. This places certain obligations on companies or individuals that use or place TEL on the market in GB. This includes its use in aviation fuel.

Luke Pollard:

[\[76827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has for phasing out Avgas 100.

Jo Churchill:

Tetraethyllead (TEL) is a chemical used in AVGAS 100 and is listed on the UK REACH Candidate list as a substance of very high concern (SVHC). This places certain obligations on companies or individuals that use or place TEL on the market in GB.

SVHC identification is the first step in the Authorisation process, which is used to control the use of substances with specific hazards. Once a substance has been identified as an SVHC, it can then be prioritised for inclusion in Annex 14 of UK REACH (the authorisation list). In its recent draft recommendation on substances that are a priority for adding to Annex 14, the HSE concluded whilst no action should be taken at present, it might be appropriate to revisit the regulatory approach to tetraethyllead when technical evaluations of potential alternatives for use in aviation fuel are completed.

The Department for Transport is working to encourage industry to transfer to cleaner aviation fuels as soon as possible. In December 2020, the Secretary of State for Transport asked officials to explore ways to encourage the aviation sector to use UL91 fuel, an unleaded aviation fuel which it is believed a significant proportion of the piston engine aviation fleet can use.

■ Chemicals

Kerry McCarthy: [\[77393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, in the context of the Health and Safety Executive's approach to recommending priority substances for inclusion in Annex 14 of UK REACH, whether the Executive takes into consideration (a) socio-economic criteria, such as what impact the authorisation requirement for a substance may have on certain industry sectors and (b) the existence of work to develop alternative substitutes.

Jo Churchill:

In considering priority substances for inclusion in Annex 14 of UK REACH, the Health and Safety Executive does not take into account socio-economic criteria, but does consider evidence on alternative substitutes.

■ Countryside

Sir Geoffrey Cox: [\[74906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Written Statement of 24 June 2021, HCWS119 on Government response to the Landscapes Review, what recent progress has been made in developing proposals for the reform of National Parks and AONBs; what meetings he has had with the Dartmoor National Park Authority on structural reform to national park governance; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The Secretary of State has not met the Dartmoor National Park Authority to discuss the response to the Landscapes Review. However, Lord Benyon has met with National Parks England, and Government officials have met regularly with representatives from several National Parks Authorities, to inform our response to the review.

The Government intends to respond to the review in full and consult on draft proposals shortly.

■ Crops

Jim Shannon:

[\[74990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what additional support his Department provides to (a) apple and (b) other crop growers whose crops have failed owing to weather conditions.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government recognises the important role our farmers and growers play in both feeding the country and in contributing to our economic growth, locally and nationally.

We have not received representations from either the apple or other crop growing sectors regarding failed crops as a result of adverse weather conditions. However, Defra and the Devolved Administrations have established mechanisms to monitor and assess the impact of market developments across the UK, including weather and supply chain issues, enabling it to provide forewarning of any atypical market movements .

We will continue this important work paying particular attention to the crop growing sectors in the coming months.

■ Dogs

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[75065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what evidence his Department has used to inform any policy or legislation on the use of electric (a) fencing, (b) netting and (c) collars for the control of dogs.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has considered evidence from Defra-funded research, the results of a public consultation, and information from other relevant sources to inform its policy on the use of electronic aids for the control of dogs.

Concerns that remote controlled hand-held electronic training devices, or e-collars, can cause long-term harm have been raised by a number of trainers, behaviourists, the animal welfare sector and dog keeping organisations. In light of these concerns, Defra commissioned a research study to assess the welfare of dogs trained with pet training aids, specifically e-collars. The research showed that many users of the hand-held devices were not using them properly in compliance with the manufacturers' instructions.

As well as being misused to inflict unnecessary harm, there is also concern that e-collars can redirect aggression or generate anxiety-based behaviour in pets, making underlying behavioural and health problems worse.

Following the completion of the research study, Defra ran a public consultation into the use of e-collars for cats and dogs in England. Respondents to the consultation argued that containment systems, or invisible fencing systems, where set up correctly presented less welfare risks to cats and dogs and offered some protection to them from other harms, such as where they escape onto a busy road.

Defra has also monitored the situation in nations who have already taken steps to restrict or prohibit the use of e-collars, including Wales and some European countries. The department has also considered research published by those nations and other respected sources in determining its response.

■ Fisheries: UK Trade with EU

Luke Pollard:

[\[75120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has in place to support the UK fishing industry in the event that the EU activate provisions of Article 506 in the Trade and Co-operation Agreement applying tariffs to British fish exports.

Victoria Prentis:

Our approach to fisheries licensing under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement has been reasonable and fully in line with our commitments. Technical discussions continue with the European Commission and French administration to determine whether there is further information available that would support vessels to qualify for a licence. Vessels that provide the required evidence will receive a licence.

■ Fishing Vessels: Marine Environment

Alex Sobel:

[\[57307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the financial impact on the UK fishing industry by the use of EU Fly-Shooting vessels in UK waters since the end of the transition arrangements following the UK's departure from the EU.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has not made an assessment of the financial impact on the UK fishing industry of EU fly-seining vessels operating in UK waters but we are currently examining our wider policy on fly-seining vessels to ensure our approach is evidence-based, and in line with the UK/EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

■ Invertebrates: Animal Welfare

Catherine West:

[\[75083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will amend the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill [HL] to include all invertebrates.

Jo Churchill:

The Animal (Welfare) Sentience Bill as drafted applies to vertebrates and gives the Secretary of State a power to extend the recognition of sentience to particular invertebrates in future.

Defra commissioned an independent external review of the available scientific evidence on sentience in decapod crustaceans such as crabs and lobsters, as well as sentience in the cephalopod class, which includes octopus, cuttlefish and squid.

We have carefully considered recommendations in the review. The evidence of sentience in decapods and cephalopods is clear and that is why we are amending the Bill which recognises these creatures as sentient.

We are led by the science, and at this time there is no intention to include any other invertebrates, beyond decapods and cephalopods in the Bill.

Members: Correspondence**Luke Pollard:**[\[75125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2021 to Question 71453 on Members: Correspondence, what his Department's target date is for the hon. Member for Cambridge to receive a reply to his letter dated 1 September 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 17 November 2021.

Official Cars**Helen Hayes:**[\[73929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to increase the use of sustainable surface transport by (a) Ministers and (b) civil servants when travelling in the UK on Government business.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is committed to increasing the use of sustainable transport for Ministers and civil servants travelling in the UK on government business.

In October 2021, Defra published the new Greening Government Commitments Framework for 2021 to 2025, which sets out ambitious targets on the environmental impact of the government estate and its operations. This cross-Government framework includes three sub-targets focused on domestic business travel, which are designed to contribute to departmental greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

The sub-target that relates to surface transport is for the Government to meet the Government Fleet Commitment for 25% of the Government car fleet to be ultra low emission vehicles by 31 December 2022, and for 100% of the Government car and van fleet to be fully zero emissions at the tailpipe by 31 December 2027.

Departments are individually responsible for ensuring the core department and its agencies meet their targets, with data submitted to Defra every quarter for the purposes of the annual report. As of November 2021, almost 30% of the Government Car Service (which provides vehicles to Ministers and Senior Officials) are zero emission vehicles.

Defra provides a recognised Cycle to Work scheme for all eligible employees to use to purchase a bicycle for their commute to work, up to the value of £6,000. This is recovered via salary sacrifice as a tax-free benefit. For any employees who are not eligible for the salary sacrifice scheme, Defra offers a loan scheme similar to a season ticket loan, that provides up to £1,000 as an interest free loan to purchase a bicycle for their commute to work.

■ Soil

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[76872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the benefits to soil health of banning the use of ammonium nitrate and urea fertiliser; and what steps he is taking to promote the improvement of soil health with farmers.

Rebecca Pow:

Although we have not made any recent assessments on the benefits to soil health of banning mineral based fertilisers the Nutrient Management Expert Group (NMEG) is independently reviewing and analysing existing policy, alongside up-to-date technical and scientific evidence on fertilisers and nutrient management. It is considering the multiple challenges surrounding nutrient management (reaching Net Zero by 2050, protecting and enhancing soil health, improving water and air quality, protecting natural biodiversity and managing resources sustainably) and developing recommendations on the optimal policy approaches to minimise nitrogen-based and other pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from fertiliser use. The Group is engaging with sector sounding boards, including industry representatives and other key stakeholders, to ensure its recommendations have practical merit.

The findings and recommendations of NMEG will be published in the new year. They will feed into our review of fertiliser regulation and inform wider Defra policy development and delivery plans.

The Government is developing a Soil Health Action Plan for England. It will look at how land management practices and planning can be adapted to help protect soil from the impact of climate change, and will deliver a single, strategic and coherent plan for multiple outcomes that prevents soil degradation and improves soil health.

The Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) is a key focus of the Action Plan and will support sustainable approaches to farm husbandry that deliver for the environment and improve soil health. For example, SFI will pay farmers for actions they take (going beyond regulatory requirements) to manage their land in an environmentally sustainable way. Actions will be grouped into simple packages set out as standards,

to make it as easy as possible for farmers to identify the actions that are best suited to their land and their business.

Two of the standards that are being piloted in the SFI are the Improved Grassland Soils Standard and the Arable and Horticultural Soils Standard. These standards focus on soil management and health and will also be available under the early roll out of the SFI from 2022.

■ **Tetraethyllead**

Kerry McCarthy: [\[77391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which companies or organisations made representations to the Health and Safety Executive as part of its assessment of whether to recommend including tetraethyl lead in Annex 14 of UK REACH.

Jo Churchill:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) published its draft recommendation of priority substances to be included in Annex 14 of UK REACH (list of substances subject to Authorisation) in August 2021. HSE, working with the Environment Agency, published a summary of the technical rationale it used in recommending these substances. No companies or external organisations made representations to HSE as part of the assessment of which substances to recommend. The draft recommendation is currently subject to public consultation until 30 November 2021.

Kerry McCarthy: [\[77392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether HSE conducted an independent assessment of the existence of alternative substitutes in its assessment of whether to include tetraethyl lead its authorisation list, Annex 14 of UK REACH.

Jo Churchill:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) published their draft recommendation of priority substances to be included in Annex 14 of UK REACH (list of substances subject to Authorisation) in August 2021. In recommending these substances, HSE considered evidence that had been submitted to the European Chemicals Agency in relation to tetraethyllead and identified that whilst work is underway to identify alternative substitutes, none are currently available. HSE set out that it may be appropriate to revisit the regulatory approach to tetraethyllead when technical evaluations of potential alternatives are completed. The process for recommending substances for Annex 14 prioritisation is a regular one, so all substances will be reassessed in future prioritisation rounds.

■ Timber

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[74955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of trends in (a) global and (b) national supplies of commercial timber supplies up to 2050.

Rebecca Pow:

Forest Research publish [timber availability forecasts](#) for softwood and hardwood in Great Britain over 25 and 50 year time horizons. Forecasts are adjusted over time as new data and improved models become available.

Current forecasts show that softwood availability changes over time increasing from an annual average availability of 17.15 million m³ in the period 2017 – 2021 to 18.4 million m³ in 2027 – 2031 before declining to 11.9 million m³ in 2047 -2051. A revised 25 year forecast will be published in 2022.

The department has not made estimates of global supplies of timber, however, data provided by Forest Research contribute to Forest Sector Outlook Studies produced by the UN Economic Commission for Europe.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[74956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of trends in the annual supply deficit of commercial timber in the UK in each of the next three decades.

Rebecca Pow:

Forest Research publishes [Forestry Statistics on Trade in wood products](#) based on Overseas Statistics compiled by HM Revenue & Customs.

In the period 2011 - 2020 the UK has consumed between 43 and 57 million tonnes of wood raw material equivalent (WRME) annually. Consumption is the sum of UK produced wood plus imported wood minus exported wood. UK production accounted for between 10.0 and 11.2 million tonnes WRME annually and imported timber for between 39.6 and 50.3 million tonnes WRME.

Imported timber accounts for around 80% of timber consumed in the UK. Levels of consumption depend on economic activity. It is anticipated that imports will continue to account for the majority of timber consumed in the UK in each of the next three decades. This year, as part of the Nature for Climate Fund, we are supporting 17 projects designed to increase levels of woodland management to both improve habitats and supply timber to market. As described in the England Trees Action Plan we are working with industry to encourage the use of timber, increase supply of timber to the construction market and develop innovative timber products and methods of construction using wood.

■ Timber: Prices**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[74957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the compound annual growth rate of UK commercial timber prices in the last two decades.

Rebecca Pow:

[Timber price indices](#) published by Forest Research, based on timber sales made by Forestry England, Natural Resources Wales and Forestry and Land Scotland, show that coniferous standing timber has increased in value by 235% in nominal terms and 113% in real terms over the last 20 years. Timber is an internationally traded commodity and prices vary depending on the performance of economies around the world, currency exchange rates and levels of harvesting.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations****Jim Shannon:**[\[74980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the (a) appropriateness of the timing and (b) adequacy of the management of the US withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan.

James Cleverly:

Following President Biden's 14 April announcement that US troops would withdraw, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) came up against the hard reality that it could not continue the mission without the US. The UK worked intensively with the US and NATO Allies, both on military and civilian channels to ensure an orderly and co-ordinated withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan.

■ Belarus: Poland**Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[73793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations she has made to her counterpart in the Republic of Belarus on the situation at the border of Poland.

Wendy Morton:

As the Foreign Secretary wrote on 14 November, the situation at the Polish border marks the latest step by the Lukashenko regime to undermine regional security. He is using desperate migrants as pawns in his bid to create instability and to cling on to power regardless of the human cost. We have made clear to the Belarusian authorities, including through their Ambassador to the UK, that this harmful, aggressive and exploitative behaviour must stop. We were pleased to send a small team of personnel to provide engineering support to ease pressure at the border. The Foreign Secretary discussed the situation with her Polish counterpart on 16

November. We will continue to stand in solidarity with Poland, Lithuania and Latvia in dealing with this situation.

Matt Vickers:

[\[75169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) unilateral and (b) multilateral steps the Government is taking to reduce tensions on the Poland-Belarus border.

Wendy Morton:

As the Foreign Secretary wrote on 14 November, the situation at the Polish border marks the latest step by the Lukashenko regime to undermine regional security. He is using desperate migrants as pawns in his bid to create instability and to cling on to power regardless of the human cost. We have made clear to the Belarusian authorities, including through their Ambassador to the UK, that this harmful, aggressive and exploitative behaviour must stop. We were pleased to send a small team of personnel to provide engineering support to ease pressure at the border. The Foreign Secretary discussed the situation with her Polish counterpart on 16 November, reiterating the UK's support and solidarity with Poland. We continue to work closely with international partners, including through the OSCE, NATO and the G7.

■ **British Council: Closures**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[76782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she plans to publish the business case for the closure of British Council offices.

James Cleverly:

The unprecedented impact of the pandemic required the government to take tough but necessary decisions on the British Council's global presence and reinforced the need for the Council to do more to adapt to a changing world. As the interim CEO stated in June 2021, the British Council will stop spending Grant-in-Aid funding in 11 countries and deliver Grant-in-Aid programming through offices in other countries in a further nine. Decisions on presence were only taken after a thorough assessment - in partnership with the Council - of how the British Council's priorities link to the Government's foreign policy objectives, as set out in the Integrated Review, and how the Council can achieve the greatest impact. The British Council are in the process of determining their future operating model, which is subject to staff consultation, and this remains an operational matter for the Council.

■ **China: Olympic Games**

Hywel Williams:

[\[74900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she or other representatives from her Department plan to attend the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics.

Amanda Milling:

As the Government has previously made clear, no decisions have yet been made about Government attendance at the Beijing Olympics in 2022.

■ **Christianity****Rosie Cooper:**[\[74940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to prevent sexual violence towards Christian women and girls around the world.

Amanda Milling:

The Foreign Secretary has put ending violence against women and girls, including the use of sexual violence in war, at the heart of UK foreign and development policy. The UK is building a new consensus with our partners to condemn sexual violence in conflict as a "red line". We are committed to exploring all options for further international action, including the possibility of a new international convention. Through our investments of up to £67.5 million in the *What Works to Prevent Violence: Impact at Scale* programme, we are also scaling up proven violence prevention approaches globally, including sexual violence, for the most at-risk groups of women and girls.

In 2020, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon launched the Declaration of Humanity, which unites multiple faiths and beliefs in a common front to challenge damaging societal norms and calls for support for survivors of sexual violence internationally. Bilaterally, Ministers and officials regularly raise specific cases of concern, and discuss practices and laws that discriminate on the basis of religion or belief. Multilaterally, we also work with the UN, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Council of Europe, G7 and other multilateral fora to promote Freedom of Religion or Belief. In 2022, the UK will host an international Ministerial conference on freedom of religion or belief to energise collective efforts on this agenda as well as a major global summit to unite world leaders around action to prevent sexual violence in conflict.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination****Layla Moran:**[\[77496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Government's press release of 11 June 2021, UK to donate 100 million surplus coronavirus vaccine doses to the world within the next year, how many of the doses sent have been administered to individuals living in lower- and middle-income countries as of 18 November 2021.

Wendy Morton:

To date, 10.7 million doses of the Astra Zeneca vaccine, donated by the UK, have arrived in low and middle income countries and have been, or are in the process of being, rolled out. COVAX has agreed to accept a further 20 million Astra Zeneca

doses from the UK. COVAX are in the process of allocating and delivering these doses.

■ **Developing Countries: Malnutrition**

Tulip Siddiq: [\[75949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of reductions to the aid budget on global levels of child malnutrition; and what steps she is taking to tackle child malnutrition around the world.

Wendy Morton:

Due to the seismic impact of the pandemic on the UK economy, the Government has taken tough but necessary decisions, including the temporary reduction in the aid budget from 0.7% to 0.5% of national income.

Tackling malnutrition remains a core focus of our work delivering the objectives of the Integrated Review and the Foreign Secretary's priorities on global health, humanitarian response and in support of UK goals on girls' education and climate. It is critical for reducing preventable deaths and ensuring children get the best start in life in the poorest countries of the world. We are taking a number of steps to increase the impact of aid spending on nutrition and food systems, including the promotion of nutrition objectives in other sectors.

■ **GCHQ: Amazon Web Services**

Chi Onwurah: [\[74966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many cloud computing companies submitted a bid for the contract that GCHQ is recently reported to have awarded to Amazon Web Services; and how many of those bids were submitted by domestic UK companies.

Elizabeth Truss:

The national security community does not routinely release details of the technology partnerships it enters into. Releasing details concerning national security technology can have significant security implications as would be the case in this scenario. Any contract can be fully scrutinised through the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament.

■ **Iran: Visits Abroad**

Ruth Jones: [\[73957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many members of the Government have visited Iran since July 2019.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary and ministers take every opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues with Iran, both virtually and through our Ambassador in Tehran. Officials

routinely visit Tehran for discussions with Iranian counterparts. Such discussions include nuclear non-compliance, regional stability and security, Iranian human rights violations and the release of British dual nationals.

■ **Maria Shahbaz**

Rosie Cooper: [\[74941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with the Home Secretary on the case of Maira Shahbaz.

James Cleverly:

It is a longstanding Government policy not to comment on individual cases, where to do so may put individuals and their family members in danger.

■ **Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe**

Ruth Jones: [\[73956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when a member of the Government last visited Tehran to discuss the release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

James Cleverly:

Our Ambassador in Tehran continues to regularly raise the cases of Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe, Anoosheh Ashoori, and Morad Tahbaz with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. When officials visit Tehran they also take all opportunities to raise these cases. The Foreign Secretary most recently raised them with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on 8 November in a phone call. I raised them with the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Bagheri Kani in person during his visit to London on 11 November.

Ruth Jones: [\[75128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 November 2021 to Question 68455 on Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, aside from 22 September and 8 November 2021, whether she has made other representations to the Iranian Government on the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe since her appointment.

James Cleverly:

As I stated in my previous reply, we are doing all we can to help Nazanin get home to her family. The Foreign Secretary and I will continue to push Iran on this and on the cases of Anoosheh Ashoori and Morad Tahbaz. We continue to engage with Iran at the most senior levels and our Ambassador in Tehran continues to regularly raise our detainees with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

■ Passports: Hong Kong**Sarah Olney:**[\[75176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the impact of the Hong Kong Government's announcement that it no longer recognises the British National (Overseas) passport as a valid travel document or proof of identify on holders of that passport being able to access their mandatory provident funds early.

Amanda Milling:

Hong Kong's Mandatory Provident Fund Authority is unfairly disrupting people's livelihoods by refusing to accept the British National (Overseas) visa when Hong Kongers apply for early withdrawal of their pensions. This is preventing Hong Kongers from accessing funds they are entitled to. The Government has raised our concerns with the relevant Hong Kong authorities.

■ Persecution of Christians across the Globe Independent Review**Rosie Cooper:**[\[74939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of progress in the implementation of the recommendations from the Bishop of Truro's independent review on persecution of Christians and freedom of religion or belief.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities.

The Bishop of Truro's review provided recommendations for an enhanced Government response to support members of all faiths, beliefs, and those of no religious belief. We are making good progress on implementing all the recommendations, including on the recommendation to review the recommendations independently three years from publication of the report.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Sarah Green:**[\[904312\]](#)

What steps he is taking to help support patients who experience complications from surgical mesh.

Maria Caulfield:

Women who have been adversely affected by surgical mesh may access comprehensive treatment, care and advice at the 8 specialist mesh centres currently in operation across England.

Good progress is being made towards the establishment of a further regional service with a provider in the South West. NHS England and NHS Improvement will announce the location of this provider in due course.

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[904313\]](#)

What discussions he has had with the Minister for Health and Social Services of Wales on the delay in delivering the Hospitals Transformation Programme in Shropshire.

Edward Argar:

I have had no meetings or discussions with the Minister for Health and Social Services of Wales or any other representative of the Welsh government regarding the Hospitals Transformation Programme in Shropshire. The only recent meeting on this subject took place in September of this year between myself, my officials, other Honourable Members representing Shropshire constituencies, and their staff.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[904315\]](#)

What plans he has to prioritise cancer diagnosis, care and treatment during winter 2021-22.

Maria Caulfield:

Cancer has remained a priority for the National Health Service throughout the pandemic and the vast majority of services have been maintained. This will continue into the winter. Over the winter, we will aim to sustain the progress made and prepare for future challenges, while ensuring the NHS does not come under unsustainable pressure. Anyone experiencing potential symptoms of cancer should contact their general practitioner as soon as possible.

Suzanne Webb: [\[904316\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to provide booster doses of the covid-19 vaccine to all eligible people.

Sajid Javid:

As of 21 November, over 15.3 million third doses have been administered across the United Kingdom.

In England, there are now more sites than ever delivering COVID-19 vaccines, including hundreds of walk-in sites. The National Booking Service has been updated, allowing people to pre-book their appointment and receive their booster dose as soon as they become eligible.

We have also launched the Boost Your Immunity This Winter media campaign, which emphasises the importance of booster vaccinations.

■ Abortion

Jim Shannon: [\[74989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of home abortions in the UK in the last 12 months.

Maggie Throup:

Information on the number of abortions at United Kingdom level is not collected.

■ **Ambulance Services****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[76806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential risks of the long-term operation at Resource Escalation Action Plan Level Four of (a) the South Central Ambulance Service and (b) ambulance services throughout the country.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[76807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential (a) challenges and (b) risks to (i) the South Central Ambulance Service and (ii) ambulance services throughout the country as a result of long-term operation at Resource Escalation Action Plan Level Four during winter 2021-22.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[76808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's planned timeframe is for the de-escalation of Resource Escalation Action Plan (REAP) Level Four back to normal REAP operating levels for (a) the South Central Ambulance Service and (b) ambulance services throughout the country.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement advise that the long-term impact of ambulance services operating at Resource Escalation Action Plan (REAP) level four include impact on staff health and wellbeing and a reduction in normal levels of focus on transformation activities. To mitigate these risks, an additional £4.29 million has been made available to the South Coast Ambulance Service across a number of schemes including:

- Recruitment of 999 call handlers;
- Expanded capacity through additional crews on the road;
- Additional clinical support in the control room;
- Extended hospital ambulance liaison officer cover at the most challenged acute trust sites in terms of patient handover delays; and
- Retention of emergency ambulances to increase the fleet for winter.

This is supported by local work to minimise hospital handover delays and increase the amount of clinical decision support and referrals into other community and acute pathways to reduce pressure on the emergency care system. National initiatives are also supporting the reduction of pressures across the ambulance service, including £55 million additional non-recurrent revenue funding in winter 2021/22.

In addition, NHS England and NHS Improvement has invested £1.7 million into ambulance services in England in September 2021 to support local health and wellbeing initiatives in recognition of the current pressures. Each trust regularly reviews its REAP level and decisions to de-escalate from REAL level four will be made when performance and associated operational challenges return to normal levels.

■ Ambulance Services: Standards

Daisy Cooper: [\[61224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many ambulance trusts have moved into REAP Level 4 in the last six weeks; and how many in total are at REAP Level 4 as at 22 October 2021.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 27 October 2021]: In the last six weeks, all 11 English ambulance trusts have been at or moved to REAP Level 4. On 22 October 2021, all 11 ambulance trusts were at REAP Level 4.

Caroline Lucas: [\[76637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for ambulance services; and if he will undertake an assessment of the need for central Government investment in an urgent programme (a) of fall prevention work and (b) other preventative interventions to reduce the number of ambulance call-outs in (i) Brighton and Hove and (ii) other areas of the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

National Health Service ambulance trusts are being supported by NHS England and NHS Improvement to reduce waiting times through the National Ambulance Coordination Centre. We are also investing an extra £55 million to increase staff numbers ahead of winter, helping trusts to recruit more 999 call handlers and clinicians to work in control rooms and supplementing frontline staffing capacity. There are no current plans to undertake such an assessment.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Feryal Clark: [\[75158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients registered with North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group have been required to wait longer than two weeks for a hospital appointment following an urgent cancer diagnosis referral in each of the past five years.

Edward Argar:

This information is not available in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Helen Hayes: [\[75050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase awareness of the third primary covid-19 vaccine programme amongst the eligible population.

Helen Hayes: [\[75051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help raise awareness of the difference between the third primary covid-19 vaccine programme and the booster vaccination programme among those administering vaccinations.

Maggie Throup:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have identified approximately 400,000 severely immunosuppressed people who may be eligible for a third primary dose. These individuals are being contacted by text and letter to advise them to discuss the options with their clinician. Texts were sent to individuals who may be eligible from 11 October and letters sent from 18 October. Those who believe they may be eligible are encouraged to contact their general practitioner.

We regularly provide resources and additional information to charities and patient organisations representing those living with severely compromised immune systems for circulation among their members and followers. The UKHealth Security Agency (UKHSA) and NHS England and NHS Improvement update guidance as more information becomes available about COVID-19 vaccines.

Guidance was issued to the National Health Service on 2 September outlining the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI) advice regarding the prioritisation of severely immunosuppressed people for third primary doses. On 30 September this was supplemented by further guidance which also clarifies that third primary doses are distinct from booster doses.

Feryal Clark: [\[75164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of expanding the Covid-19 booster vaccination programme to include all those working in an educational setting.

Maggie Throup:

The Department has not requested that the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation provide advice on the potential merits of expanding the COVID-19 vaccination programme to all those working in an education setting. Therefore, no such assessment has been made.

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[77500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to enable the NHS App to display booster vaccines as part of the COVID Pass.

Maggie Throup:

The NHS COVID Pass can now be used to demonstrate proof of a booster or third dose for outbound international travel and this record is visible through both the NHS App and on NHS.UK. Booster vaccinations are not required for domestic certification in England.

■ Dental Services**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[75947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that NHS dental services take on new patients.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are responsible for commissioning primary dental care services to meet local need, including for new patients. The Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement to increase the levels of National Health Service dental care delivered. Dental practices have been asked to meet as many prioritised needs as possible, focussing first on urgent care and care for vulnerable groups, including children followed by overdue appointments. Patients should be prioritised according to clinical need, regardless of whether they are known to the practice or are new patients. This is a condition of ongoing financial support.

■ England Infected Blood Support Scheme**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[75074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide a specific timeframe for when (a) bereaved partner payments and (b) back payments to 2019 will be issued under the England Infected Blood Support Scheme.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department has processed the vast majority of the additional payments and we anticipate that the bereaved partner payments, including back-dating where applicable, will be made by the end of the calendar year.

■ Fertility: Medical Treatments**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[75948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the NHS backlog does not restrict access to fertility treatments.

Maria Caulfield:

The level of local health service provision for patients, including fertility treatment, is decided by local commissioning groups. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidelines set out how fertility treatment should be offered to patients and are based on best clinical practice. The Department meets regularly with NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority to review fertility treatment activity data. Recent assessments show that fertility treatment in England is approaching pre-COVID-19 levels.

■ General Practitioners

Navendu Mishra:

[\[76847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) adequacy of Government support for GP services, (b) ability of GP services' systems to cope with increased patient demand and (c) wellbeing of the workforce in GP services.

Maria Caulfield:

We have recently launched a £250 million Winter Access Fund, to support general practitioner (GPs) and assist patients to see or speak to GPs and their teams. We are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement and the profession to understand how we can continue to help GPs and improve their working environment, in light of the pressures from the pandemic.

■ Global Health Insurance Card

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[75105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many staff are working on processing Global Health Insurance Card applications; and whether the Government has made an assessment of the adequacy of the number of staff processing applications in relation to the volume of applications.

Edward Argar:

There are approximately 35 to 45 staff deployed to work on Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) applications. Staffing levels at the NHS Business Services Authority are kept under review to meet demand during peak periods. However, we encourage customers to apply for their GHIC as far in advance of planned travel as possible.

■ Health Services

Mike Amesbury:

[\[75119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that (a) elderly people are able to access the GP care they need and (b) people without technology are able to access NHS resources through other means.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England and NHS Improvement's guidance is clear that online tools must always be provided in addition to, rather than as a replacement for, other channels for accessing general practice. Practice receptions should be open so that patients without access to telephone or online services are in no way disadvantaged.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have commissioned an independent evaluation to understand the impact for staff, patients and the wider health and care system of using digital tools in primary care to inform its long-term strategy. The Department continues to work with NHS England and NHS Improvement and general practitioners to assess the impact of different types of appointment and to improve

access for all patient groups. The Public sector equality duty requires public authorities to have due regard of the impact of their policies on different protected characteristics, including age.

■ Hospital Beds: Disease Control

Justin Madders: [\[75013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of beds currently unavailable in the NHS for infection control reasons.

Edward Argar:

The information requested is not collected centrally.

■ Liver Diseases: Diagnosis

Olivia Blake: [\[77513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much and what proportion of the £2.3 billion announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 to transform diagnostic services will support liver disease.

Edward Argar:

The funding announced at the Spending Review will increase the capacity and efficiency of diagnostic services overall. While some of these services can be used to diagnose liver disease, there will not be a specific allocation for liver disease.

Services and equipment used to diagnose liver disease will also be used to diagnose a range of conditions.

■ Long Covid

Jim Shannon: [\[74991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people with long covid, by age category.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department uses estimates provided by the Office for National Statistics which is shown in the following table, as of 2 October 2021.

AGE GROUP	ESTIMATE OF NUMBER OF PEOPLE SELF-REPORTING SYMPTOMS AT FOUR WEEKS	ESTIMATE OF NUMBER OF PEOPLE SELF-REPORTING SYMPTOMS AT 12 WEEKS
2 to 11 years old	20,000	9,000
12 to 16 years old	49,000	24,000
17 to 24 years old	142,000	75,000
25 to 34 years old	173,000	124,000
35 to 49 years old	310,000	228,000

AGE GROUP	ESTIMATE OF NUMBER OF PEOPLE SELF-REPORTING SYMPTOMS AT FOUR WEEKS	ESTIMATE OF NUMBER OF PEOPLE SELF-REPORTING SYMPTOMS AT 12 WEEKS
50 to 69 years old	406,000	314,000
70 years old and over	103,000	74,000

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Robert Largan: [\[76045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the enquiry dated 25 August 2021 from the hon. Member for High Peak, reference RL23521.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 22 November 2021.

■ **Multiple Chemical Sensitivity**

Mr Gagan Mohindra: [\[75150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that (a) multiple chemical sensitivity is a NHS recognised condition and (b) people affected by multiple chemical sensitivity are able to receive sufficient (i) support and (ii) treatment from the NHS.

Maggie Throup:

Multiple chemical sensitivity is currently not a recognised condition. Anyone presenting to primary or secondary care services with symptoms associated with multiple chemical sensitivity such as nausea, headache, and dizziness will receive appropriate support, treatment and advice according to clinical need.

■ **NHS and Social Services: Coronavirus**

Andrew Percy: [\[74953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of making the Johnson and Johnson one shot covid-19 vaccine available to NHS and care workers.

Maggie Throup:

The Janssen vaccine - the commercial name of the Johnson and Johnson manufactured vaccine - was authorised for use by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency on 28 May 2021. At the time of authorisation, no supply was available and none was expected until the end of the year. On 30 October 2021 the Government announced that it would donate all 20 million Janssen vaccines doses it had ordered to COVAX.

Given the maturity of the United Kingdom vaccination programme and strength of existing supplies to meet domestic requirements, the Government was able to identify the Janssen vaccine supply for donation, to be distributed to those most in need overseas. We remain confident that existing stocks of authorised vaccines meet the current requirement for National Health Service and care workers for both the primary course and booster vaccinations.

■ **NHS: Absenteeism**

Sir Gary Streeter:

[\[76569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of current levels of absence from work of NHS staff; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement's data shows that to 3 November 2021 the average number of staff in National Health Service trusts absent due to sickness or self-isolation in the preceding week was 72,355 per day, of which 14,316 staff were absent for COVID-19 related reasons. This compares to a peak of over 155,000 absences per day in April 2020 and almost 100,000 absences per day in January 2021.

■ **NHS: Coronavirus**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[76810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential effect of pressures caused by the covid-19 outbreak on NHS staff retention in a) Slough, (b) the South East, (c) England, and (d) the UK.

Edward Argar:

No assessment has been made at the United Kingdom level, as this is a devolved matter.

As of July 2021, there was a decrease in the rates of staff leaving in the trusts serving patients in Slough: Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust; Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust; and Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust. For all staff in these trusts, the South East region and England, the rates of staff leaving are still below pre-pandemic levels.

The NHS People Plan, published in 2020, includes a retention package for all staff to promote and prioritise wellbeing. In addition, the NHS People Recovery Task Force and the NHS Retention Programme are working to ensure staff feel supported to stay within the National Health Service.

■ NHS: Protective Clothing

Bill Esterson: [\[77438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made in securing a supplier for medical examination gloves and surgical gloves under tender, reference 269071/982217, published on 23 July 2021.

Edward Argar:

The tender remains under evaluation by NHS Supply Chain Coordination Limited.

■ NHS: Staff

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[76695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the findings of the Royal College of Physicians' 2020 Physicians Census published by the Royal College of Physicians' on 15 November 2021, that 48 per cent of advertised consultant posts were unfilled in 2020, what comparative estimate he has made of the size of the (a) NHS workforce and (b) demand for NHS services.

Edward Argar:

The Department has made no such comparative estimate.

In July 2021 the Department commissioned Health Education England to review long term strategic trends for the health and registered social care workforce. This will renew the long-term strategic framework for the health workforce, to ensure we have the right skills and behaviours to deliver high quality clinical services and standards of patient care.

■ Obesity: Clinics

Rosie Cooper: [\[74937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of medical weight loss clinics in helping to tackle obesity.

Maggie Throup:

The National Obesity Audit, due to be launched in 2022, will collect patient level information and analyse robust comparative data from the different types of services which support people to manage their weight including general practice and tier 2, 3 and 4 weight management services.

■ Obesity: Health Services

Rosie Cooper: [\[74934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the announcement in March 2021 of £70 million to support the expansion of weight management services, when further information will be provided on the proportion of funding that will be allocated to Tier 3 weight management services.

Maggie Throup:

Of the £70 million announced in March 2021, £4 million has been allocated to Tier 3 and 4 adult specialist weight management services in 2021/22. NHS England is working with regional teams and integrated care systems to develop a recovery plan for specialist weight management services and bariatric surgeries as required by the Mandate.

Rosie Cooper:[\[74935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department plans to provide to the proposed new Integrated Care Systems to increase access to Tier 3 weight management services; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have worked with integrated care systems to develop regional recovery plans for Tier 3 and Tier 4 specialist weight management services. Funding has been provided to systems to support the implementation of these plans.

Rosie Cooper:[\[74936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he is developing for the expansion of funding for Tier 3 services for children and adults, as part of the NHS Long Term Plan to tackle obesity.

Maggie Throup:

NHS England and NHS Improvement will be investing £3 million in 2021/22, and a further £6 million in 2022/23 to mobilise 15 new Tier 3 clinics for children and young people. These services will provide holistic support to manage complications from severe obesity. This is in addition to £4 million allocated in 2021/22 to support the expansion of adult specialist weight management services and bariatric surgeries, including working with integrated care systems to map the existing provision of services.

Rosie Cooper:[\[74938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the cost is to the NHS of patients moving from requiring tier 3 to tier 4 weight management services.

Maggie Throup:

It is not possible to estimate the cost of moving patients treated in Tier 3 services to management under Tier 4 from existing data. There are currently no national tariffs for Tier 3 specialist weight management services and national tariffs for bariatric surgery vary dependent on the type of procedure.

■ Ophthalmology: Staff**Afzal Khan:**[\[76007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to prioritise ophthalmology in future workforce planning.

Edward Argar:

We are looking at all aspects of eyecare delivery including recovery, digital adoption, workforce transformation, commissioning and business intelligence. As part of the workforce workstream, we are looking at the development of the total optical workforce, including ophthalmologists, in order to develop a sustainable model of care.

■ Osteoporosis: Health Services**Rachael Maskell:**[\[75023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that osteoporosis is included in all Government guidance on medical training.

Edward Argar:

For undergraduate curricula, the General Medical Council (GMC) set the standards that medical schools are expected to meet in the delivery of their training. This includes specifying the knowledge, skills and behaviours that graduates must be able to demonstrate before gaining a licence to practise medicine. The GMC would expect that, in fulfilling these standards, newly qualified doctors are able to identify, treat and manage any care needs a person has, including in relation to osteoporosis.

The training curricula for postgraduate trainee doctors is set by the relevant Royal College and must also meet standards set by the GMC. Whilst curricula do not necessarily highlight specific conditions, they do emphasise the skills and approaches that a doctor must develop in order to ensure accurate and timely diagnoses and treatment plans for their patients. Osteoporosis is emphasised in the Royal College of General Practitioners' e-learning training modules, which have been designed in collaboration with the Royal Osteoporosis Society to support the diagnosis and management of osteoporosis.

■ Pharmacy: Medical Records**Jane Hunt:**[\[76864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of including community pharmacies in IT systems that fully integrate local health and care records, where appropriate permissions are given.

Maria Caulfield:

The Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework sets out the shared vision for community pharmacy to play an increased role in the delivery of primary care. There is consensus that community pharmacists should have the ability to view and contribute to the medical records of patients, where appropriate permissions are given.

NHSX is developing interoperable IT systems to fully integrate local health and care records, while considering issues such as patient consent and data security. This will allow clinicians across the National Health Service to access patients' records, make

informed clinical decisions and populate those records, ensuring transfers of care are safe and effective and improve health outcomes.

■ Prescription Drugs

Cat Smith:

[\[76728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many prescriptions were issued for each drug categorised under the drug groups (a) benzodiazepines including clonazepam, (b) z-drugs, (c) antidepressants and (d) opioids in the (i) last 12 months for which figures are available and (ii) most recent comparative 12 month period prior to the last 12 month period for which those figures are available.

Edward Argar:

The following table shows the number of items prescribed in England for benzodiazepines including clonazepam, z-drugs, antidepressants and opioids in the latest two full years of available data.

	BENZODIAZEPINES INCLUDING		OPIOID	
	CLONAZEPAM	Z-DRUGS	ANTIDEPRESSANTS	ANALGESICS
October 2019 to September 2020	8,968,513	5,714,149	77,747,592	23,296,870
October 2020 to September 2021	8,659,089	5,603,196	81,908,280	23,083,291

■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges

Jesse Norman:

[\[75871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he had made of the effect of prescription charges on nursing students with respiratory conditions who are required to work with covid-19 patients.

Edward Argar:

We have made no such assessment. Where a student has difficulty in paying for their prescriptions, they may be eligible for the National Health Service Low Income Scheme, which may provide exemption from the prescription charge and help with other health costs, on the basis of a means-tested assessment. They may also be entitled through other exemptions, such as a medical condition, maternity or through receipt of a qualifying benefit.

A prescription pre-payment certificate is also available where a holder of a 12-month certificate can get all the prescriptions they need for just over £2 per week.

■ Strokes: Mechanical Thrombectomy

Lilian Greenwood: [\[76665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to accelerate the roll-out of cost-effective mechanical thrombectomy treatment for stroke patients.

Lilian Greenwood: [\[76666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made towards (a) 10 per cent of stroke patients receiving a mechanical thrombectomy by 2022 and (b) delivering other NHS Long Term Plan commitments on stroke care.

Lilian Greenwood: [\[76667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure progress against the NHS Long Term Plan commitment to modernise the stroke workforce to support the delivery of mechanical thrombectomy.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: Thrombectomy is currently available in 22 centres in England. The National Health Service is committed to increasing the delivery of mechanical thrombectomy from 1% to 10%, with the latest data showing that 2.3% of patients receiving a thrombectomy following a stroke. In early 2022, NHS England will undertake a quality review with each of the seven regions to increase the thrombectomy rate.

Since April 2021, integrated stroke delivery networks have been created across England to bring together health and care services to co-ordinate stroke care pathways. In May 2021, the NHS published the National Stroke Service Model which summarises the gold standard of care across the stroke pathway and advises providers and commissioners on how each element of this pathway can be improved

Due to training requirements, thrombectomy is restricted to Interventional Neuroradiologists in England. The General Medical Council (GMC) is working with the Royal College of Radiologists to develop a medical credential in interventional neuroradiology (acute stroke) which addresses mechanical thrombectomy. The GMC and the Royal College are ensuring the credential has the right scope to meet the needs of health services.

■ Supermax Healthcare

Bill Esterson: [\[77439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November 2021 to Question HL 3265, if he will speed up his Department's investigation into allegations of modern slavery at Supermax.

Edward Argar:

We continue to prioritise our investigations into these allegations which are ongoing.

■ Surgery: Finance

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[75149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy that additional NHS funding will be allocated to (a) bringing down joint replacement waiting times and (b) providing support to people waiting for surgery.

Edward Argar:

Funding has already been announced which will improve joint replacement surgery capacity. This includes £2 billion this year and £8 billion over the next three years to increase elective activity and deliver approximately nine million more checks, scans and procedures. We have provided £5.9 billion capital funding for new surgical hubs to address waiting times for clinical tests, including for patients awaiting joint replacement surgery.

Further information on support for people waiting for elective care, such as joint replacement surgery, will be outlined in the upcoming elective recovery plan which is due to be published by the end of this year.

HOME OFFICE

■ Animal Experiments

Henry Smith:

[\[73802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Animals in Science Committee's report entitled Review of the harm benefit analysis in the use of animals in research, what steps her Department has taken to implement the 17 recommendations pertaining to the regulatory framework around the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: The Home Office responded to the Animals in Science Committee's (ASC) report on a review of harm-benefit analysis in the use of animals in research on 21 May 2020.

The Home Office accepted the 17 recommendations pertaining to the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and indicated how it intended to implement the recommendations.

The Home Office has regularly updated the ASC and stakeholders on progress, and wider issues, at scheduled meetings. In particular, the Home Office has updated ASC and stakeholders on reforms to the regulatory delivery model, including the approach to audit, and updates to the e-licensing system. Further information is available at: www.gov.uk/guidance/research-and-testing-using-animals.

Ruth Jones: [\[76014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) fines and (b) prosecutions have resulted from cases of non-compliance under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 in each of the last ten years.

Damian Hinds:

The Home Office can confirm that no fines or prosecutions have resulted from cases of non-compliance under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 in each of the last ten years. The Home Office take any allegations regarding potential non-compliance with the Act, the Code of Practice or individual licence conditions very seriously.

The Compliance Policy, found here: (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/animal-testing-and-research-compliance-with-aspa>) has been published which explains how the Regulator identifies and investigates potential incidents of non-compliance and decides on appropriate and proportionate measures and remedies aimed to minimise the risk of recurrence. This is focused on delivering the right sanctions to achieve better compliance outcomes.

■ **Animal Experiments: Licensing**

Ruth Jones: [\[76013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason no project licences, requested under the Animals Scientific Procedures Act 1986, were refused in 2020.

Kit Malthouse:

No assessment has been made as to what reason no applications for project licences, requested under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA), were refused in 2020.

Kerry McCarthy: [\[76605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many licences are in operation that use the forced swim test for the screening of antidepressant drugs; and what assessment she has made of the potential merits of withdrawing licences for operations that use the test for that purpose.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: Data are not collected on numbers of project licences that include the forced swim test.

No assessment has been made as to the potential merits of withdrawing licences for operations that use the test for the purpose of screening antidepressant drugs.

■ Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

Holly Lynch: [\[75039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has for replacement funding for organisations that currently receive support through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

Kevin Foster:

The Department is currently considering allocations of its Spending Review settlement internally, including allocations to areas which have previously received funding from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

The outcome of this work will be included in the Main Estimate publication for the start of the next financial year as per the normal process.

■ Immigration Controls

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[77477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the legal basis is for refusing entry to the UK to foreign nationals who are deemed non-conducive to the public good; and what authority is responsible for deciding when entry should be refused on those grounds.

Kevin Foster:

The Secretary of State has the power to regulate entry of non-British nationals to the United Kingdom by virtue of section 3 of the Immigration Act 1971.

The Immigration Rules constitute a statement of practice to be followed in the administration of the Immigration Act 1971 for regulating the entry into, and stay of, persons in the UK. Paragraph 9.3.1. of the Immigration Rules provides for the refusal of entry to the UK on the ground the person's presence is not conducive to the public good.

A decision to refuse entry on non-conducive grounds may be taken by UK Visas and Immigration where an application has been made for entry clearance abroad, or by Border Force if the person seeks entry on arrival at the border.

■ Immigration Rules: Families

Tim Farron: [\[74950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish decision-making guidance for applications for family reunion under paragraph 319X of the Immigration Rules.

Kevin Foster:

To strengthen existing policy including Paragraph 319X, we will provide additional clarity in the Immigration Rules on the exceptional circumstances where we would grant leave to a child seeking to join a relative in the UK.

We expect to lay the changes in Spring 2022. This will be accompanied by relevant guidance material.

■ Metropolitan Police: Special Constables

Sarah Olney:

[\[76780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to speed up the recruitment and vetting process managed by Shared Services Connected Limited for special constables to the Metropolitan Police Service.

Kit Malthouse:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: Special constables bring diverse and valuable skills to police forces that strengthen policing and help forces to develop important links with communities. Their recruitment and vetting is managed locally by police forces in line with national guidance maintained by the College of Policing.

The Government recognises public concern around police vetting which is why the Home Secretary has recently commissioned Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) to carry out an urgent thematic inspection of vetting and counter-corruption procedures in policing across England and Wales.

We continue to work closely with National Policing Leads to ensure consistency across forces in order to strengthen the national approach to special constables, including their recruitment.

■ Migrant Workers: Fisheries

Claire Hanna:

[\[75166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent progress her Department has made on offering migrant working status for people working in the fishing industry.

Kevin Foster:

It is important businesses make jobs more attractive to UK workers by improving training, career pathways, pay and working conditions rather than relying on recruitment overseas.

Acting upon advice from the independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), the Government broadened out the skills threshold of the Skilled Worker route and introduced a lower salary threshold which – as modelling by the MAC suggests – strikes a reasonable balance between access to labour and controlling immigration. Eligible occupations under this route now include engine room attendants; ferryman; merchant seaman and seaman and employers can now recruit these roles globally provided the relevant salary and English language requirements are met.

Furthermore, recognising the important role Deckhands play in the sector, the Government accepted the MAC's recommendation to recognise them as an RQF3 level role (for vessels over 9m and for individuals to have at least 3 year's experience

in using their skills) which therefore qualifies for recruitment under the Skilled Worker Route.

Finally, if a foreign national is coming to work within 12 nautical miles of the UK, or the UK landmass itself, then they will need to apply for a visa to work on one of the UK's work routes. Conversely, if they are working solely outside of the 12 nautical miles then a work visa is not required.

■ Motorcycles: Antisocial Behaviour and Crime

Grahame Morris:

[\[76647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2021 to Question 70255: Motorcycles: Antisocial Behaviour and Crime, if he will make it his policy to introduce an off-road bike national strategy to consider and address the difficulties the police encounter in (a) pursuing, (b) identifying suspects and (c) seizing off-road bikes drove illegally.

Kit Malthouse:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: The Government has no plans to introduce an off-road bike national strategy.

■ Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme

Carla Lockhart:

[\[74009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications have been received by the places of worship protective security funding scheme, by region of the UK in each of the last three years.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: The Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme is available in England and Wales. Data on the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme is collated by geographic region.

Applications to the 2021/2022 round closed on 16th July. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application in due course.

Over the last three years, which includes the 2018/2019, 2019/2020, and 2020/2021 rounds, we have received 707 eligible applications in total.

In the 2018/2019 round, we received 88 eligible applications. This can be broken down as 3 East of England applications, 10 East Midlands applications, 9 London applications, 1 North East applications, 19 North West applications, 9 South East applications, 2 South West applications, 17 West Midlands applications, 17 Yorkshire & Humber applications, and 1 Wales applications.

In the 2019/2020 round, we received 376 eligible applications. This can be broken down as 10 East of England applications, 38 East Midlands applications, 100 London applications, 13 North East applications, 50 North West applications, 27 South East applications, 11 South West applications, 56 West Midlands applications, 54 Yorkshire & Humber applications, and 17 Wales applications.

In the 2020/2021 round we received 243 eligible applications. This can be broken down as 9 East of England applications, 23 East Midlands applications, 52 London applications, 3 North East applications, 35 North West applications, 27 South East applications, 13 South West applications, 44 West Midlands applications, 29 Yorkshire & Humber applications, and 8 Wales applications.

Carla Lockhart:

[\[74010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications have been received by the places of worship protective security funding scheme, by the religious faith of the applicant organisation in each of the last three years.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: The Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme is available in England and Wales. Applications to the 2021/2022 round closed on 16 th July. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application in due course.

Over the last three years, which includes the 2018/2019, 2019/2020, and 2020/2021 rounds, we have received 707 eligible applications in total.

In the 2018/2019 round, we received 88 eligible applications. This can be broken down as 46 Muslim applications, 18 Christian applications, 6 Hindu applications, and 18 Sikh applications.

In the 2019/2020 round, we received 376 eligible applications. This can be broken down as 208 Muslim applications, 106 Christian applications, 29 Hindu applications, 30 Sikh applications, and 3 applications from other faiths, such as Buddhism, Jain, or Multi-faith.

In the 2020/2021 round we received 243 eligible applications. This can be broken down as 89 Muslim applications, 103 Christian applications, 22 Hindu applications, 21 Sikh applications, and 8 applications from other faiths.

■ **Police: County Durham**

Grahame Morris:

[\[76646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2021 to Question 70254 on Emergency Services: County Durham and with reference to data published in response to a Freedom of Information request to Durham Constabulary, reference DC/FOI 666/18, what (a) operational and (b) policy steps she plans to take in response to the increase in police response times since 2010.

Kit Malthouse:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: Law enforcement, including response times, is an operational matter for the police. It is for local policing bodies, Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners to decide how best to manage their communications and response to the public based on their knowledge and experience of the communities they serve.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of the Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services regularly carry out independent inspections of police forces who are required to act on their recommendations if they were to identify any failings.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Ben Everitt: [\[75167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support Afghan refugees who do not have a permanent address to open a bank account.

Victoria Atkins:

For those in bridging accommodation, the hotel address will be sufficient to allow them to do this, and if they encounter any issues these should be raised with the Hotel Liaison Officers.

These officers will provide support, advise and escalate any issues should they occur.

Chi Onwurah: [\[77447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans for the Afghan citizens resettlement programme to open; and for what reasons the programme has not yet opened.

Victoria Atkins:

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme is not yet open and remains under development. Officials are working urgently to stand up the remaining elements of the scheme. The Home Office will continue to work closely with other Government departments, non-Governmental organisations, charities, local authorities and other partners and relevant organisations in the development and implementation of the ACRS.

Further information on the eligibility, prioritisation and referral of people for the ACRS is set out in the policy statement published on gov.uk on 13 September, available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Department for International Trade: Film London

Emily Thornberry: [\[74917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to her Department's letter of agreement with Film London/British Film Commission of 5 October 2021, what elements of business development Film London/British Film Commission have been contracted to provide; and what indicators have been agreed to measure their performance against the contract requirements.

Mike Freer:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 18th November to Question UIN: 74916.

■ Department for International Trade: Institute of Export and International Trade**Emily Thornberry:**[\[74920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, under the terms of the contract agreed by her Department on 26 August 2021 for provision of an Export Support Services Contact Centre, how much funding from the public purse was allocated for the training of Export Support Service teams by the Institute of Export and International Trade between 26 August and 12 November 2021.

Emily Thornberry:[\[74921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, under the terms of the contract agreed by her Department on 26 August 2021 for provision of an Export Support Services Contact Centre, how much funding from the public purse is currently allocated each month for the provision of webinars by the Institute of Export and International Trade to Export Support Service teams.

Mike Freer:

We cannot specify the funding for these activities because it is contained within the overall value of the contract.

■ Department for International Trade: Telephone Services**Emily Thornberry:**[\[74919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, under the terms of the contract agreed by her Department on 26 August 2021 for provision of an Export Support Services Contact Centre, how many of the full time equivalent individuals employed to handle calls to the contact centre have the ability to communicate orally in Welsh, and at what grades they are employed, as of 12 November 2021.

Mike Freer:

As of 12 November 2021, the Export Support Service Contact Centre employs two UK based full-time Welsh speaking call handlers.

Emily Thornberry:[\[74922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, under the terms of the contract agreed by her Department on 26 August 2021 for provision of an Export Support Services Contact Centre, how much funding from the public purse is currently allocated each month for the payment of retainer fees to (a) Shanker Singham, (b) Lars Karlsson and (c) Kevin Franklin.

Mike Freer:

The Department of International Trade has not currently allocated any retainer fees for the provision of an Export Support Services Contact Centre.

Emily Thornberry: [\[74923\]](#)

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, when she plans to activate a smart queue jumping service for certain callers; and which callers will have access to that service.

Emily Thornberry: [\[74924\]](#)

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, when she plans to activate the facility for agents to book telephone appointments for callers with government specialists.

Emily Thornberry: [\[74925\]](#)

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, when she plans to activate a webchat function for exporters seeking assistance online.

Mike Freer:

The Department has not yet exercised these options.

Emily Thornberry: [\[74926\]](#)

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 calls were received by the contact centre between 1 October and 12 November 2021 inside core operating hours; and what proportion of those calls were (a) answered and (b) answered within 30 seconds.

Mike Freer:

926 helpline enquiries were received by the Export Support Services Contact Centre between 1 October and 12 November 2021. 99% of all calls were answered within 30 seconds. This data comes from management information supplied by the helpline and has had basic quality assurance checks.

Emily Thornberry: [\[74927\]](#)

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 calls were received by the contact centre between 1 October and 12 November 2021 outside core operating hours.

Mike Freer:

People who call outside of core operating hours are referred to the Digital Enquiry Service. 24 calls were received outside core operating hours by the contact centre between 1 October and 12 November 2021. This data comes from management information supplied by the helpline and has had basic quality assurance checks.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[74929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the contract agreed by her Department for provision of an Export Support Services Contact Centre, what proportion of calls answered between 1 October and 12 November 2021 resulted in an agent (a) resolving the caller's query using her Department's scripts and knowledge bank, (b) transferring the caller to another government helpline or website or (c) raising a Complex Query form and referring the caller to her Department's Digital Enquiry Team.

Mike Freer:

92% of enquiries have been resolved using the Knowledge Bank or by referring to another government department helpline between 1st October and 12 November 2021. The helpline has referred 8% of total enquiries to the Department for International Trade's Digital Enquiry Service during the same period. This data comes from management information supplied by the helpline and has had basic quality assurance checks.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[74930\]](#)

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 took part in customer satisfaction surveys between 1 October and 12 November 2021; and what proportion said they were satisfied with (a) the overall service and (b) how their call was handled.

Mike Freer:

As this is a new service, we are currently working with the supplier on customer satisfaction metrics and data.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[74933\]](#)

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, what proportion of calls received between 1 October and 12 November 2021 were transferred to another relevant stakeholder; and what proportion of those calls were transferred within 10 minutes.

Mike Freer:

We do not currently transfer calls. Businesses are provided with either online guidance or the details of relevant Government helplines to call.

■ Olympic Games: Beijing

Hywel Williams:

[\[74901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what guidance her Department is providing to UK businesses on sponsorship of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics.

Mike Freer:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) does not get involved with sponsorship discussions as this is a commercial matter for companies that may wish to choose to sponsor or become an official partner or supplier of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics.

DIT, along with the British Embassy in Beijing, offers trade advice and support to UK companies seeking to pursue export opportunities, including those which might arise from the organisation of the 2022 Winter Olympics.

■ TRIPS Agreement: Coronavirus

Bill Esterson:

[\[77440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent assessment she has made of the (a) national and (b) international potential merits of introducing a TRIPS waiver in respect of covid-19 related (i) vaccines and (ii) vaccine technology.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Whilst HM Government has not seen evidence that Intellectual Property (IP) is a barrier to the production or supply of COVID-19 goods, including vaccines, we will continue to engage constructively in debates at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Council and other international institutions to promote affordable and equitable global access to COVID-19 vaccines for all.

The United Kingdom affirmed this commitment in the G7 Trade Ministers' communique of 22nd October, which notes our determination to achieve an impactful outcome on trade and health, including how the international IP framework can best support the WTO's pandemic response.

JUSTICE

■ Coroners

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[75060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether officials in his Department are required to provide him with all evidence relating to a death inquest when its findings are under review and subject to a ministerial decision.

Tom Pursglove:

Coroners are independent judicial office holders so it would be inappropriate for Ministers or their officials to interfere in the judicial decisions they make in their investigations and inquests.

■ Coroners: Appeals

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[75059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to improve the experience of bereaved families who appeal decisions by coroners.

Tom Pursglove:

A coroner's decision can be challenged by way of judicial review or in certain circumstances (where an individual considers a coroner has refused or neglected to hold an inquest which ought to be held, or where an inquest has been held and the

discovery of new facts or evidence makes it desirable that another investigation should be held), through an application to the High Court, with the authority of or by the Attorney-General.

However, in response to the Justice Committee's recommendation that the Government should introduce a system of appeals, the Government has committed to look further into the issue.

■ Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre

Kate Osborne: [\[73986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what his planned timetable is for completion of the tender process for the Detained Duty Advice Scheme at Derwentside immigration removal centre; and when his Department plans to publish the outcome of that process.

Kate Osborne: [\[73987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many legal advice surgeries will take place per week under the Detained Duty Advice Scheme at Derwentside immigration removal centre; and from what date those services will commence.

James Cartlidge:

Applicants were notified that the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) had cancelled the procurement process for the Detained Duty Advice Scheme (DDAS) at Derwentside in its entirety on 16 November 2021.

This decision was taken as a result of receiving insufficient compliant tenders that met the minimum requirements detailed in the procurement process.

To provide access to DDAS services for Clients at Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) from 1 January 2022, the LAA will seek to continue the existing contingency arrangements, which were established on 18 August 2021 (but which have not yet been used due to the postponement of the IRC opening), for a period of 6 months (until 30 June 2022). During this time the LAA will review the volume of Clients at the IRC and how services are being delivered to inform its approach to procuring these services.

Under the contingency arrangements, 2 surgeries per week are planned for DDAS at Derwentside and appointments will be available as soon as detainees are being held there.

■ Gender Recognition Certificates

Jackie Doyle-Price: [\[74964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Gender Recognition certificates have been issued in each year since 2010; and how many applications have been rejected.

James Cartlidge:

Information on the number of Gender Recognition certificates that have been issued in each year since 2010; and how many applications have been rejected are

published at www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2021.

The data provides information on receipts, grants, part grants, refusals, withdrawals etc for each year from before 2010 to most recent publication.

■ Judicial Review

Mr David Lammy:

[\[75806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the oral contribution by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice of 9 November 2021, Official Report , column 160, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of Cart-type judicial review cases on the Crown Court backlog.

James Cartlidge:

In the oral contribution by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice to which he refers, the PUS refers to the 'precious resource' of High Court Judges. As it states on judiciary.uk: 'High Court judges can hear the most serious and sensitive cases in the Crown Court (for example murder)'. Our impact assessment sets out the Cart judicial review measure will save 172-180 judge days per year in the High Court and Upper Tribunal. A High Court Judge, who would otherwise be devoting time to considering Cart judicial review, may therefore instead devote that time to considering other serious cases in the Crown Court.

We continue to take action to tackle the impact the pandemic has had on our criminal justice system, including Crown Court backlog.

The Judicial Review and Courts Bill provides the Crown Court with increased flexibility to return certain cases to the magistrates' court, helping support court recovery by saving an estimated 400 Crown Court sitting days per year.

We have allocated over a quarter of a billion pounds on recovery in the last financial year, making court buildings safe, rolling out new technology for remote hearings, recruiting additional staff and opening Nightingale courtrooms, including retaining 32 Nightingale Court rooms until the end of March 2022.

The Ministry of Justice's Spending Review settlement provides £477 million to improve waiting times for victims and to reduce Crown Court backlogs caused by the pandemic.

■ Ministry of Justice: Stonewall

Tim Loughton:

[\[76549\]](#)

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

James Cartlidge:

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

2016-17 Financial Year (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

2020-21 Financial Year

£3,000.00: Stonewall Diversity Champions Membership

Total spend across MoJ HQ the last five financial years totals £16,480.80 with costs inclusive of VAT.

■ Prisoners**Feryal Clark:**[\[75163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of safety and wellbeing measures for people in custody.

Victoria Atkins:

The safety of those who live and work in our prisons is our top priority. We continue to deliver on our £100m investment to improve prison security to reduce crime in prison, clamping down on weapons, drugs and phones that fuel prison violence and undermine safety.

The Challenge, Intervention and Support Plan (CSIP) is in place for the effective case-management of those prisoners who are at a raised risk of violence towards others.

To mitigate the impact of the regime restrictions that were introduced in response to COVID-19 on prisoners, we have produced materials to support wellbeing at this particularly difficult time, including a range of in-cell activities.

We have also created a Wellbeing Plan with input from mental health charity Mind. We have implemented a revised version of the Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) document across the prison estate. Revisions include a stronger emphasis on ensuring a person-centred approach and support for at-risk prisoners.

We continue to make the Samaritans phone service available and are working with the Samaritans to ensure that the Listener peer support scheme continues to function effectively.

■ Prisoners: Females**Feryal Clark:** [\[75162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent steps his Department has taken to ensure the safety of women in prison.

Victoria Atkins:

The safety of those who live and work in our prisons is our top priority. We have established a Women's Estate Self-Harm taskforce which is co-ordinating longer-term work to address the factors driving self-harm

Our Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model is transforming how we support prisoners and significant investments have been made to improve safety and deliver key work. In April 2021 we began implementing a gender specific Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model in the women's estate.

The Challenge, Intervention and Support Plan (CSIP) is also in place for the effective case-management of those prisoners who are at a raised risk of violence towards others. While the newly revised version of the Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) framework includes a stronger person-centred approach and improved focus on risks, triggers, and protective factors.

■ Prisons: Drugs**Matt Vickers:** [\[75171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the Prisons Drug Strategy in (a) reducing the availability of drugs in prisons and (b) providing effective drug rehabilitation support to prisoners.

Victoria Atkins:

Since publishing the Prison Drug Strategy in April 2019, we have implemented a range of evidence-based programmes to help restrict supply, reduce demand, and build recovery from substance misuse at a local and national level.

Through the Security Investment Programme, we have invested £100 million to tackle crime in prisons, including stopping the supply of drugs. Between 2020 and 2021, the number of incidents where drugs were found in prisons decreased by 6%. We are also focused on ensuring our prisons support meaningful recovery, with Incentivised Substance Free Living wings in 15 prisons encouraging prisoners to live drug free, and the Drug Recovery Prison at HMP Holme House using innovative whole prison approach to restricting supply and engaging prisoners in treatment.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Construction: Materials**

Feryal Clark: [\[75154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on providing adequate funds to local authorities to address the cost of building materials surge.

Christopher Pincher:

As far as housebuilding costs are concerned, local authorities have access to a range of financing options that allow them to respond to changes in the prices of material. Since 2012 local authorities have had the freedom to decide how to invest in their housing stock. In 2018 we made this easier by abolishing the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap, giving local authorities greater flexibility to borrow for investment in housing. Local authorities also benefit from lower rates of borrowing available through the Public Works Loan Board.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Meetings

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[77410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his departmental board last met; and when his Department plans to publish minutes of board meetings held since December 2016.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities was established in September 2021, with the Machinery of Government change transfer of functions completing in December. The Secretary of State has been focusing on his priorities since setting up the new department, and the first Ministerial Board meeting is due to take place in January 2022. Governance arrangements, including publication of minutes of meetings, will be reviewed by the Board as part of the new department's governance framework and published in the usual way.

■ Energy Performance Certificates

Caroline Lucas: [\[74951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many of the energy performance certificates issued to householders in the last (a) 12 and (b) 24 months have specifically recommended the installation of (i) an air source heat pump and (ii) a ground source heat pump.

Eddie Hughes:

No Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) issued during the 24 months to October 2021 contained a recommendation to install an air or ground source heat pump.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Newport Wafer Fab

Ruth Jones: [\[75127\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, what assessment he has made of the time taken for publication National Security Adviser's report on the future of Newport WaferFab.

Boris Johnson:

As I said at the Liaison Committee on 7 July 2021, the National Security Adviser is reviewing the case. It would be inappropriate to comment until the review has concluded.

TRANSPORT

■ A27: Arundel

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[75872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has undertaken a cost benefit analysis of the A27 Arundel bypass.

Trudy Harrison:

The most recent benefit to cost ratio for the A27 Arundel bypass is 1.37 and this will be refined further once more detailed design and associated modelling and assessments have been undertaken.

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[75873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the number of road traffic accidents that have occurred on the stretch of road proposed for the A27 Arundel bypass in each of the last ten years.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department does not hold historical information on reported road accidents on proposed stretches of road. Information on the number of reported road accidents on the existing A27 between where the proposed Arundel bypass will start and end from 2011 to 2020 can be found in the table below.

REPORTED ROAD ACCIDENTS ON THE EXISTING A27 BETWEEN WHERE THE PROPOSED ARUNDEL BYPASS WILL START AND END, 2011 TO 2020

Year	Accidents
2011	14
2012	7
2013	18
2014	16

REPORTED ROAD ACCIDENTS ON THE EXISTING A27 BETWEEN WHERE THE PROPOSED ARUNDEL BYPASS WILL START AND END, 2011 TO 2020

2015	15
2016	14
2017	11
2018	9
2019	13
2020	8

Source: DfT, STATS19

■ **Aviation: Fuels**

Luke Pollard: [\[76824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish all correspondence his Department has had with the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association on AVGAS 100.

Luke Pollard: [\[76826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made on the environmental impact of using Avgas 100.

Robert Courts:

This is a global issue since nearly all commercial flight training involves fuel incorporating TEL since it reduces the risk of engine misfires with potentially serious consequences for aircraft safety. The use of fuel incorporating TEL is widespread across many countries' GA sectors, including the United States and many European countries, where it is the dominant fuel used for piston engine aircraft.

The Department for the Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs leads the development of the UK REACH alongside the Health & Safety Executive (HSE). My officials engaged with them to understand the legal status of TEL in the EU, as well as to understand how the UK REACH regulations would work. No country globally has banned TEL. The HSE recently announced that they would not include TEL in their list of authorised chemicals under the UK REACH as they judged that with intensive efforts already ongoing to find a substitute, additional regulatory pressure is unlikely to speed this up keeping the UK in line with the EU, but would revisit this when substitutes had been tested and certified.

Aside from noting whether TEL would be assessed for inclusion in Annex 14 of UK REACH, neither my officials, myself nor the Secretary of State have engaged either organisation to influence their decision.

In response to an enquiry by the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association about the future of 100LL the Secretary of State asked his officials to speed up work on finding safe alternative unleaded fuel such as UL91. This is highly technical safety work involving the FAA, EASA and engine manufacturers in which the UK seeks to play a leading part.

Kerry McCarthy: [\[77389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his policy is on the phasing out of tetraethyl lead as an additive in aviation fuel for aircraft piston engines.

Kerry McCarthy: [\[77390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions (a) he or (b) his staff have had with officials in the (a) Health & Safety Executive and (b) Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs on including tetraethyl lead in Annex 14 of UK REACH.

Robert Courts:

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■ Channel Tunnel Railway Line

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhési: [\[76796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending High Speed 1.

Andrew Stephenson:

There are currently no plans to extend the High Speed 1 network and no assessment has been made of the potential merits of extending HS1.

■ **Crossrail Line****Sir David Evennett:**[\[77387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with the Mayor of London on the economic effect on London of delays in Crossrail delivery.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department engages regularly with the Mayor of London and Transport for London on a wide range of transport matters. On 1 October 2020, the governance of the Crossrail programme transferred to Transport for London. The Mayor of London is responsible for delivering the Crossrail project.

■ **Diesel Vehicles****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[76663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government are taking to encourage drivers in England to switch from using diesel vehicles to more environmentally sustainable vehicles.

Trudy Harrison:

We are going further and faster to decarbonise transport by phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, and, from 2035, all new cars and vans must be zero emissions at the tailpipe. We have committed £2.5 billion to support the uptake of zero emission vehicles and accelerate rollout of electric vehicle chargepoints in drivers' homes, on residential streets and workplaces. The Government has also put in place a favourable taxation model that rewards the cleanest vehicles.

In May 2020, we published an ambitious vision for rapid charging infrastructure along strategic roads in England over the next decade which sets out the number of rapid chargepoints that will be located across motorways and major A roads to meet the future demand for electric vehicles. Further, we plan to support people to charge their cars at home by ensuring new homes are electric vehicle ready. We have consulted on plans to introduce a requirement for every new home to have a chargepoint, where there is an associated car parking space. We will publish our response to the consultation soon and aim to lay regulation in Parliament in 2021. We have also committed £90 million to fund local EV charging infrastructure, to support the roll out of larger, on-street charging schemes and rapid hubs in England.

■ Driving Tests: Welsh Language

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[75077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the availability of Welsh language learning materials for DVSA theory tests.

Trudy Harrison:

The Highway Code is available in Welsh as a book. The Department for Transport is currently working on proposals to change the Code. When the proposed substantive changes come into force in 2022, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) plans to publish them in Welsh simultaneously in print. When the new edition is published, the DVSA wants to publish the Welsh translation online also.

Books, apps and other resources to study for theory tests are available from many commercial sources, including ones endorsed by the DVSA, published by The Stationery Office Ltd (TSO). The DVSA is unaware of any publishers or developers that offer such resources in the Welsh language; this is possibly because there is not a market for it of a commercial scale.

■ Durrington-on-Sea Station: Disability

Sir Peter Bottomley: [\[77357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the time and distance for a user of a wheel chair to get from one platform to the other at Durrington-on-Sea station.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Durrington-on-Sea is a category B2 station, which means that there is step-free access to both platforms and technically a step-free route between platforms.

However, the step-free route between the two platforms is quite impractical as it is 0.6 miles via a nearby road-bridge on Shaftesbury Avenue. This is approximately a 12-minute journey for someone walking and the bridge is steep. Govia Thameslink Railway does not treat B2 category stations as accessible.

■ Electric Scooters

Navendu Mishra: [\[75153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the number of licences that have been issued for e-scooters; and how many e-scooters are being used in the designated pilot areas as of 15 November 2021.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department is running trials of rental e-scooters to assess their safety and wider impacts, and there are currently 12 e-scooter rental service providers that have been approved to take part in the trials. Data currently held by the Department indicates that there were 23,635 e-scooters available to rent across all trial areas in September.

■ Electric Vehicles

Chi Onwurah:

[\[76682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to encourage the conversion of combustion engine vehicles to electric vehicle; and whether he has plans to introduce grants to help improve the affordability of electric vehicles.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government welcomes innovative retrofit technology for converting internal combustion engine vehicles to electric vehicles and recognises it will be an important element of reducing road transport emissions, on the journey towards zero emissions by 2050. We have invested over £80 million in retrofitting vehicles (mainly buses) with pollution reducing technology since 2013. The Government is also funding the Clean Vehicle Retrofit Accreditation Scheme (CVRAS) which provides independent evidence that a vehicle retrofit technology can deliver the expected emissions reductions and air quality benefits.

Our ambitious targets for the transition to zero emission driving is being supported with the £1.9 billion from Spending Review 2020 and an additional £620 million of committed funding. To ensure best value for public money, the Government's Plug-in Car and Van grant schemes are focused on developing the market for new zero emission cars and vans. Additionally, our funding for chargepoint infrastructure at homes, workplaces, residential streets and across the wider roads network is also supporting consumers in the transition to electric vehicles, whether new or retrofitted.

■ Leeds-Sheffield Railway Line

Hilary Benn:

[\[77384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the fastest journey time from Leeds to Sheffield by rail is; and what that journey time is planned to be under the proposals set out in the Integrated Rail Plan.

Andrew Stephenson:

Journey times from Leeds to Sheffield by rail currently take around 40 minutes.

Intercity connections will be further considered within the £100m funding announced in the IRP which includes work on how best to take HS2 services to Leeds.

■ Luton Airport: Railways

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[76053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to support the launch of a Luton Airport Express.

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[76054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is working with rail operators to promote the fast service from St Pancras International to Luton Airport Parkway when the DART launches in 2022.

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[76055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to support Luton Airport's plan to promote rail travel to its terminal through a new Luton Airport Express on the East Midlands Line.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Officials are currently involved in collaborative discussions with East Midlands Railway, Govia Thameslink Railway and Luton Airport, covering issues such as service branding, marketing and communications to promote rail travel to Luton Airport and take advantage of the introduction of the Luton Airport DART.

■ Minibuses: Driving Licences

Chris Elmore:

[\[75956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason the 101 restriction on D1 licences prohibits qualified minibus drivers from driving in a paid capacity.

Trudy Harrison:

The 101 "not for hire or reward" restriction code on a driving licence shows the driver has acquired rights to drive minibuses but has not passed the test to drive professionally. These drivers have not undergone a medical examination or passed all the theory and practical tests required to be a professional driver.

Ensuring professional drivers have the right licence, and skills to drive their vehicles, and that they are medically fit to do so, is key to maintaining road safety.

Chris Elmore:

[\[75957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on the removal of restriction 101 on D1 licences in relation to tackling driver shortages.

Trudy Harrison:

I am not aware of any discussions with stakeholders over this issue. The restriction is in place to ensure professional drivers meet the higher standards required of those who drive for a living.

■ Motorways: Safety

Navendu Mishra:

[\[76855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government is planning to take in response to safety concerns relating 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's (TSC) report *Rollout and safety of smart motorways*, published on 2 November 2021, and its scrutiny. The Department

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.

■ Railways: Bicycles

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[76795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, whether the Government plans to roll out cycle carriages throughout the rail network.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As stated in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, we will increase the amount of space for bikes on trains wherever practically possible, particularly on popular leisure routes, and all future trains will include more bike space relevant to the markets served. There are currently no plans to roll out 'cycle carriages' throughout the rail network.

■ Railways: Electrification

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[76803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Answer of 26 Oct 2021 to Question 58484, whether his Department has plans to release a Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline annual update by the end of 2021.

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: Public Expenditure

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[76804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his Department's timeframe is for the spending of the £500 million committed to the restoration of Beeching Cut rail lines, as set out in the 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In January 2020 the Government pledged £500 million for the Restoring Your Railway Fund to deliver on our manifesto commitment and start reopening lines and stations.

The 2021 Spending Review settlement includes the £500 million RYR fund which starts next year 2022/23 and runs beyond Control Period 6 to Control Period 7 Year One 2024/2025.

Some funding has already been allocated to schemes through the programme. Earlier this month the Dartmoor Line between Okehampton and Exeter became the first line to reopen thanks to over £40 million of government investment.

■ Railways: Timetables

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[75820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help ensure that railway passengers who lack access to the internet are able to access paper timetables from train operating companies.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Our railway must be accessible and open to everyone, which is why we are working with operators to ensure they make access to timetables simpler and more convenient. We recognise that some passengers prefer physical copies and, as we recover from the pandemic, expect operators to ensure they meet the needs of those passengers.

Passengers without access to the internet can request up to date timetable information from National Rail Enquiries on 03457 48 49 50 or visit their nearest staffed ticket office.

■ Rapid Transit Systems: West Yorkshire

Hilary Benn: [\[77385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what routes his Department has produced costings in the first phase of the proposed West Yorkshire Mass Transit system.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department has not produced costings, as it is for West Yorkshire Combined Authority to develop the scheme. The figures used by the Department come from proposals submitted by West Yorkshire Combined Authority for the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements programme.

■ Unmanned Air Vehicles

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[76793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what (a) financial and (b) other resource support the Government has provided to the drone industry to assist integrating drones operating beyond visual line of sight into UK airspace; and what plans he has for the future of drone use in the UK.

Robert Courts:

Government is working with and supporting industry to develop the drone industry. A key programme is the Future Flight Challenge that is a joint government and industry

investment of £300m to develop greener ways to fly, such as all-electric aircraft and deliveries by drone, by advancing electric and autonomous flight technologies.

In addition, government supports specific focused projects such as the £1.2m Drone Pathfinder Catalyst Programme that looks to support integrating drones into UK airspace by bringing together drone providers and end users to demonstrate innovative drone use cases, helping to inform regulatory development; and the Civil Aviation Authority's Innovation Hub sandbox supports the testing and trialling of innovative unmanned aircraft operations and flights beyond visual line of sight to take place in a safe environment and in collaboration with the regulator.

TREASURY

■ Debit Cards

Chi Onwurah:

[\[77446\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what regulatory protections are in place for consumers who have automated payments taken from payment debit cards; and for what reason those payments do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Direct Debit Guarantee.

John Glen:

A continuous payment authority (sometimes called a “recurring” or “automated” payment) is a regular payment, where a payer has given consent for a firm to take one or more payments from a customer’s payment account. These are often established to enable regular payments to be made for goods or services via a payment card – for example, for a magazine subscription – and are distinct from Direct Debits. A retailer or supplier is not permitted to take a recurring payment without authorisation from the cardholder.

The Payment Services Regulations 2017 provide for unauthorised transactions to be refunded immediately. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has published advice to consumers about continuous payment authorities and their rights to cancel them. In its published guidance on the regulations, the FCA states that consumers have the right to cancel recurring payments at any time before the end of the business day before a payment is due to be made, and to obtain an immediate refund from their payment service provider if any future payments are debited from their account after they have revoked their consent.

Different payment schemes may offer additional protections to customers. The Direct Debit Guarantee is an additional safeguard for customers who initiate Direct Debits, and applies to all banks and building societies taking part in the Bacs Direct Debit scheme, operated by Pay.UK.

■ Fossil Fuels: Subsidies

Caroline Lucas:

[\[74952\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Glasgow Climate Pact which calls on Parties to accelerate the phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, if he will (a) make it his policy to request that the Office for Budgetary Responsibility undertakes an audit of the UK's domestic fossil fuel subsidies, with a view to phasing them out, (b) publish a timescale for that audit and (c) make the findings of that review publicly available.

Helen Whately:

The UK follows the approach of the International Energy Agency, which states that a fossil fuel subsidy is a measure that reduces the effective price of fossil fuels below world market prices. On this basis, the UK does not have any fossil fuel subsidies.

■ Insurance: Low Incomes

Matt Vickers:

[\[75172\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to help make insurance coverage more accessible to low-income households.

John Glen:

The Government wants to ensure that people, regardless of their background or income, have access to useful and affordable financial products and services.

There are wider initiatives that low-income households will benefit from when accessing insurance. For example, from 1 January 2022, new FCA rules for home and motor insurance will require insurers to offer renewing customers a price that is no higher than they would pay as a new customer.

Additionally, since 2012, the Government has engaged in a voluntary signposting agreement with the Association of British Insurers (ABI) and the British Insurance Brokers Association (BIBA) for motor and travel insurance. Where an insurer or insurance broker cannot offer cover due to upper age limits on their policies, it will refer the customer to another insurer who can provide cover, or an appropriate signposting service.

The Government also continues to engage closely with the sector, including the insurtech sector, on products available in the market to ensure that consumers can benefit from a wide range of products suited to their needs.

■ International Monetary System

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[77494\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on the potential merits of disbursing the up to £4 billion in Special Drawing Rights announced at the IMF's annual meeting to entities other than the IMF.

John Glen:

At their October meeting, G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors welcomed progress made by the IMF to provide options for members with strong external positions to channel a share of their allocated Special Drawing Rights (SDR), including considering viable options to voluntarily channel SDR to Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs).

The IMF and MDB partners are developing channelling options, and the UK will consider these for support.

Preet Kaur Gill:[\[77495\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on the (a) immediate needs of vulnerable countries and (b) potential merits of disbursing the up to £4bn in Special Drawing Rights he announced at the IMF's annual meeting to support those countries.

John Glen:

At the IMF's Annual Meetings in October, the Chancellor committed to channelling up to 4bn Special Drawing Rights (SDR) of the UK's new allocation, starting with an additional loan of SDR 1bn to the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust which provides zero interest loans to low-income countries.

The Chancellor has also welcomed proposals for the IMF's new Resilience and Sustainability Trust which would redirect SDR towards supporting vulnerable countries in addressing climate change and other long-term structural challenges.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Children: Day Care****Tulip Siddiq:**[\[75063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to introduce a non-repayable childcare grant for parents on low incomes entering work on a similar basis to the measure introduced in Northern Ireland in October 2021.

David Rutley:

In England, Scotland and Wales, help with upfront childcare costs for starting work is available on a discretionary basis through a non-repayable Flexible Support Fund award for eligible Universal Credit claimants. This is a payment that covers costs until the claimant receives their first salary, up to the prescribed limits.

Universal Credit childcare costs provide more generous childcare support than was available under Tax Credits, reimbursing up to 85% of eligible childcare costs.

The childcare offer in England provides 15 hours a week of free childcare for all three and four year olds and disadvantaged two year olds, doubling to 30 hours a week for working parents of three and four year olds.

By comparison, the less generous Northern Ireland funded pre-school education offer provides 4.5 hours per day, 5 days per week during term time, and is available to parents of three and four year olds in their immediate pre-school year.

In light of the current childcare offers available in Great Britain, there are no plans to introduce a similar measure to that in Northern Ireland.

■ Cold Weather Payments and Household Support Fund

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[77479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) providing a £50 one-off payment to people eligible for the Cold Weather Payment and (b) doubling the Household Support Fund in winter 2021-22.

David Rutley:

Vulnerable households across the country will now be able to access a new £500 million support fund to help them with essentials. As part of this, the Household Support Fund provides £421 million to Local Authorities in England to help vulnerable people with the cost of food, utilities and wider essentials. This fund was announced on 30 September 2021, recognising that some households need additional help this winter as we enter the final stages of recovery from the pandemic and covers the period 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 inclusive. There are currently no plans to increase the funding provided.

Cold Weather Payments of £25 are paid to vulnerable households on qualifying benefits for every week of severe cold weather between 1st November and 31st March. There are currently no plans to increase the Cold Weather Payment rate.

■ Coronavirus: Government Assistance

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[76056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Government provides (a) financial and (b) other support to people who have been dismissed from their employment as a result of voluntary shielding during the covid-19 outbreak to protect a household member with underlying health conditions.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pensions does not hold the information requested.

There is a range of support, both financial and practical, available for people who are out of work, looking for work, including those who have been affected by the pandemic. This support is tailored to individuals' circumstances, and can include includes benefits like Universal Credit, Job Seekers Allowance and Employment Support Allowance, employment schemes like The Work and Health Programme and a range of support as part of the Plan for Jobs, and free debt advice in England through the Money and Pension Service.

■ Employment Schemes: Disability

Chi Onwurah:

[\[76676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Second Report of Session 2021–22, Disability employment gap, published on 30 July 2021, if she will accept the conclusions and recommendations of that Committee that (a) her Department carry out a radical overhaul of its approach to employment support for disabled people and (b) funding for the Work and Health Programme be devolved.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: The Government sent our response to the committee on 5 November 2021, who subsequently published the response on 22 November 2021.

[Disability employment gap: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2021–22 \(parliament.uk\)](#)

■ Employment: Disability

Chi Onwurah:

[\[76678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help increase the representation of disabled people in the workforce.

Chloe Smith:

The National Disability Strategy, the Health and Disability Support Green Paper and the Health is Everyone's Business response, published in July this year, together demonstrate this Government's commitment to supporting disabled people and those with long-term health conditions to live full and independent lives, including through employment. In 2017, we set a goal to see one million more disabled people in work by 2027. In the first four years since setting that goal, the number of disabled people in employment has increased by 850,000.

A range of DWP initiatives are currently supporting disabled people to start, stay and succeed in work. These include the Work and Health Programme, the Intensive Personalised Employment Support (IPES) programme, Access to Work, Disability Confident and support in partnership with the health system, including Employment Advice in NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapy services.

■ Pensions

Feryal Clark:

[\[75161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps she has taken to promote a sustainable pensions industry at COP26.

Guy Opperman:

The UK leads the world on this issue. The UK was the first country in the world both to make climate disclosures in line with the Task Force on Climate- Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) recommendations mandatory for occupational pensions schemes, and to consult on measures to require pension schemes to measure and report their alignment with the Paris Agreement on climate change. Our work on ESG is recognised worldwide. DWP are also consulting on guidance for trustees to improve stewardship and voting which will be key to ensuring high-carbon assets transition to net zero.

The Secretary of State played a very active role in encouraging other countries and industry to follow this precedent and to commit to TCFD/Paris aligned reporting for their pension sector at COP26. The Secretary of State also introduced a session to focus on mobilising finance to fight climate change in emerging markets and developing countries, which will be crucial in the fight against climate change.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan**Ben Everitt:**[\[75168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress she is making to (a) backdate benefit payments to Afghan refugees and (b) reduce the delay in payments to those refugees.

David Rutley:

The Department has played a key role in Operation Warm Welcome, including legislating to exempt those arriving under the Afghan relocation and resettlement schemes from the usual residency tests, which restrict access to certain benefits for arrivals to the UK, including Universal Credit. This means that eligible individuals will meet the residency requirements and are able to access benefits when they arrive in the UK.

DWP work coaches have supported all those in bridging hotels who need to make a claim, with currently over 2,900 claims for Universal Credit on the caseload, which covers roughly 4,500 claimants (families are treated as a single claim).

Immediately after a claim for Universal Credit has been taken, the full support of the Department is available, including job searches and training, as well as other support. The Home Office have issued cash cards to those arriving under the Afghan relocation and resettlement schemes for expenses until such time as their first Universal Credit payments, meaning those relocated are supported financially as soon as they enter the UK.

Accommodation and meals are paid for, as well as the provision of other additional essential items for those in bridging hotels, such as nappies, baby food/milk and toiletries including women's sanitary products.

As for those who were placed in local authority accommodation before claiming Universal Credit, the local authorities will provide financial support, including weekly cash support up until the first Universal Credit payment.

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

Tulip Siddiq: [\[75075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending the Covid Local Support Grant scheme.

David Rutley:

The Covid Winter Grant and the Covid Local Support Grant provided Local Authorities in England with total funding of £429m to September 2021, to help them to support the most vulnerable households in their areas with the costs of household essentials during the COVID-19 pandemic. These schemes have now ended.

However, we recognise that some people may require extra support over the winter as we enter the final stages of recovery, which is why vulnerable households across the country will now be able to access a new £500 million support fund to help them with essentials. The Household Support Fund will provide £421 million to help vulnerable people in England. The Barnett Formula will apply in the usual way, with the devolved administrations receiving almost £80 million (£41m for the Scottish Government, £25m for the Welsh Government and £14m for the NI Executive), for a total of £500 million.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Feryal Clark: [\[75159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of legacy benefits for people with severe disabilities.

Chloe Smith:

I refer the honourable member to the answer to PQ UIN [68410](#).

■ War Pensions

David Linden: [\[75981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking along with the Ministry of Defence to improve the (a) application process for and (b) time taken to determine war pensions.

David Rutley:

DWP has no responsibility for the administration of war pensions; this lies with the Ministry of Defence.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business Update

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng):
[\[HCWS408\]](#)

Innovation is central to tackling the largest challenges the world faces, from climate change to global pandemics. The UK must be in the vanguard of the response to these challenges. That is why the Government has placed innovation at the heart of our Plan for Growth including through our Innovation Strategy.

The UK has a long and illustrious history of world-leading innovation, from the industrial revolution to the vaccine development of the past year. Now we have left the EU, we can move even more quickly to respond to emerging challenges and global opportunities, and cement the UK's position as a world-leader in science, research and innovation. That is why the Government committed to public R&D spending reaching £22 billion in 2026/27. This represents the fastest ever sustained uplift in R&D funding, increasing R&D funding to £20 billion per annum by the end of the SR period – £5 billion more than 2021/22.

Following a successful extended pilot with businesses including those in clean growth tech, Innovate UK will deliver a new programme of £150 million in flexible, affordable and patient Innovation Loans over the next three years. Innovation loans will help SMEs to take their late-stage R&D, including in support of Net Zero, to commercial success so that they can grow and scale through innovation.

■ Energy Update

Minister of State (Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change) (Greg Hands):
[\[HCWS409\]](#)

I wish to update the House that today my Department has announced funding of £9.4 million for a first-of-a-kind new hydrogen project at the Whitelee onshore windfarm – the UK's largest - in Glasgow.

The project will look to produce hydrogen for storing energy and providing zero-carbon fuel as the country shifts to a clean energy future, and support Glasgow's ambition to become net zero by 2030.

Developed by ITM Power and BOC, in conjunction with ScottishPower's Hydrogen division, the state-of-the-art facility will be able to produce enough green hydrogen per day – 2.5 to 4 tonnes – that, once stored, could provide the equivalent of enough zero-carbon fuel for 225 buses travelling to and from Glasgow and Edinburgh each day. A 10MW electrolyser, to be developed and manufactured at ITM Power's Sheffield factory, will be co-located at the Whitelee windfarm. The electrolyser is expected to be the largest deployed to date.

This project is subject to planning permission, and final investment decisions from the organisations involved, expected by Summer 2022 with start of construction.

In addition, my Department is also supporting the development of hydrogen skills and standards for heating, with an additional £2.25 million in new government funding. This funding, under the Net Zero Innovation Portfolio, will see the British Standards Institution (BSI) develop technical standards, and a consortium comprising Energy and Utility Skills and the Institution of Gas Engineers and Managers, will establish new standards and training specifications to facilitate the training of hydrogen gas installers.

As part of the UK Government's plans to decarbonise the UK's power system by 2035, it is accelerating the transition to clean, renewable energy - however, the unpredictable nature of renewables like wind power means that energy can be produced when it is not needed by the grid. Hydrogen has the ability to store energy for long periods of time and in large quantities making it a vital part of the green energy future, as it provides the opportunity to convert excess renewable energy into a fuel for use across the economy. This means hydrogen storage will play key role in the shift towards a fully decarbonised energy system, which is crucial to the UK reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Net Zero Estate Playbook

Paymaster General (Michael Ellis):

[\[HCWS412\]](#)

My noble Friend, the Minister of State for Efficiency and Transformation (Lord Agnew Kt), has today made the following written statement:

I am pleased today to formally launch the new Net Zero Estate Playbook.

Decarbonising the public estate will play a pivotal role in our fight against climate change. With more than 300,000 individual properties, at a combined value of £515 billion, the UK public sector manages, by some distance, the largest property portfolio in the country.

Operating at this scale means that every decision we make and every improvement we implement has an impact. We must go beyond decarbonising our own estate, by leading from the front, setting an example, and bringing industry with us.

There is a very clear direction set out for Government property. We are steadily working towards creating a greener public estate. Since 2010, we have reduced carbon emissions by 50%, but there remains much more work to do.

We have made significant progress on encouraging collaboration and co-location between parts of the public sector. We are working to improve maintenance, insulation, and efficiency across the public estate. We are prioritising retrofitting existing buildings where we can, and adopting modern and sustainable methods of construction where we need new buildings.

This Net Zero Estate Playbook is about helping us go further, and faster. It's a guide, to support every Government organisation. It takes best practice from around the UK,

aligning with government policy and bringing the best advice into one place to inform and improve sustainability strategies and simplify the path to Net Zero.

It provides, for the first time, a methodical step-by-step guide to help government property professionals decarbonise their estate. A copy of the Net Zero Estate Playbook has been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: public records

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Elizabeth Truss): [\[HCWS410\]](#)

Today the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) will release files covering the events surrounding British Airways flight 149 (BA149) to the National Archives. BA149 landed at Kuwait City on 2 August 1990 as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was beginning. The passengers and crew from the flight were subsequently held hostage by Iraq and mistreated. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) provided consular and diplomatic support to those involved from the outset, but there have long been questions about how much the Government knew of the situation at the time.

We now know that Iraq was beginning a full invasion of Kuwait on the night of 1/2 August. The files being released today describe how things looked to those involved at the time.

On 1 August the British Embassy in Kuwait told the local British Airways office that while flights on 1 August should be safe, subsequent flights were inadvisable. BA149 took off from London at 18:04 GMT on 1 August, almost two hours later than scheduled because of technical problems. Its ultimate destination was Kuala Lumpur with a short stopover in Kuwait. At about 22:15 GMT, during its flight towards Kuwait, the captain spoke to the captain of another flight which had left Kuwait for London that evening. The pilot of that flight reported nothing unusual in Kuwait and no reason for BA149 to depart from its planned route.

The files show that the British Ambassador in Kuwait informed the Resident Clerk (the officer on overnight duty to deal with emergencies) at the FCO in London about reports of an Iraqi incursion into Kuwait around 00:00 GMT on 2 August 1990, while the British Airways flight was en route. The information was passed by the Resident Clerk to the Head of the FCO's Middle East Department and also to No.10, the Ministry of Defence, Cabinet Office and the Secret Intelligence Service, but not to British Airways.

BA149 landed at Kuwait City at 01:13 GMT. Around 45 minutes later Kuwait City airport was closed and BA149 was unable to leave. Its passengers and crew were subsequently held hostage by the Iraqis, with the last hostages released in December 1990.

The Government has always condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the suffering that followed and the mistreatment of those aboard BA149. The responsibility for these events and the mistreatment of those passengers and crew lies entirely with the Government of Iraq at the time.

The files show that in the call to the Resident Clerk, the British ambassador in Kuwait was unclear whether the Iraqi move across the border was a limited or larger incursion. At that point, the evidence in the files suggests that it was not possible to say with certainty what was happening. Similarly, the Resident Clerk in the FCO would have had no knowledge of the timing of flights into Kuwait. At the time there appeared to have been no formal arrangements by which information about such events could be passed from the FCO to airlines or the Department of Transport. A procedure to deal with situations like this now exists involving Government and the airline industry.

There was also speculation at the time and since that the flight was used to carry members of UK Special Forces. The files are consistent with the then Minister for Europe's statement in April 2007 that 'the Government at the time did not attempt in any way to exploit the flight by any means whatever' (Hansard 2007, vol. 459, col.1217).

The call made by HMA Kuwait has never been publicly disclosed or acknowledged until today. These files show that the existence of the call was not revealed to Parliament and the public. This failure was unacceptable. As the current Secretary of State, I apologise to the House for this, and I express my deepest sympathy to those who were detained and mistreated.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ NHS Update

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Sajid Javid):

[\[HCWS414\]](#)

Yesterday we announced to the House of Commons our intention to centralise NHS workforce and technology to prioritise better care for patients. Health Education England (HEE), NHS Digital (NHSD) and NHSX will become part of NHS England and Improvement (NHSE/I), putting workforce and technology at the heart of long-term planning. The plans will aim to see more patients benefit from the best possible care, with the right staff in place to meet patients' needs.

Subject to parliamentary passage of the requisite powers within the Health and Care Bill, these changes will help ensure that service, workforce and finance planning are integrated in one place at a national and local level. It will simplify the national system for leading the NHS, ensuring a common purpose and strategic direction.

I have accepted the recommendations of Laura Wade-Gery, Non-Executive Director at NHS England and Chair of NHSD, including to merge NHSX and NHS Digital into NHSE/I. A copy of the summary report is being placed in the library of the House.

The recommendations build on the huge progress made on digital transformation during the pandemic and will improve co-operation between the key digital bodies of the NHS by bringing them under one roof for the first time.

NHSX has more than fulfilled the mandate it was given when it was set up, putting digital transformation right at the centre of the NHS's future vision and driving effective delivery of key programmes such as the Covid Pass. NHS Digital has kept the NHS's live services

going, producing the Shielded Patients List, and run the technology that supported our vaccine deployment.

I would like to offer reassurance that in this new configuration the responsibilities for digitisation of the social care sector, and for ensuring the very highest standards of information governance and data privacy, will be retained.

Merging HEE with NHSE/I will put long-term planning and strategy for healthcare staff recruitment and retention at the forefront of the national NHS agenda. Combining HEE's strengths with those of NHSE/I will help ensure that:

- service, workforce and finance planning are properly integrated in one place, together with the work of the NHS People Plan, at national and local levels;
- the changes to education and training that we need – to enable employers to recruit the health professionals they need to provide the right care to patients in future – are driven further and faster;
- the record investment the Government is making in the NHS delivers for both front line NHS organisations and patients through one national organisation, making it easier to ensure a single national strategy for the service; and
- there is a simplified national system for leading the NHS, providing a single line of accountability for the whole of NHS performance.

This reform will build on the progress HEE has made and the vital role it has played during the pandemic, with record numbers of doctors and nurses currently working in the NHS.

I would like to pay tribute to colleagues at HEE, NHS Digital, and NHSX for the progress they have made, which we will continue to drive forward.

HOME OFFICE

■ Immigration provisions

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel):

[\[HCWS411\]](#)

I am today announcing the opening of Derwentside immigration removal centre for women in County Durham. Detention plays a limited, but crucial role in maintaining effective immigration control and securing our borders. It is right that those with no right to remain in the UK are removed if they do not leave voluntarily.

This new, smaller immigration removal centre will replace Yarl's Wood as the only dedicated immigration removal centre for women. In order to maintain operational flexibility, we will continue to maintain some limited detention capacity for women at Colnbrook, Dungavel and Yarl's Wood. These changes will significantly reduce the overall immigration detention capacity for women.

Derwentside will be operated in line with the statutory framework established by the Immigration Act 1971 and the Detention Centre Rules 2001. The centre will provide safe,

secure and fit for purpose accommodation for up to 84 women, with a full range of recreational and healthcare facilities tailored to women.

We are committed to ensuring the proper protection and treatment of vulnerable people in detention. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of women is at the forefront of the new facility, and builds on the learning and experience of Yarl's Wood. The new contract to operate the centre takes into account Stephen Shaw's reviews of vulnerability in detention, with increased staffing levels and major improvements in the frequency, diversity and accessibility of educational and recreational activities.

TRANSPORT

■ Draft Legislation: The Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (No. 5) Regulations 2021

Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):

[\[HCWS413\]](#)

A statutory instrument was laid on 16 September 2021 titled the Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2021 (the "No. 2 Regulations") and was due to come into force on 15 November 2021. The substantive legislative changes proposed in the No. 2 Regulations would have removed the need for a person to pass the 'B+E' car and trailer test before they could pull a heavy trailer behind their car. This would have meant people with licences awarded after 1997 also no longer needed to pass a separate test to tow a heavy trailer.

This statutory instrument was not approved in time for the No. 2 Regulations to come into force on 15 November 2021. Since such affirmative statutory instruments cannot be amended once laid in draft, we have taken action to lay the regulations afresh as the draft Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (No. 5) Regulations 2021 (the "No. 5 Regulations").

To make rapid progress on this, we are seeking to make use of the urgency procedure under paragraph 14(6) of Schedule 8 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. I am of the opinion that, by reason of urgency, the requirements for this affirmative statutory instrument (by virtue of paragraph 13(1) of Schedule 8 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018) to be made after being published in draft for 28 days, together with a scrutiny statement, should not apply.

Forgoing the 28-day publication period will allow earlier laying of the No. 5 Regulations than would have otherwise been possible and strengthen the steps we have already taken to increase HGV testing capacity and ease supply chain issues as quickly as possible. Arrangements will be in place to ensure that the changes made by the No. 5 Regulations are operationally effective as soon as they come into force.