



Daily Report

Monday, 29 November 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 29 November 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:31 P.M., 29 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

■ Attorney General: Meetings

Owen Thompson: [76744]

To ask the Attorney General, what her Department's process is for (a) recording and (b) keeping minutes of all meetings relating to Government business.

Alex Chalk:

Formal, structured meetings are usually minuted, however, not all meetings need to be minuted.

The Cabinet Office expects that the general guidance that departments give to their staff will help officials make judgements as to what meetings need to be minuted, noting their Civil Service Code obligation to 'keep accurate official records.' The retention policy of the Attorney General's Office is that records of all diaries, calendars, gifts/hospitality, Invitations, outgoing correspondence and information on visits and speeches will be held for 5 years.

Specific procedures are in place for external meetings involving ministers. These are publicly available and can be found in the [Guidance on the management of Private Office Papers](#).

■ Attorney General: Staff

Robert Largan: [78537]

To ask the Attorney General, how many civil servants employed by her Department were based in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions on (a) 1 March 2021, (b) 1 June 2021 and (c) 1 September 2021.

Robert Largan: [80512]

To ask the Attorney General, how many senior civil servants employed by her Department were based in each of the 12 NUTS1 regions of the UK on (a) 1 March 2019, (b) 1 March 2020, (c) 1 March 2021 and (d) 1 September 2021.

Alex Chalk:

All Attorney General's Office employees are employed in one NUTS1 region, which is London (Inner London – West, Westminster).

The number of civil servants employed by the department in this region and on those specified dates are as follows:

(a) 1 March 2021 – 50 staff

(b) 1 June 2021 – 50 staff

(c) 1 September 2021 – 46 staff

The number of senior civil servants employed by the department in this region and on those specified dates are as follows:

- (a) 1 March 2019 – 6 staff
- (b) 1 March 2020 – 6 staff
- (c) 1 March 2021 – 6 staff
- (d) 1 September 2021 – 5 staff.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Clarks: Strikes**

Seema Malhotra:

[78412]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the effectiveness of the mediations between Clarks and its employees.

Paul Scully:

When employment disputes arise, the Government wants to ensure that employers and employees can resolve these quickly and efficiently. It is always better to resolve disputes through dialogue wherever possible. Acas provides collective conciliation and mediation services. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not assessed the effectiveness of the mediations between Clarks and its employees, and the Government will not get involved whilst mediation talks are progressing with Acas.

■ **Climate Change**

Mr William Wragg:

[77468]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what parameters his Department are monitoring to determine the rate of climate change.

Greg Hands:

The HadCRUT5[1] global temperature series, produced by the Met Office, University of East Anglia and UK National Centre for Atmospheric Science, is the primary data set BEIS uses to assess the rate of climate change.

[1] <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/hadobs/hadcrut5/>

■ **Components: Small Businesses**

Steve McCabe:

[79270]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of worldwide component shortages on small businesses in the UK.

Lee Rowley:

The Department is working closely with businesses and key industry groups, including those representing SMEs, to understand the key supply chain risks and shortages that they are facing. Due to the potential commercial sensitivity of this type of information we do not routinely make this information public.

■ Conditions of Employment: Ethnic Groups**Catherine West:**[\[81087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that labour rights are respected for employees from BAME communities.

Paul Scully:

The Equality and Human Rights Commission enforces the Equality Act 2010, including in cases of race discrimination in the workplace.

On 22 November, the EHRC launched a new fund to tackle race discrimination and help victims seek justice. The Race Legal Support Fund is open for a minimum of two years, with up to £250,000 allocated this year to tackling race discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, and more available in future years. From December 2021, legal practitioners will be able to apply for funding to seek advice and help to resolve complaints of race discrimination, up to and including legal proceedings where appropriate.

Employees from BAME communities have the same routes to advice and redress as other employees. Acas provides free advice to workers and employers to enable them to understand their rights and responsibilities. Where disputes cannot be resolved earlier on, the Employment Tribunal system would be the primary enforcement method for most employment rights. There are only a few exceptions where the state enforces employment rights, such as ensuring employers pay the National Minimum Wage.

■ Energy Performance Certificates**Richard Fuller:**[\[75860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to take steps to alter the Grade E Energy Performance Certificate minimum requirement to Grade C under the provisions of the Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) Regulations; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of supporting landlords to improve the energy efficiency of their tenant's home in an economically effective way.

Greg Hands:

The Government remains committed to the aspiration, set out in the Clean Growth Strategy, that as many homes as possible are improved to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band C by 2035, and as many private rental homes as possible by 2030 where practical, affordable and cost effective. The Government recently

consulted on improving the energy performance in private rented homes to EPC Band C by 2028 and will publish a response in due course.

The Government recognises that financial support may be needed, in particular where poorer performing homes are occupied by lower income and fuel poor tenants. Therefore the Government has a number of schemes available including the Sustainable Warmth project, which comprises a third phase of the Local Authority Delivery scheme, as well as the first phase of the Home Upgrade Grant, which can be used for low-income households both on and off the gas grid. In summer this year, the Government consulted on the next iteration of the Energy Company Obligation scheme, ECO4, which will run from 2022-26 and will be worth £1 billion per year. The Government continues to support low-income households in private rented sector properties, subject to householder eligibility requirements.

■ **Fireworks: Regulation**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[80414]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to restrict firework usage to organised displays only.

Paul Scully:

There is a comprehensive regulatory framework already in place for fireworks that controls who can purchase them, their availability and use, curfews, and their safety as a product.

We agree with the conclusion of the Petition Committee's 2019 inquiry into fireworks, that any further restrictions on fireworks sold to the public could lead to more individuals buying products inappropriately, through online social media sources or from outside the UK. This could drive individuals to source fireworks from illegitimate or unsafe suppliers, where products may not meet the UK's safety requirements.

As part of the Government's programme of action, we have commissioned research and continue to use evidence to inform our work. This has included developing and publishing an evidence base on fireworks and undertaking engagement with a wide range of organisations on the key issues raised.

We also commissioned research by Ipsos Mori that provided evidence on consumer attitudes towards and behaviours around using fireworks in the UK. The key findings have informed our annual public awareness campaigns and support the need to educate consumers on fireworks use.

■ **Flexible Working**

Gill Furniss:

[81092]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of strengthening employees' rights to flexible working from the start of employment.

Paul Scully:

The Government is currently consulting on measures that would increase the availability and support the uptake of flexible working arrangements, including whether to extend the right to request flexible working to employees from their first day of employment. The consultation closes on 1 December 2021 and the Government will issue its response in due course.

Green Homes Grant Scheme: Boilers**Judith Cummins:**[\[73885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many applications were submitted to the Green Homes Grant scheme for new biomass boilers.

Greg Hands:

The official statistics published to date do not include a breakdown of all voucher applications by type of measure but focus on those that are active within the system for work to be completed.

As of 7 October 2021, there were eight live voucher applications for biomass boilers – these are vouchers that were not rejected or withdrawn following the initial application.

Heat Batteries: Carbon Emissions**Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[76541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of heat batteries for the decarbonisation of off grid homes in the UK.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: The Government is currently consulting on phasing out the installation of fossil fuel heating in homes off the gas grid in England from 2026. In this consultation, the Government proposes to adopt a 'heat pump first' approach to heat decarbonisation in off-grid properties based on extensive assessment of the cost effectiveness of heat pumps relative to other low-carbon heating technologies. The Government is also seeking views on the role of alternative low-carbon heating technologies, such as heat batteries.

Research published by the Department (www.gov.uk/government/publications/cost-optimal-domestic-electrification-code) suggests that alternative electric heating technologies could have a role to play in decarbonising buildings, but can lead to higher lifetime costs relative to heat pumps. The Government acknowledges the wider benefits that heat batteries provide in terms of their ability to support a smart and flexible energy system, therefore the Government is exploring this potential further.

■ Heat Pumps

Mr David Jones:

[80240]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he plans to take to encourage the installation of heat pumps by owners of off-gas grid homes.

Greg Hands:

The Government has been acting to support those wishing to install heat pumps, including in homes off the gas grid, through schemes such as the Renewable Heat Incentive and the forthcoming Boiler Upgrade Scheme.

The Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive is scheduled to close in 2022. It will then be replaced by the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, which will provide upfront capital grants for the installation of low carbon heating systems in homes and small non-domestic buildings. The Boiler Upgrade Scheme will provide grants of £5,000 towards the installation and capital costs of air source heat pumps and biomass boilers, and grants of £6,000 for ground source heat pumps in England.

In addition to this, the recent Heat and Buildings Strategy has outlined a comprehensive policy framework that will support heat pump deployment growth towards the Government's ambition of 600,000 installations a year by 2028.

■ Help to Grow Scheme

Seema Malhotra:

[78410]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 20 October 2021 to Question 56300, on Help to Grow Scheme, what plans the Government has to increase participation in the Help to Grow Management scheme; and what assessment his Department has made of the likelihood of that scheme's participation target being achieved.

Paul Scully:

We are working to increase SME participation in the Help to Grow: Management programme through:

- A national communications and marketing campaign to raise awareness of the programme to relevant SMEs.
- Working closely with key stakeholders (such as the Banks, Trade Associations and Business Representative Organisations) to promote to SMEs in their networks and drive them to participate in the programme.
- Optimising the customer journey to ensure SMEs that are interested go onto to sign up for a course.

Help to Grow: Management aims to support up to 30,000 small and medium-sized (SME) businesses leaders over the lifetime of the programme. We ensure we are effectively using all our levers to reach this target and keep our progress towards achieving this under regular review.

■ Housing: Carbon Emissions

Elliot Colburn: [\[77503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that consumers are protected from scams and rogue traders as they make the changes to their homes necessary for the transition to net zero.

Elliot Colburn: [\[77504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the net zero strategy includes sound protections for consumers.

Greg Hands:

The Government remains committed to ensuring that installations meet high standards and provide appropriate consumer protection. The Government strengthened consumer rights through the Consumer Rights Act 2015 (CRA), including home installations of green efficiency products.

The Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs) protects consumers, from mis-selling of goods and services and prohibits unfair commercial practices by businesses against consumers. Consumers can seek free advice on their rights through the Citizens Advice Consumer Service.

The PAS 2030 and 2035 standards were developed by an industry-led steering group in response to the recommendations of the independent 2016 Each Home Counts review. These standards indicate an industry-led approach to ensuring quality in the retrofit of people's homes and were designed to improve both quality and consumer protection.

Contractors delivering energy efficiency or whole house retrofit works within Government schemes must be TrustMark registered, and heat pump installers must be certified by the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) or equivalent. Both schemes take steps to ensure that installers demonstrate technical competence, good trading practices and good customer service. These requirements are being kept under review and further consumer protection measures will be considered if necessary.

■ Immigration: Conditions of Employment

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[80936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure labour rights are enforced for all workers regardless of immigration status.

Paul Scully:

All workers who are legally working in the UK enjoy the full protection of UK employment law. Migrant workers are also entitled to the same protections under health and safety legislation as any other worker.

While most employment rights are enforced by an individual through an employment tribunal, the state has an important role to play in protecting the most vulnerable workers from exploitative practices.

We spend over £35million a year on enforcement covering:

- National Minimum and Living Wages – enforced by HMRC;
- Employment agencies and employment businesses - enforced by the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate (EAS);
- Labour exploitation and modern slavery, and the gangmasters licensing scheme for suppliers of labour in agriculture and fresh fruit supply chains - Gangmaster and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA).

The Government has also now committed to establish a single enforcement body for employment rights, which will bring together the three existing bodies to better protect vulnerable workers and create a level playing-field for the majority of employers complying with the law.

■ **Liquefied Natural Gas: Mozambique**

Claudia Webbe:

[\[78511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on the (a) UK's support for Liquid Natural Gas in Mozambique and (b) the compatibility of that support with the UK's climate commitments under the Paris and Glasgow COP Agreements.

Greg Hands:

My Rt. Hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Foreign Secretary have not discussed any UK support for Liquid Natural Gas in Mozambique.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[78512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to end UK Government support for Liquid Natural Gas in Mozambique in the context of the UK's climate commitments under the Paris and Glasgow COP Agreements.

Greg Hands:

The UK Government no longer provides any new direct financial or promotional support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas, other than in limited circumstances.

■ **Migrant Workers: STEM Subjects**

Helen Hayes:

[\[81083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, in the context of no eligible prize holders having applied for the Home Office's fast-track Global Talent visa in the first six months of that scheme, what steps he is taking to help ensure that the UK attracts talented scientists at all stages of their careers.

Helen Hayes:

[\[81084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, in the context of no eligible prize holders having applied for the Home Office's fast-track Global Talent visa in the first six months of that scheme, what steps he is taking to help ensure that the UK attracts talented academics and researchers at all stages of their careers.

George Freeman:

The prize route is just one option under our Global Talent route, through which Home Office have received thousands of applications since its launch in February 2020, and this number continues to rise.

The Government is committed to making the UK the most exciting destination in the world for scientists, researchers, and innovators. The Government will continue to improve our approach to attracting global talent to the UK through the Office for Talent, and by reviewing our talent offer to make sure that our programmes are among the best and most attractive in the world.

The Government continues to work closely with the science and research sector to ensure the UK immigration system is closely aligned to the sector's needs.

■ Natural Gas: Prices

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[77414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he was first made aware of the concerns about the pricing of wholesale gas.

Greg Hands:

BEIS and Ofgem monitor a range of wholesale market metrics and frequently engage with both domestic and international stakeholders to share market information.

■ Oil: Shetland

Claudia Webbe:

[\[78513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to end Government support for the new Cambo oil field in the context of the UK's climate commitments under the Paris and Glasgow COP Agreements.

Greg Hands:

The Government's domestic offshore oil and gas sector remains important to the UK and continues to keep the country warm, fuel the economy and strengthen security of supply. While the government is working to drive down demand for fossil fuels, this will be a gradual transition. There will continue to be ongoing demand for oil and gas over the coming years, as recognised by the independent Climate Change Committee, with the UK expected to remain net importers of oil and gas as domestic demand continues to outstrip domestic production.

Development proposals for fields with existing licences, such as Cambo, are subjected to extensive scrutiny by the Oil and Gas Authority, and the Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning. This includes an

environmental impact assessment, a public consultation, and careful examination from the Oil and Gas Authority under its revised strategy – effectively a net zero test – before development consent can be issued.

The Government has not provided any financial support for the Cambo field.

■ **Oil: Surrey**

Claudia Webbe: [\[78516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to end Government support for Oil Drilling in Horse Hill, Surrey in the context of the UK's climate commitments under the Paris and Glasgow COP Agreements.

Greg Hands:

As the case remains before the Courts following the recent hearing, it would not be appropriate to comment.

■ **Paternity Leave and Paternity Pay**

Charlotte Nichols: [\[78506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to increase the amount of (a) pay and (b) leave granted of paternity leave.

Paul Scully:

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

■ **Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry**

Gareth Thomas: [\[77369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when Post Office Horizon IT inquiry 2020 plans to interview the former Managing Director of the Post office; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

The Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry is independent of the Department. The Inquiry's forward engagement plans are for Sir Wyn Williams FLSW to decide as Chair of the Inquiry.

■ **Postal Services: Greater London**

Helen Hayes: [\[78468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of Royal Mail services in south London; and what steps he is taking to ensure that Royal Mail improves services disrupted by the covid-19 pandemic.

Paul Scully:

Royal Mail is a fully private business. The Government has no role in its operational or commercial decisions.

The Government sets the minimum requirements and service standards for the UK postal service in the Postal Services Act 2011 which designates the Office of Communications (Ofcom) as the independent regulator for the sector with the responsibility and powers to regulate postal services.

Ofcom has a duty to ensure the provision of a financially sustainable and efficient universal postal service. It monitors Royal Mail's provision of the universal service and has powers to investigate and take enforcement action if Royal Mail fails to achieve its performance targets, taking account of all relevant factors.

Ofcom's statement declaring the Covid-19 pandemic an emergency regulatory period under the Postal Services Act 2011, and therefore removing the regulatory conditions placed on Royal Mail, ended on 31 August 2021. Ofcom has stated that it continues to take a pragmatic and proportionate approach to compliance monitoring taking account of any relevant matters beyond Royal Mail's control that impact on its performance, including any continuing impacts of the pandemic.

■ Postal Services: Standards**Helen Hayes:**[\[78469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he is holding with the CEO of Royal Mail regarding current service standards for the delivery of letters, in the context of Royal Mail's announcement of a £400 million payout to shareholders.

Paul Scully:

The Department has regular discussions with Royal Mail on a range of issues although, as a fully private business, its operational and commercial decisions are a matter for the company's management.

Ofcom has a duty to ensure the provision of a financially sustainable and efficient universal postal service. It monitors Royal Mail's provision of the universal service and has powers to investigate and take enforcement action if Royal Mail fails to achieve its performance targets as appropriate, taking account of all relevant factors.

■ Royal Mail: Finance**Helen Hayes:**[\[78470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what comparative assessment he has made of the level of Royal Mail's (a) recent investment in mail delivery services and (b) £400m payout to shareholders.

Helen Hayes:[\[78471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of returning postal services into public ownership to

ensure profits are reinvested into the service, in the context of Royal Mail's announcement of a £400m payout to shareholders.

Paul Scully:

The Government has no plans to renationalise Royal Mail. Operational and commercial decisions are a matter for the company's management.

One of the primary reasons for the sale was to enable Royal Mail to access the capital it needed to invest in and grow the business.

Royal Mail has invested £2 billion in the firm since privatisation, with a further £1.8 billion investment in the UK's postal service announced in 2019 to transform and grow the UK business.

■ **Woodhouse Colliery**

Claudia Webbe:

[78515]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to end Government support for Whitehaven Coal Mine in the context of the UK's climate commitments under the Paris and Glasgow COP Agreements.

Greg Hands:

The Government has not provided any financial support for the proposed Whitehaven Coal Mine.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Cabinet Office: Staff**

Angela Rayner:

[78421]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many civil servants in his Department work on cross-government procurement, broken down by unit.

Michael Ellis:

The Government Commercial Function (GCF) was formed in 2015 and incorporates civil servants working in commercial roles for Government Departments, colleagues in the NHS and the wider public sector. Further information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-commercial-function/about>.

Robert Largin:

[78519]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many civil servants employed by his Department were based in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions on (a) 1 March 2021, (b) 1 June 2021 and (c) 1 September 2021.

Robert Largin:

[78538]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many senior civil servants employed by his Department were based in each of the 12

NUTS1 UK regions on (a) 1 March 2019, (b) 1 March 2020, (c) 1 March 2021 and (d) 1 September 2021.

Michael Ellis:

The table below provides headcount figures for the total number of Civil Servants, with detail of how many Senior Civil Servants, employed by the Cabinet Office in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions on the dates requested.

REGION	CIVIL SERVANTS AT 31 MAR 2021	CIVIL SERVANTS AT 30 JUN 2021	CIVIL SERVANTS AT 30 SEPT 2021	SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS AT 1 MAR 2019	SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS AT 1 MAR 2020	SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS AT 1 MAR 2021	SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS AT 30 SEP 2021
East Midlands	20	30	30	0	[c]	[c]	[c]
East of England	120	120	110	[c]	[c]	[c]	10
London	6,500	6,580	6,510	470	700	624	640
North East	420	430	420	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]
North West	450	460	500	0	0	13	20
South East	220	220	210	0	0	[c]	10
South West	190	190	200	[c]	[c]	18	20
West Midlands	50	60	80	0	0	12	10
Yorkshire and The Humber	740	710	700	[c]	[c]	14	10
Northern Ireland	10	10	10	0	0	0	0
Scotland	80	80	110	0	0	0	[c]

Wales	70	70	50	0	0	[c]	[c]
Overseas	[c]	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	600	520	710	[c]	0	18	20
Total	9460	9470	9630	480	710	710	740

Notes:

- numbers shown are rounded to the nearest 10.

- [c] = confidential and suppressed due to small numbers of between 1 and 4 in the cell.

■ Cabinet Office: Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform

Theresa Villiers:

[\[80233\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent progress he has made on implementing the recommendations of the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform relevant to his Department.

Michael Ellis:

On 16 September, Lord Frost announced how the government intends to implement recommendations of the Taskforce. This includes: concluding the consultation on developing a new regulatory framework, setting out bold strategies and proposals in the areas of data reform, gene editing, medical devices and Artificial Intelligence.

Across Government, departments are continuing to implement the recommendations, including bringing forward legislation when parliamentary time allows. The Brexit Opportunities Unit in the Cabinet Office is driving this work forward across government.

■ Committee on Standards in Public Life

Angela Rayner:

[\[79398\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether it is his policy to implement any of the recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life Standards Matter 2 review, contained in the report Upholding Standards in Public Life, published in November 2021.

Michael Ellis:

I refer the Honourable member to [PQ58953](#).

The Government notes the work of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs and Treasury Committees, as well as the Standards Matter 2 report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life. Once all these reports have been published, we will consider their work alongside Mr Boardman's recommendations and set out a substantive Government policy statement to Parliament in due course.

■ Cybercrime: Public Appointments

Conor McGinn: [\[81044\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the (a) status and (b) composition is of the Ministerial Cyber Steering Group.

Conor McGinn: [\[81045\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many times and on what dates the Ministerial Cyber Steering Group has met since its inception.

Michael Ellis:

Following the Cabinet reshuffle on 15 September 2021 and subsequent updates to the Cabinet Committee structure, the government's cyber priorities are now overseen by the relevant Cabinet Committees. The Prime Minister has asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to be lead minister for cyber. In line with previous answers, information relating to the proceedings of Cabinet Committees, including when and how often they meet, is generally not disclosed. To do so could harm the frankness and candour of internal discussion.

■ Good Law Project: Legal Costs

Angela Rayner: [\[79393\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what legal costs his Department incurred in the case of The Good Law Project versus Minister of State for the Cabinet Office, which concluded on 9 June 2021.

Michael Ellis:

I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to [PQ13960](#) on 10 June 2021 and [PQ24328](#) on 29 June 2021.

Our estimate of £500,000 - £600,000 for defending the case to June 2021 remains accurate.

The case is being appealed and further costs have not yet been determined.

■ Press Conferences: Sign Language

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[81097\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the benefits of offering all press conferences in British Sign Language.

Michael Ellis:

The Government provides a BSL Interpreter for COVID press conferences and COVID data briefings on its social media channels to make essential public health information widely accessible. The Cabinet Office is also examining how we could extend similar provision for all public broadcasts (including non-COVID broadcasts) from No9 Downing Street.

Public Sector: Staff**Bridget Phillipson:**[\[79353\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has issued any guidance, internally or to other Departments on the risks or benefits of contracting companies to provide payroll finance solutions to staff delivering public services, in the last 10 years.

Michael Ellis:

A joint communication from the Chief People Officer, Director General of Public Spending (HMT) and Government Chief Commercial Officer was issued in December 2020. This communication related to early payroll schemes, advising departments to ensure they were making full use of all options already available, including salary advances and loan schemes before considering proposals from third party finance providers. It further reminded departments that if they did want to introduce a new type of finance arrangement, they were required to seek internal sign off from their departmental Accounting Officer before approaching HM Treasury for final approval.

DEFENCE**Arctic: Climate Change****John Healey:**[\[80909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions has he had with counterparts in (a) NATO and (b) the Arctic Council in the last 12 months on the security implications of climate change on the Arctic region.

James Heappey:

The UK agrees with NATO's aim to be the leading international organisation in understanding, mitigating against and adapting to the impacts of climate change on security. In 2021 the UK and NATO Allies negotiated and agreed a NATO Agenda on Climate Change and Security and accompanying Action Plan, which contain concrete actions to tackle the implications of climate change on Alliance security. The Defence Secretary discussed this further with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg during COP26. The UK also greatly values its role as a state observer to the Arctic Council. As the Arctic Council does not discuss matters of military security, the Defence Secretary has not engaged with the Council on the security implications of climate change on the Arctic region. The Defence Secretary routinely discusses a range of security matters with his counterparts in most of the Arctic States, including how we can work with Allies and partners to ensure the Arctic remains a region characterised by high cooperation and low tensions.

■ Arctic: Shipping

John Healey:

[\[80910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment has he made of the UK's icebreaker ship strength to protect UK interests in the Arctic.

James Heappey:

As the Defence Command paper made clear, the High North and maintaining security in the defence of the North Atlantic remains of great importance to the UK.

The Royal Navy has the capability to project force using a variety of assets in the High North and Arctic, dependent on the location, season and threat, including Littoral capabilities. It has one purpose-built Ice Patrol Ship (HMS Protector) and two ice strengthened survey vessels (HMS Echo and HMS Enterprise).

As announced in the 2021 Defence Command Paper, we will develop a new Multi-Role Ocean Surveillance capability to better understand the High North underwater environment, protect our underwater CNI and improve our ability to detect threats in the North Atlantic. The Defence Command Paper also announced major investments in a new generation of Anti-Submarine Warfare frigates and support shipping, enabling us to project UK forces into the High North and Arctic, and ensuring our freedom to operate in the North Atlantic.

The UK *Defence Contribution in the High North* will outline the range of capabilities the UK has and is developing to ensure we continue to be able to protect UK interests in this key region.

■ Capita Fire and Rescue: Vacancies

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[81019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of vacant positions there were at Capita Fire and Rescue as at 24 November 2021; and what comparative assessment he has made of how that vacancy rate compared with the level under his Department's Defence Fire and Rescue Service prior to the transfer of that contract.

Leo Docherty:

Capita Fire and Rescue (CFR) provides suitably qualified personnel to meet the operational requirements at designated MOD sites. The MOD closely monitors CFR's ability to maintain operational outputs, but current vacancy levels at Capita is a matter for the company.

■ Clyde Naval Base: Contracts

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[80325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which (a) company or (b) sub-contractors are providing workers to HMNB Clyde during the industrial action at that naval base; and which (a) official or (b) Minister in his Department was responsible for agreeing that contract.

Brendan O'Hara: [\[80326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what level of security clearance the resilience workers have that are working at HMNB Clyde during the industrial action; and whether that security clearance is at the level required at that naval base.

Brendan O'Hara: [\[80327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the compliance between duties of resilience staff at HMNB Clyde with (a) the Working Time Directive and (b) other rest requirements set out in law.

Brendan O'Hara: [\[80328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether Capita has reduced the working hours of the staff across the civilian element of Capita Fire and Rescue; and what the total average weekly hours worked by operational staff (a) is as at 23 November 2011 and (b) was prior to transfer.

Brendan O'Hara: [\[80329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether all stations included in his Department's contract with Capita received (a) new firefighting vehicles, (b) PPE, (c) training facilities and (d) any other contractual delivery requirements prior to the reduction of staff at certain Capita stations.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) closely monitors Capita's delivery against its contractual obligations through a rigorous performance management regime; any changes to crewing levels follow a rigorous assessment of the fire risks at the site, and must be approved by the MOD.

All resilience staff working at HMNB Clyde have the appropriate clearance, but any agreements between Capita Fire and Rescue (CFR) and its sub-contractors on equipment or terms and conditions of employment are a matter for the company. The MOD continues to monitor the situation closely and will take any measures we think are necessary, while also providing CFR and their employees the space to resolve differences.

■ Gurkhas: Pensions

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[80933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking in response to concerns raised by Gurkha pension campaigners.

Leo Docherty:

I can confirm that the Secretary of State, and I, met with a wide range of Gurkha representative groups and representatives from the Nepali Embassy, including the Nepali Ambassador, on 8th September. We agreed to start a Bilateral Committee to discuss all Gurkha Veteran Welfare issues. The Committee will be an opportunity to discuss Gurkha concerns across the board.

The government agreed to hold a consultation on the implementation of the Indian 7th Central Pay Commission and we will publish our response to this consultation in due course.

It remains this government's view that the pension schemes offered to Gurkha veterans in the past were very fair schemes.

■ Ministry of Defence: Amazon

Jamie Stone: [\[78490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what risk assessment was undertaken before awarding the cloud contract for GCHQ, MI5 and MI6 to Amazon.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: These are not contracts awarded by the Ministry of Defence and I refer the Hon. Gentleman to the relevant Departments.

■ Ministry of Defence: Annual Reports

John Healey: [\[79282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to publish his Department's annual report and accounts for 2020-21.

Jeremy Quin:

The Annual Report and Accounts for 2020-21 are currently being staffed for final approval within the Department and will be published as soon as this activity has completed.

■ Sub-saharan Africa: Climate Change

John Healey: [\[80911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential security implications of climate change on the sub-Saharan region of Africa.

James Heappey:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 3 November 2021 to Question 64538.

Attachments:

1. Sahel: Climate Change and Terrorism [UIN 64538.docx]

■ Trident Submarines: Repairs and Maintenance

John Healey: [\[80908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the forecast total cost is of the Vanguard class submarine Life Extension Programme.

Jeremy Quin:

As the Dreadnought Class submarine programme progresses, we continue to review life extension options to ensure the Vanguard Class submarines continue to operate

safely during the phased transition from the Vanguard Class to the Dreadnought Class. The associated costs will be linked to the operational programme, information on which is withheld as disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

■ **Unmanned Air Vehicles**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[80922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what date Watchkeeper received release to service certification.

Jeremy Quin:

The initial Release to Service (Issue 1) for WK was issued 28 February 2014. A further Release to Service date (Issue 2) was published on 1 April 2019.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[80923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the accumulative flying hours undertaken by Watchkeeper are since it entered service with the British Army.

Jeremy Quin:

As of 24 November 2021, Watchkeeper has flown 2778 hours and 46 mins in total since it received its release to service in 2014.

Chris Evans: [\[80975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of the Watchkeeper fleet are operational as of 24 November 2021.

Chris Evans: [\[80976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Watchkeeper's are in service as of 24 November 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

As at 1 April 2021, the Ministry of Defence had 46 Watchkeeper Aircraft in active fleet management, of which 11 were in service. The remainder are held in the sustainment fleet in storage or being used in test and evaluation.

I am withholding the number that are operational, as its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

Chris Evans: [\[80977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many flying hours have been undertaken by Watchkeeper in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021 as of 24 November 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

The number of flying hours undertaken for watchkeeper for 2019, 2020 and 2021 as of 24 November 2021 is shown in the below table.

CALENDAR YEAR (01 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER) TOTAL

2019	199 hours 20 mins
2020	406 hours 36 min
2021	432 hours 34 mins

■ Unmanned Air Vehicles: Exports**Chris Evans:**[\[80978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether any Watchkeeper WK450's have been exported since 2018.

Jeremy Quin:

No Watchkeeper WK450 UAVs have been exported since 2018.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Digital Technology: Disadvantaged****Chi Onwurah:**[\[78401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions her Department has had with local authorities in the North East on how to provide targeted support to disadvantaged and socially excluded groups who are most likely to experience digital exclusion.

Chris Philp:

The Government, industry and the third sector are working closely together to ensure the UK has the digital skills it requires for life and for work.

DCMS officials recently held a roundtable with local stakeholders in the North East to share insights on how to support access into the digital sector locally. We recently published a [report](#) using the findings from the roundtable, which provides suggestions on how to further help level up the North East's digital ecosystem.

To help support those with learning disabilities, the Digital Lifeline fund provides tablets, data and free digital support to over 5,000 people with learning disabilities who would otherwise find it difficult to get online. In the North East, 387 people received devices and data as part of the Digital Lifeline between February 2021 and October 2021.

DCMS has had initial discussions with the North East LEP who have expressed an interest in setting up a regional digital skills partnership. Such a partnership would bring together local cross-sector partners to design, develop and coordinate the delivery of digital skills programmes to upskill the current workforce, tackle digital exclusion and raise awareness of the importance of digital skills regionally.

Chi Onwurah:

[78402]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of digital exclusion on the ability of individuals to access (a) online training, (b) job searches and (c) virtual interviews.

Chris Philp:

The Government's 10 Tech Priorities include building a tech savvy nation where no-one is left behind by the digital revolution. For this reason, the government is working to ensure that everyone has digital access to further their training and improve employment prospects.

We recognise that it is not enough for people to just have good mobile and broadband coverage. They also need to have affordable access and have the devices and skills to be able to take part in the digital economy.

On devices, the government is tackling the digital divide for adults with learning disabilities through our £2.5m Digital Lifeline fund. Throughout the pandemic, this fund has provided tablets, data and free digital support to over 5,000 people with learning disabilities, enabling them to connect with friends and family, and access services and support groups, promoting overall well being. The Lifeline fund, now in the process of evaluation, also provided mentoring and sustained support for users to increase their digital skills and confidence.

The Government is making sure that training is available for all adults wishing to acquire digital skills. In order to guarantee opportunities to develop essential digital skills, the government introduced a new digital entitlement for adults with low digital skills to undertake improved basic skills qualifications free of charge. Essential Digital Skills qualifications (EDSQs), introduced alongside the digital entitlement at entry level and level 1, are a new qualification type based on employer-supported national standards for essential digital skills, which set out the digital skills people need to get on in life and work. (Level one qualifications are GCSE grades 3, 2, 1 or grades D, E, F, G).

Chi Onwurah:

[78404]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of the recommendation of the North East LEP report, entitled Digital Exclusion in the North East LEP Area, published in September 2021, to introduce short, practical courses and advice on digital skills delivered in informal, community-based settings.

Chris Philp:

The [Digital Exclusion in the North East LEP Area](#) report highlights priority actions for tackling the economic and skills impacts of digital exclusion. As mentioned in the report, digital inclusion is a complex issue. Addressing this challenge requires collaboration between the government, businesses and academia.

To gain and develop essential digital skills, the government introduced a new digital entitlement for adults with low digital skills to undertake improved basic skills qualifications free of charge.

The Government has introduced a range of opportunities to access digital skills training and gain digital skills qualifications, including through short courses. Digital bootcamps offer digital skills training in skills that are in particularly high demand from industry. The courses are free, flexible and last up to 16 weeks. At Budget it was announced that there would be further investment in skills bootcamps, with the aim to quadruple the number of places.

To embed digital skills into the higher education and further education curriculum and as part of the National Data Strategy skills commitments, the government has committed to test the most effective ways to teach foundational data skills to undergraduates in two ways – through offering modules including wider subjects such as AI, cyber and digital skills, and by integrating data skills in other subject areas. Universities will take part in the pilot on a voluntary basis.

■ **Gambling Act 2005 Review**

Justin Madders:

[\[81032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Review of the Gambling Act 2005 Terms of Reference and Call for Evidence, published in December 2020, what his timetable is for concluding that review following the call for evidence which closed on 31 March 2021.

Chris Philp:

Our Gambling Act Review call for evidence received c.16,000 submissions from a range of stakeholders and members of the public, which we are considering carefully. The Government will publish a white paper setting out and consulting on next steps in the coming months.

■ **Sports: Religious Discrimination**

Catherine West:

[\[81088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the prevalence of Islamophobia in organised sport.

Nigel Huddleston:

Recent reports of racism in cricket have highlighted that discrimination, including anti-Muslim hatred, is sadly too prevalent within sport. There can be no place for it. The Government expects sports bodies to take robust action to tackle discrimination whenever and wherever it occurs.

Earlier this year UK Sport, Sport England and the other UK sports councils published reports into racism and racial inequalities in sport, including a report capturing people's lived experiences of racism in sport. The sports councils have agreed some initial overarching commitments, and are working to develop their own action plans to further deliver on these commitments.

This is in addition to steps such as the forthcoming update of UK Sport and Sport England's Code for Sports Governance, which will place an increased focus on diversity in decision making and ensuring that sports organisations reflect the communities they serve. Sports receiving the most funding will be required to agree a diversity and inclusion action plan with Sport England and UK Sport, which will be published and updated annually.

Getting faith groups more involved in sport and activity is also a key part of Sport England's 10-year strategy "Uniting the Movement", published earlier this year. Through this strategy Sport England have committed to providing opportunities to people and communities that have traditionally been left behind and helping to remove the barriers to activity.

The Government, and our sports councils, are committed to making sure sport is inclusive for everyone. Where action taken by sports does not go far enough, the government is prepared to step in.

■ Television: Advertising

Chi Onwurah:

[\[80988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether there are restrictions on the (a) length or (b) nature of advertising ITV shows on ITV hub.

Julia Lopez:

There are currently no limits on the amount of advertising Ofcom regulated on-demand services (such as ITVHub) can show. However, there are restrictions on the type and content of advertising that appear on on-demand services. These are set out in Section 368F of the Communications Act. Ofcom has designated the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) to enforce the rules.

The advertising must adhere to the content and placement standards set out in the advertising codes, namely the UK Code of Non-broadcast Advertising (CAP Code). This code sets out the principles for advertisers that their marketing content should be legal, decent and honest.

EDUCATION

■ Access to Work Programme

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[78485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions his Department is having with the Department of Work and Pensions on the forthcoming trial of Access to Work adjustment passports for students leaving education; and what the planned (a) scale, (b) commencement date and (c) duration is of that pilot.

Alex Burghart:

The department is supporting the Department for Work and Pensions to develop an adjustments passport that aims to smooth the transition into employment and support

people changing jobs including people with special educational needs and disabilities. Twelve-month pilots of the adjustments passport are now underway in higher education and post-16 provider pilot sites. The adjustments passport will capture the in-work support needs of the individual and includes the aim to empower them in having confident discussions about adjustments with employers.

Having an adjustments passport is voluntary and the department will continue to monitor take up alongside communications as to how we might increase visibility and awareness to inform a future approach were the pilots to be successful. Following an evaluation, if the pilots prove successful, the adjustments passport will be made available to support all people with disabilities and health conditions providing a transferable record of adjustments and reduce the need for unnecessary assessments.

The government launched the SEND Review in September 2019, a cross government review being led by the department. The goal of the SEND Review is to substantially improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND, build parental confidence and bring financial sustainability to the system. The government plans to publish proposals for public consultation, in a Green Paper, in the first three months of 2022.

■ Children: Health

Chi Onwurah:

[78407]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a comprehensive national measurement of children's well-being in the UK.

Will Quince:

The wellbeing of children and young people is a priority for this government and is central to achieving the aims of the department. We have committed to publishing 'state of the nation: children and young people's wellbeing' reports annually to bring together publicly available data, including data collected regularly by the Office of National Statistics on wellbeing.

As part of 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 training for senior mental health leads in around a third of all state schools and colleges in financial 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.

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 includes an additional £1.6 billion for schools and high needs in financial year 2022-23, on top

of the funding we have previously announced. It also includes an additional £1 billion for a recovery premium over the next two academic years, 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Beyond this, the department is 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.

On 10 October 2020, the department published the second annual report which focused on children and young people's experience associated with wellbeing during the COVID-19 outbreak. The report is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2020-children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing>. The report has helped the government, children and young people's services, schools, parents, and anyone interested in children and young people's wellbeing to understand their experiences of the COVID-19 outbreak, the measures put in place to reduce the impact of the outbreak, and the broader effects on society. The third report is due to be published in February 2022.

The department continues to monitor the emerging evidence on the experiences of children and young people during the outbreak to ensure the support measures put in place by the government, including in the longer term, are informed by the most up-to-date evidence.

In particular, Public Health England is monitoring the impacts of the outbreak, including on children and young people, and is publishing regular surveillance reports. Their report about population mental health and wellbeing in England during the COVID-19 outbreak was last updated on 8 April 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-report>.

■ Cryptocurrencies: Education

Ms Lyn Brown:

[79308]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of teaching children about the risks of (a) cryptocurrency speculation and (b) scams involving cryptocurrencies in the context of the history of (i) scams involving novel financial products and (ii) financial bubbles.

Mr Robin Walker:

Education on financial matters helps to ensure that young people are prepared to manage their money well, make sound financial decisions and know where to seek further information when needed. Pupils receive financial education through the national curriculum for mathematics and citizenship which, for secondary school-aged pupils, includes compulsory content covering the functions and uses of money, financial products and services, and the need to understand financial risk.

As with other aspects of the curriculum, schools have flexibility over how they deliver the curriculum so they can develop an integrated approach that is sensitive to the needs and background of their pupils. The Money and Pensions Service published

financial education guidance for primary and secondary schools in England during Talk Money Week, 8-12 November 2021, an annual event that encourages people of all ages to talk about money: <https://maps.org.uk/2021/11/11/financial-education-guidance-for-primary-and-secondary-schools-in-england/>. This guidance was developed in consultation with financial education experts and is designed to support school leaders and education decision makers to enhance the financial education currently delivered in their schools. The guidance includes links to quality assured resources for schools, including specific content and activities on cryptocurrencies and the knowledge and skills to equip pupils to protect their personal data, critically evaluate online content and identify scams.

There are also other opportunities across the national curriculum to teach pupils about cryptocurrencies. For example, the computing curriculum teaches the knowledge and skills that empower children and teachers to make well-informed choices about technology: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-computing-programmes-of-study>. It covers the principles of e-safety at all key stages, with progression in the content to reflect the different and escalating risks that young people face.

The department will continue to work closely with the Money and Pensions Service and other stakeholders, such as Her Majesty's Treasury, to support the teaching of financial education to children and young people including novel financial products. The government takes fraud very seriously. We continue to work closely with the industry to close down the vulnerabilities that fraudsters exploit and ensure members of the public have the information they need to spot a scam and stand up to fraudsters.

■ Department for Education: Staff

Robert Largan:

[78522]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many civil servants employed by his Department were based in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions on (a) 1 March 2021, (b) 1 June 2021 and (c) 1 September 2021.

Michelle Donelan:

The number of civil servants employed by the department in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions as at 31 March 2021 is available in the document 'Statistical tables – Civil Service Statistics: 2021' at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2021>.

The number of civil servants employed by the department in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions as at 1 June 2021 and 1 September 2021 is available in attached table.

Attachments:

1. 78522_table [78522_department_for_education_employees_NUTS1_regions.xls]

■ Department for Education: UN Climate Conference 2021**Ruth Jones:****[80471]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to WPQ 75126, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2021 to Question 75126 on UN Climate Conference 2021: Government, how many Ministers in his Department travelled to COP26 by airplane.

Michelle Donelan:

Four ministers attended COP26 including myself, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, my hon. Friend, the Minister for Skills, and my hon. Friend, the Minister for the School System. Ministers took the train to COP26 in Glasgow. Any unavoidable carbon emissions from COP26 will be offset, including those associated with travel.

■ Digital Technology: Education**Chi Onwurah:****[78403]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress her Department has made on embedding digital skills within the (a) Further Education and (b) Higher Education curriculum.

Alex Burghart:

The department recognises the importance of digital skills at all levels and has introduced a range of provision to give people the opportunity to acquire the digital skills they need.

In 2020 we introduced a new digital entitlement that will enable adults with no or low digital skills to undertake new improved digital qualifications free of charge. These entitlements are based on new national standards, which set out the digital skills that people need in life and in work.

We have introduced skills bootcamps, which will provide flexible training for in-demand areas including software development, digital marketing, and data analytics, and a fast-track to an interview with a local employer. Our free courses for jobs offer supports eligible adults to access over 400 fully funded level 3 courses, including digital qualifications in areas such as cyber security, coding, network architecture, and systems support.

There are now 25 digital apprenticeships, from level 3 to degree apprenticeship, covering a range of roles including cyber security, software development and artificial intelligence (AI), providing the digital skills training in the workplace that individuals and employers need. Last year the first AI data specialist apprenticeship standard was approved for delivery at level 7. This highly skilled role champions AI, its applications and promotes the adoption of novel tools and technologies.

At levels 4 and 5, the first approved higher technical qualifications in digital occupations, such as cyber security technologist, will be ready for first teaching from September 2022.

For 16-19 year olds, digital T Levels offer a prestigious, high-quality technical option at level 3, supporting progression to occupations such as software development technician. It is not just occupations in the digital sector where good digital skills are needed, and relevant digital skills are built into every T Level qualification.

English higher education providers are autonomous institutions, which means that they have the freedom to determine the content of courses and the way their courses are taught, supervised, and assessed.

Last year, the former Secretary of State for Education, my right hon. Friend for South Staffordshire, formally commissioned Sir Michael Barber in his capacity as Chair of the Office for Students, to lead a review following the rapid shift toward digital teaching and learning in higher education since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak. The report, which was published on 25 February, builds on lessons learned through the COVID-19 outbreak and sets out recommendations to seize opportunities for the medium to long-term future. The report included a series of recommendations for higher education providers outlining what a successful approach to building digital skills looks like, with practical suggestions for action.

■ Mathematics: Education

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[79356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much and what proportion of the £560 million for the Multiply programme announced in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 he plans to disburse in (a) 2022-23, (b) 2023-24 and (c) 2024-25.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[79357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much and what proportion of the £560 million for the Multiply programme announced in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 he plans to disburse in each region of England in 2022-23.

Michelle Donelan:

All local areas in the UK will benefit from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) in order to deliver Multiply, a bespoke adult numeracy programme. Multiply will help people improve their basic numeracy skills through free digital training, flexible courses, and tutoring.

We estimate that up to 500,000 learners across the UK could gain a recognised qualification and/or improve their skills. The government will set out further details of the UKSPF later this year.

■ Post-18 Education and Funding Review

Damien Moore:

[\[80445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department plans to publish the full response to Sir Philip Augar's review of Post-18 Education and Funding.

Michelle Donelan:

Further to the interim conclusion to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding published in January 2021, we continue to carefully consider the recommendations made by the independent panel that reported to the Review. We plan to provide a full response in due course.

■ **Primary Education**

Mr Richard Holden: [\[79507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many primary schools with (a) fewer than 210, (b) 120 to 210, (c) 60 to 120, (d) fewer than 60 and (e) fewer than 30 pupils on roll there are, by (i) local authority area and (ii) parliamentary constituency in England.

Mr Richard Holden: [\[79508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many secondary schools with fewer than (a) 400 and (b) 200 pupils on roll there are, by (i) local authority area and (ii) parliamentary constituency in England.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department publishes annual school level figures on the number of pupils attending schools in England. The most recent figures, based on the January 2021 school census, can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

Figures for individual schools can be found in the school level underlying data file, which is called 'School level underlying data 2020/21 (csv, 21 Mb)', and is listed under the dropdown headings 'Explore data and files' and then 'List of other files'.

Phase of school is in column N, you can select state-funded primary schools. Local authority is in column H and parliamentary constituency in X. The size band of the school is given in column AD in units of 100. The exact pupil headcount is given in column HL.

■ **Pupils: Per Capita Costs**

Bim Afolami: [\[79452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the per pupil funding is for schools in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency for the academic year (a) 2021-22, (b) 2022-23 and (c) 2023-24.

Mr Robin Walker:

Schools in Hitchin and Harpenden are attracting £4,862 per pupil through the schools national funding formula (NFF) in the 2021-22 financial year. This will increase to £5,007 per pupil in the 2022-23 financial year and is based on notional school-level NFF allocations.

The department is investing a further £4.7 billion by the 2024-25 financial year for the core schools budget in England, over and above the Spending Review 2019 settlement for schools in 2022-23.

This includes a further £1.6 billion for schools and high needs in 2022-23, on top of the notional school-level NFF allocations set out above. The department will announce the distribution of this additional funding for 2022-23 shortly. The department will make announcements on the breakdown of the 2023-24 and 2024-25 financial year core school budget in due course.

■ School Leaving: Disability

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[78484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to encourage (a) awareness and (b) uptake of apprenticeships, supported internships and traineeships among young disabled school-leavers.

Alex Burghart:

In the 'Skills for Jobs' White Paper, published in January 2021, we announced the introduction of a three point plan to enforce provider access legislation (the 'Baker Clause', commenced in 2018). This requires that all maintained schools and academies provide opportunities for providers of technical education and apprenticeships to visit schools to talk to all year 8-13 pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This plan includes creating clear minimum legal requirements, specifying who is to be given access to which pupils and when. This is an important step towards real choice for every pupil.

Through the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) we support careers leaders in schools and colleges to design and deliver careers education programmes tailored to the needs of young people with SEND. As part of this work, the CEC has worked with the Gatsby Foundation and Disability Rights UK to create support material to help schools and colleges use the Gatsby Benchmarks to deliver high-quality career guidance for students with a wide range of needs and disabilities.

As set out in the National Disability Strategy, we will work to improve supported internships in England, including updating guidance and, through our contract/grant delivery partners in financial year 2020-21, developing a self-assessment quality framework for providers, and helping local authorities to develop local supported employment forums. In addition, the CEC continues to encourage employers to provide work experience and supported internships for young people with SEND.

We are also encouraging more young people to consider apprenticeships through our Apprenticeship Support & Knowledge (ASK) programme which reached over 600,000 students across England in the last academic year. As part of this, we are working with 40 schools through the ASK Development Schools project to support students who have the potential to progress into a traineeship or apprenticeship but who are facing significant personal barriers, including disabilities.

In partnership with Disability Rights UK, we have launched a Disabled Apprentice Network to provide valuable insight and evidence on how to attract and retain disabled people into apprenticeships. We have also improved our 'Find an

Apprenticeship' and 'Find a Traineeship' services to allow people to identify Disability Confident employers offering opportunities.

We are also taking several measures to raise awareness of traineeships and increase uptake. We have created a new online collection of free resources for schools including factsheets, case studies and a guide for teachers. We are also working with the National Careers Service and the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure that young people understand the different options available to them and are supported on the right path.

■ Schools: Ventilation

Munira Wilson:

[79498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much the Government has spent on campaigns to encourage better ventilation in schools to tackle covid 19 in (a) 2020 and (b) 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the department has emphasised the importance of ventilation and provided guidance and updates to nurseries, schools and colleges on ventilation requirements. It is important for nurseries, schools and colleges to ensure that they are well ventilated and that a comfortable teaching environment is maintained.

The department has also supported wider national government activity to raise awareness of the importance of ventilation as well as providing detailed advice and guidance to nurseries, schools and colleges on gov.uk, via stakeholder briefing and in direct emails.

On 21 August 2021, the department announced that CO2 monitors would be provided to state-funded nurseries, schools and colleges backed by £25 million in government funding. These monitors will be delivered by the end of the Autumn term and will enable staff to identify areas where ventilation needs to be improved and provide reassurance that existing ventilation measures are working, helping balance the need for good ventilation with keeping classrooms warm. Feedback shows that schools are finding the monitors helpful to manage ventilation and, in the majority of cases, existing ventilation measures are sufficient.

On 18 August 2021, it was announced that 1,000 Department for Education-funded air cleaning units will be made available for poorly ventilated teaching spaces and staff rooms in special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision settings, including SEND units in mainstream settings, where quick fixes to improve ventilation are not possible. These settings are being prioritised given the higher-than-average number of vulnerable pupils attending those settings.

■ Special Educational Needs: Reviews

Wera Hobhouse:

[78483]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, subject to the successful piloting of Access to Work adjustment passports, whether he plans to embed passports for children with special educational needs and disabilities support (SEND) in schools and colleges in an updated Code of Practice following his Department's SEND review.

Alex Burghart:

The department is supporting the Department for Work and Pensions to develop an adjustments passport that aims to smooth the transition into employment and support people changing jobs including people with special educational needs and disabilities. Twelve-month pilots of the adjustments passport are now underway in higher education and post-16 provider pilot sites. The adjustments passport will capture the in-work support needs of the individual and includes the aim to empower them in having confident discussions about adjustments with employers.

Having an adjustments passport is voluntary and the department will continue to monitor take up alongside communications as to how we might increase visibility and awareness to inform a future approach were the pilots to be successful. Following an evaluation, if the pilots prove successful, the adjustments passport will be made available to support all people with disabilities and health conditions providing a transferable record of adjustments and reduce the need for unnecessary assessments.

The government launched the SEND Review in September 2019, a cross government review being led by the department. The goal of the SEND Review is to substantially improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND, build parental confidence and bring financial sustainability to the system. The government plans to publish proposals for public consultation, in a Green Paper, in the first three months of 2022.

■ Students: Finance

Caroline Lucas:

[80274]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what criteria his Department is using to determine whether proposals for a Sharia-compliant alternative student finance system will be included in the conclusion of the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding; if he will publish the (a) timetable for considering the recommendations made by the independent panel that reported to that review and (b) estimated date of conclusion of that review; and if he will make a statement.

Michelle Donelan:

The government has been carefully considering an alternative student finance product, alongside wider reforms to the higher education system, and an update will be provided alongside the conclusion to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding. The interim conclusion of the review was published on 21 January 2021, and we will conclude the review in full at a future date.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Bovine Tuberculosis: Vaccination

Mike Amesbury: [\[78498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to accelerate the implementation of a badger vaccination strategy alongside improved cattle testing, the roll out of a cattle vaccine and stricter movement of cattle.

Jo Churchill:

As set out in the Government response to Professor Sir Charles Godfray's review of the Government's strategy for achieving Officially Bovine Tuberculosis Free status for England, the next phase of the strategy focuses on developing a deployable cattle vaccine, wider rollout of badger vaccination and improvements to TB testing.

Badger culling will not be halted immediately – as set out in the Government's response to the January 2021 consultation^[1], no new intensive cull licences will be issued after 2022 and new supplementary badger culling licences have been limited to a maximum of two years. Culling would remain an option where epidemiological assessment indicates that it is needed.

We have awarded funding for a five-year badger vaccination programme in East Sussex. The scheme, which will see vaccination deployed by the farming community, will help refine future delivery models for deploying large-scale farmer-led vaccination schemes. We are also undertaking Government-funded badger vaccination in an area where four-year intensive badger culling has ended. We are continuing to bolster our capability to deploy even more badger vaccination in post-cull areas from 2022.

Developing a deployable cattle TB vaccine, with the objective of introduction within the next five years, is one of the Government's priorities. In 2021, world-leading bovine TB cattle vaccination trials began in England and Wales.

A change from annual to six-monthly routine surveillance testing of cattle herds was introduced in the High Risk Area (HRA) counties of Shropshire and Staffordshire in September 2020 and was extended to the rest of the HRA from July 2021. Herds in the HRA that meet certain risk criteria can remain on annual surveillance testing. In addition, in July 2021 criteria for mandatory use of the more sensitive, supplementary interferon gamma blood test were changed in order to include new breakdown herds in the HRA with lesion and/or culture positive animals that were officially TB free (OTF) for less than eighteen months, following a previous breakdown with lesion and/or culture positive animals. A number of other options for improving the effectiveness of cattle testing, including pre- and post-movement testing, are currently being considered.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/bovine-tuberculosis-proposals-to-help-eradicate-disease-in-england>

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Staff**

Robert Largan:

[78523]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many civil servants employed by his Department were based in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions on (a) 1 March 2021, (b) 1 June 2021 and (c) 1 September 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

Along with all other Government departments, Defra publishes annual data as at 31 March. The Annual Civil Service Employment Survey (ACSES) provides the official headline National Statistics on the size, shape and structure of the Civil Service.

The number of Civil Servants employed by the department by regions for part (a) is available from this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2021>. Table 12 of the ACSES data shows the regional breakdown by department.

For 1 June 2021 and 1 September 2021, the data is shown below

REGION	1 JUNE 2021(DATA AS AT 31 MAY 21)	1 SEPTEMBER 2021(DATA AS AT 31 AUG-21)
London	2535	2664
South East	316	318
East of England	164	166
East Midlands	67	77
West Midlands	209	220
Yorkshire & Humber	632	650
North East	200	224
North West	294	314
South West	928	978
Wales	9	12
Scotland	15	18
Home	252	316
Grand Total	5621	5957

The data is line with the statistical methodology used by the Office for National Statistics. We have taken the end of the month closest to dates requested. We have also shown in the above table the number of home-based permanent staff.

■ Hunting

Kim Leadbeater: [78540]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to stop trail hunting on Government-owned land.

Rebecca Pow:

The Hunting Act 2004 makes it an offence to hunt a wild mammal with dogs, except where it is carried out in accordance with the exemptions in the Act, and completely bans hare coursing.

Issuing a license or giving permission for trail hunting is an operational matter for the landowner and Defra does not play a central role here.

■ Marine Management Organisation

Sir Desmond Swayne: [80891]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what metrics his Department uses to measure the efficiency of the Marine Management Organisation; and what recent assessment he has made of the MMO's performance against those metrics.

Victoria Prentis:

The efficiency of the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is measured through specific service-based targets which are subject to regular performance review, including quarterly at Board level. Like all government departments, the MMO is also required to publish an annual report each year which provides information on its purpose, the key risks in achieving its objectives, and how it has performed. The latest published annual report from the MMO is available [online](#).

Sir Desmond Swayne: [80892]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what targets are in place for the Marine Management Organisation to determine applications from marine enterprises for major investment projects.

Victoria Prentis:

The Marine Management Organisation operates several key services to support the development of major investment projects from marine enterprises, including grant funding and marine licensing. All these services include targets subject to regular performance review, including quarterly at Board level, and are published annually.

■ Marine Management Organisation: Remote Working

Sir Desmond Swayne: [80890]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many and what proportion of the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) staff were working from home in response to the outbreak of covid-19 as at 24 November 2021; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the level of home working on the effectiveness of the MMO.

Victoria Prentis:

In line with the wider Defra response to the Covid-19 outbreak, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) currently operates an office based blended working model where all MMO staff can mix office based and home working, subject to safe office capacity. The MMO has also continued to operate sea and shore-based assurance inspections throughout the pandemic.

No assessment on the effect that home working has had on the effectiveness of the MMO has been undertaken.

Travel: Civil Servants and Ministers**Helen Hayes:**[\[81081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) financial costs and (b) environmental impacts of the use of domestic flights for business travel undertaken by Ministers and civil servants.

Jo Churchill:

[The Greening Government Commitments \(GGCs\)](#) set out the Government's ambitions to improve the environmental performance of its own estate and operations. It includes sub-targets on business travel, against which departments are required to report every quarter for an annual published report.

The [GGC annual report for 2019/20](#) shows that, compared to a 2009 to 2010 baseline, the Government as a whole reduced the number of domestic flights taken by 38%. Alongside other actions taken, this helped contribute to a 50% reduction in Greenhouse Gas emissions for the government estate, compared to the 2009 to 2010 baseline. The reduced energy consumption, from the 50% reduction in Greenhouse Gas emissions across the estate, saved the government an estimated £148 million in 2019 to 2020, compared to the 2009 to 2010 baseline.

To build on this progress, in October, Defra published a new Greening Government Commitments Framework for 2021 to 2025. This includes a refined sub-target on domestic flights: between 2021 to 2025, departments are required to report on, and achieve, reductions in emissions from domestic flights by at least 30% from a 2017/18 baseline. Departmental progress against this target will be published annually.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**Afghanistan: Taliban****Chi Onwurah:**[\[80302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to ensure that engagement with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan is gender balanced.

James Cleverly:

A gender-balanced team of diplomats are taking forward direct UK engagement with the Taliban in Doha and in Kabul.

■ **British Council**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[80425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2021 to Question 76782, on British Council: Closures, if she will publish the thorough assessment of how the British Council's priorities link to the Government's foreign policy objectives.

James Cleverly:

The Integrated Review, published in July 2021, recognised the British Council's contribution to the Government's ambition for Global Britain. The Prime Minister's foreword referred to the Council as one of the 'vital instruments of our influence overseas'. The British Council are in the process of determining their future operating model and the FCDO will continue to work closely with the British Council on delivery of our shared priorities.

■ **China: Guided Weapons**

Fabian Hamilton: [\[80205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to negotiate a new agreement with China to limit the proliferation of hypersonic missile technology, particularly missiles that can be mounted with nuclear warheads.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is monitoring international developments in missile technology. We will continue to push for all countries to act responsibly in the international system.

The UK engages regularly with Chinese officials and civil society on arms control issues, including through our annual dialogue on Counter Proliferation and discussions with the Chinese Arms Control and Disarmament Association. We further these discussions with China through the P5 Process.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[80434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, by what date she expects the UK to have donated to developing countries half of the 100 million doses of covid-19 vaccine that it has committed.

Wendy Morton:

At the G20 in October the Prime Minister set out UK plans to donate an initial 70 million COVID vaccine doses. To date, 10.8 million doses have been delivered to recipients, 11 million are with COVAX and in the process of being allocated and

delivered, and a further 9 million will be delivered to COVAX in the coming weeks direct from AstraZeneca. In 2022, all of the 20 million Janssen vaccines that the UK has ordered will be donated as will most of the remainder of the UK's supply of AstraZeneca, as soon they come off the production line. This will mean that over half of the UK's total order of AstraZeneca will be donated to developing countries.

■ **Democracy: International Cooperation**

Patrick Grady:

[\[81039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which members of the Government will participate in the Summit for Democracy hosted by the President of the United States on 9 and 10 December.

Amanda Milling:

The Prime Minister welcomes this initiative from President Biden to help rejuvenate the world's democracies and defend them from harm, particularly given his leadership on Open Societies commitments made as part of our G7 Presidency.

The UK is working closely with the United States on preparations for the virtual Summit in December, including finalising arrangements for UK attendance. The Prime Minister will lead the UK's engagement through a summit statement. As full details of the Summit emerge, we will consider further opportunities for UK engagement.

■ **Developing Countries: Family Planning and Health Services**

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[80946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans she has to ensure that aid funding allocated to support women and girls in the developing world will include provision for (a) sexual and reproductive health services, (b) maternal health care and (c) family planning.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is firmly committed to defending comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) globally - this includes family planning and maternal health, both central to the empowerment of women and girls. SRHR is also central to achieving the UK Government's commitment to end the preventable deaths of mothers, babies and children by 2030 and our ambitious commitments on girls' education. We plan to launch an Ending Preventable Deaths Approach Paper soon. The 2021 Spending Review concluded on 27 October 2021. Our internal business planning process to agree individual budgets across the FCDO will begin shortly and conclude this financial year. Any funding for SRHR will contribute to UK objectives to improve the lives of women and girls worldwide.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff

Robert Largan: [\[78529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many civil servants employed by her Department were based in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions on (a) 1 March 2021, (b) 1 June 2021 and (c) 1 September 2021.

Amanda Milling:

FCDO UK Based staffing headcount regional breakdown for March 2021 is published in table 12 of the 2021 Civil Service Statistical Tables:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2021>.

The headcount for June and September 2021 can be found below:

FCDO HEADCOUNT AS @ JUNE 2021 BY UK
NUTS1 REGION

NUTS 1 Region	Banded headcount
London	3500-3999
Scotland	940-959
South East England	280-299

FCDO headcount as @ September 2021 by
UK NUTS1 region

NUTS 1 Region	Banded headcount
London	3500-3999
Scotland	900-919
South East England	280-299

■ Israeli Settlements

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[77408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations she has made to her Israeli counterpart on plans for settlement expansion or construction in (a) the settlement designated E1 in area C, (b) Atarot/Qalandiya and (c) Ariel West.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[77409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of settlement expansion or construction in (a) the settlement designated E1 in area C, (b) Atarot/Qalandiya and (c) Ariel West on the (i) territorial contiguity and viability of a future Palestinian state, (ii) human rights of

nearby Palestinian residents and (iii) prospects for a two-state solution in Israel and Palestine.

James Cleverly:

As I made clear on 28 October, we urge the Government of Israel to reverse the decisions on 24 October and 27 October to advance the construction of settlement units in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. We continue to urge the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to avoid actions which make peace more difficult to achieve.

■ **Mozambique: Liquefied Natural Gas**

Claudia Webbe:

[\[78509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the (a) UK's support for Liquid Natural Gas in Mozambique and (b) compatibility of that support with the UK's climate commitments under the Paris and Glasgow COP Agreements.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[78510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make it her policy to end UK Government support for Liquid Natural Gas in Mozambique in the context of the UK's climate commitments under the Paris and Glasgow COP Agreements.

Vicky Ford:

The UK is committed to working with countries across the world to support their transitions away from fossil fuels. Mozambique's primary energy challenge is providing access to clean, reliable, affordable energy to all. Liquefied natural gas (LNG) can improve energy access, boost the economy and jobs, and reduce deforestation through lowering the demand for wood for energy. That is why this LNG investment was supported by the World Bank and the African Development Bank, to help ensure Mozambique meets the Sustainable Development Goals. Mozambican natural gas is among the cleanest in the world in terms of carbon intensity, and the Government of Mozambique and major gas operators have committed to the use of carbon capture and storage to decarbonize the gas prior to export. The Government of Mozambique considers gas revenues an important source of investment to support its energy transition, in line with its Nationally Determined Contribution and Paris Agreement commitments, including a commitment to reach 62% renewable energy by 2030.

The UK's targeted support for LNG in Mozambique will therefore help ensure a just and clean energy transition. The UK is also supporting the development of Mozambique's renewables potential, including support for renewable hydrogen, and through £20 million of UKAid for private sector investment in off-grid renewables

which has already reached 250,000 people in rural areas and is set to reach 750,000 by 2023. The UK is also mobilising £520 million in private financing to expand access to the power grid.

■ **Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe**

Ruth Jones: [\[75129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has raised the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe with the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Ruth Jones: [\[75130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has raised the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe with international counterparts in the Middle East.

James Cleverly:

The UK works closely with likeminded countries and institutions where it is in our interest to do so. The Foreign Secretary has, and will continue to, engage counterparts on the cases of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, Anoosheh Ashoori, and Morad Tahbaz. We collaborate with all relevant international partners to seek to put an end to Iran's unacceptable practice of detaining foreign and dual nationals, including the UN Secretary-General. The Foreign Secretary has also taken every opportunity to discuss the situation with other key players in the region and more widely and will continue to do so. The Foreign Secretary discussed Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, Morad Tahbaz and Anoosheh Ashoori's cases with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on 8 November. The Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister, Bagheri Kani visited the FCDO on 11 November to meet senior government officials and myself, who raised all our cases with my Iranian counterpart.

Feryal Clark: [\[77507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent meetings she has had with her Iranian counterpart on the release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary discussed Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, Morad Tahbaz and Anoosheh Ashoori's cases with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on 8 November. The Foreign Secretary has also taken every opportunity to discuss the situation with other key players in the region and more widely and will continue to do so. I raised all our cases with my Iranian counterpart Deputy Foreign Minister, Bagheri Kani when he visited the FCDO on 11 November. Our Ambassador in Tehran continues to regularly raise Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, Morad Tahbaz and Anoosheh Ashoori with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ministers hold regular meetings with officials to direct activity across the FCDO to secure her release and that of other detained British nationals.

Gill Furniss:

[\[81089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps the Government has taken to secure the release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary recently discussed the cases of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, Anoosheh Ashoori and Morad Tahbaz with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on 8 November. The Foreign Secretary has also taken every opportunity to discuss the situation with other key players in the region and more widely and will continue to do so. I raised their cases with my Iranian counterpart Deputy Foreign Minister, Bagheri Kani when he visited the FCDO on 11 November. Our Ambassador in Tehran also continues to regularly raise Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, Anoosheh Ashoori and Morad Tahbaz with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ministers hold regular meetings with officials to direct activity across the FCDO to secure the release of unjustly detained British nationals.

■ Peng Shuai

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[79410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions officials in her Department have had with their Chinese counterparts on the wellbeing of tennis player Peng Shuai.

Amanda Milling:

On 20 November, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office called on the Chinese authorities to assure the safety of Peng Shuai. We have also raised the matter with the Chinese authorities, and continue to follow the case closely.

Everyone should be allowed to speak out without fear of repercussions. All reports of sexual assault, anywhere in the world, should be investigated.

■ Qatar: Foreign Relations

Kenny MacAskil:

[\[81137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the strength of relations between Hamas and Qatar and (b) the potential effect of those relations on the strength of the UK's relations with Qatar.

James Cleverly:

The long-standing friendship between the UK and Qatar is more important than ever. We look forward to our continued collaboration to strengthen our shared security interests for both regional and global stability. Our position on Hamas is clear and public; we condemn Hamas' continued attacks against civilians which are unacceptable and unjustifiable. Hamas must renounce violence, recognise Israel and accept previously signed agreements. We call on those in the region with influence over Hamas to encourage them to take these steps.

■ UNRWA: Finance**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[80427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the impact of the reduction in Government funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency on the number of (a) children being provided with basic education each year, (b) Palestinian refugees that have access to health services and (c) the most vulnerable people across the region who have access to the Social Safety Net Programme.

James Cleverly:

As I said in my reply of 22 November, the United Kingdom is a long-term supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). We recognise UNRWA's unique mandate from the United Nations General Assembly, to provide protection and core services including health and education to Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. The UK's annual contribution to UNRWA's programme budget helps UNRWA to provide basic education to more than 533,000 children a year (half of whom are girls), access to health services for 3.5 million Palestinian refugees and social safety net assistance for around 255,000 of the most vulnerable across the region. I reiterated this at the International Ministerial Conference on UNRWA in Brussels on 16 November.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Ambulance Services****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[81099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential risk to patients life at (a) the South Central Ambulance Service and (b) UK wide ambulance services when operating long-term at REAP Level Four.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[81100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to alleviate the operational pressures placed on (a) the South Central Ambulance Service and (b) UK wide ambulance services.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[81101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional resources his Department has provided to (a) the South Central Ambulance Service and (b) UK wide ambulance services to (i) manage demand on those services and (ii) increase the capacity of those services.

Edward Argar:

No such assessment has been made. The designation of Resource Escalation Action Plan (REAP) levels is an operational matter for the National Health Service. NHS

England and NHS Improvement advise that the escalation processes of operating at REAP level four are intended to keep the most vulnerable patients safe during times of heightened pressure on the service.

To alleviate operational pressures locally, work is ongoing to minimise hospital handover delays and increase the amount of clinical decision support and referrals into other community and acute pathways. National initiatives include continuous monitoring and support through the National Ambulance Coordination Centre and extending hospital ambulance liaison officer cover at the most challenged acute trusts.

An additional £4.29 million has been made available to the South Coast Ambulance Service for 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 and;
- Retention of emergency ambulances to increase the fleet for winter.

Nationally £55 million additional non-recurrent revenue funding has been invested for winter 2021/22. This will increase staff numbers ahead of the winter, assisting trusts to recruit more 999 call handlers and clinicians to work in control rooms and supplementing frontline staffing capacity. NHS England and NHS Improvement also 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.

■ Asthma: Coronavirus

Julian Sturdy:

[78394]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help protect asthmatics from covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

Individuals aged 12 years old and over with 'poorly controlled asthma', as defined in the Green Book, are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine primary course. Those aged 16 years old and above with poorly controlled asthma have now been offered a booster vaccine.

Individuals whose asthma is controlled are offered COVID-19 vaccination in line with their age cohort. People over the age of 16 years old not in a risk group have been offered two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and children aged 12 to 15 years old not in a risk group have been offered a first dose. All adults over the age of 40 years old have now been offered a booster dose. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation will continue to update its advice as new data emerges.

■ Autism: Diagnosis

Damien Moore:

[\[80449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the length of time for adults over the age of 25 without an Education and Health Care Plan to be diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder; and what assessment his Department has made of the impact on those adults of the time taken for that diagnosis.

Gillian Keegan:

Local commissioners should have due regard to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guideline 'Autism spectrum disorder in adults: diagnosis and management' when commissioning services for their local populations. This guideline states people should wait no longer than 13 weeks between a referral for an autism assessment and a first appointment.

As part of the COVID-19 Mental Health and Wellbeing Recovery Action plan, we are investing £2.5 million in 2020/21 to improve the quality of adult diagnostic and post-diagnostic pathways and address waiting times. We have not made a specific assessment of the impact of delayed diagnosis on adults.

■ Borderline Substances Advisory Committee

Alex Norris:

[\[81115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the ability of the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances to facilitate product innovation and patient choice.

Edward Argar:

The Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS) application process has a specified route for innovative products seeking listing in Part XV of the Drug Tariff. This route is for new formulations where there is robust evidence of advantages in terms of nutritional composition and tolerance and acceptability for patients. Products approved and recommended by the ACBS are listed in Part XV of the Drug Tariff. The ACBS list in the Drug Tariff offers some patient choice where the relevant products are available and meet the quality criteria.

■ Breast Cancer: Health Services

Barbara Keeley:

[\[76629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to improve data collection for metastatic breast cancer ahead of the audit of metastatic breast cancer announced by NHS England in May 2021.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: The National Cancer Registration and Analysis Service (NCRAS) records all primary cancer diagnoses in England. NCRAS supports the direct reporting of cancer recurrence data by all National Health Service hospital

trusts, as part of the Cancer Outcomes and Services Dataset (COSD). Recurrence data collection is also mandated as part of the cancer waiting times standards.

NCRAS has made changes to COSD in Version 9 for data collected from April 2020 onwards to enable more detail to be recorded on whether a secondary cancer is a progression, recurrence or transformation. Version 9 has been designed to make recording more specific and hence improve completeness. NCRAS works directly with NHS trusts and the National Audit of Breast Cancer in Older People to encourage submission of data. The NCRAS Data Liaison team works closely with cancer service managers at hospital trusts to determine sources of data which can be used to complete the COSD data items and also with software suppliers of cancer management systems to ensure that data items can be recorded. Compliance with data standards is monitored by clinical commissioning groups.

■ **Bridlington and District Hospital**

Sir Greg Knight:

[80213]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 June 2021 to Question 17694, on Bridlington and District Hospital, what recent progress has been made on the (a) development of the stroke inpatient rehabilitation service within Bridlington Hospital and (b) virtual outpatient and multi-disciplinary consultations referenced in that Answer.

Edward Argar:

The stroke inpatient rehabilitation service is now fully operational at Bridlington Hospital, York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust. This service is accepting patients from the Bridlington and Scarborough area who require continuing care following discharge from a hyper acute stroke unit in York or Hull. The Trust is currently examining possible solutions for virtual outpatient and multi-disciplinary consultations to be undertaken in some areas of specialist care.

■ **Cancer: Health Services**

Colleen Fletcher:

[73858]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the size of the cancer backlog in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England; and what (i) planning and (ii) funding his Department is providing to tackle the cancer backlog in those areas.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 17 November 2021]: Estimates of an overall backlog at regional and national level are complex due to the different cancer pathways, therefore there is not a single statistic. National Health Service England and NHS Improvement have estimated that up to 36,000 fewer people than expected have started cancer treatment in England.

We are committed to recovering cancer services by the end of March 2022 by returning to February 2020 levels for waiting times between a general practitioner

appointment and referral and the number of people waiting for over 62 days for treatment. This applies to Coventry, the West Midlands and England. At the Spending Review we announced an extra £5.9 billion to support elective recovery, diagnostics and technology over the next three years.

■ Continuing Care

Damien Moore:

[\[80450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to further improve communications between (a) CCGs, (b) GPs, and (c) care homes to raise awareness and understanding of the CHC referral process.

Gillian Keegan:

The 'National framework for NHS continuing healthcare and NHS-funded nursing care' sets out the principles and processes guiding NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC), including how assessments should be undertaken and CHC and National Health Service-funded nursing care delivered.

As set out in the national framework, it is the responsibility of clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) to promote awareness of CHC and ensure training and development opportunities are available for practitioners, in partnership with the local authority. The framework also sets out that a partnership approach, including good communication, at both organisational and practitioner levels between NHS England, CCGs, general practitioners, local authorities, local NHS bodies and provider organisations including care homes, is crucial for successful and consistent delivery of CHC.

■ Coronavirus and Influenza: Vaccination

Rachael Maskell:

[\[80373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help increase the predictability of the timetable of deliveries of (a) covid-19 and (b) flu vaccines to local vaccination centres.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: Information on COVID-19 vaccine deliveries is available to local vaccination sites through internal systems. Local providers are responsible for purchasing flu vaccines directly from manufacturers or wholesalers. The Department works closely with flu vaccine manufacturers to understand the timetable of deliveries to the system. Deliveries are phased and typically take place from September to November.

■ Coronavirus: Older People

Rachael Maskell:

[\[80371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of covid-19 infections among the over 60s population.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: The UK Health Security Agency monitors and publishes COVID-19 case rates by age group, including those aged 60 years old and over, in the weekly COVID-19 Surveillance report, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports-2021-to-2022-season>

As of 14 November 2021, COVID-19 case rates per 100,000 were 264.4 for those aged 60 to 69 years old, 121.0 for those aged 70 to 79 years old and 76.0 for those aged 80 years old and over - a decrease compared to the previous week.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing**Angela Rayner:****[75896]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what dates did the Minister for Efficiency and Transformation refer (a) Uniserve Ltd and (b) Worldlink Resource to the high priority lane for the supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during the outbreak of covid-19.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 19 November 2021]: Departmental records do not indicate the date that the referral was made.

Carla Lockhart:**[80515]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to assess the effectiveness of personal protective equipment used by front line health workers in protecting them from transmission of covid-19.

Edward Argar:

The infection prevention and control guidance sets out the appropriate personal protective equipment for frontline health workers. An expert group of clinicians regularly review the available evidence to ensure that the guidance and recommendations continue to be effective and reflect current understanding on how to prevent and control COVID-19 infection.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Julian Sturdy:****[53230]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time is for PCR covid-19 test results for children in childcare settings; and what steps his Department is taking to minimise those waiting times.

Maggie Throup:

The data is not held in the format requested. Currently the only childcare setting in which polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing is routinely carried out is children's secure homes. To minimise waiting times for all PCR testing, including in children's

homes, we have procured additional laboratory capacity and adopted a regional processing model to reduce travel times and increase efficiency.

Gavin Robinson: [\[81018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's rational is for requesting vaccination status from someone when registering their covid-19 lateral flow test results.

Maggie Throup:

Vaccination status is not requested when an individual reports the result of a lateral flow test they have taken in England via GOV.UK. However, there may be other instances where an individual is asked to provide details of their vaccination status. This information is requested in order to understand the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines, including the effectiveness against different strains and variants of the virus and, where appropriate, to ask individuals to complete a repeat test.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[75053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, from what date a covid-19 booster vaccination will become a mandatory part of being considered fully vaccinated.

Catherine West: [\[75080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November 2021 to Question 67098 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, what his timescale is for assessing how booster vaccination records can be incorporated into the NHS COVID Travel Pass.

Daisy Cooper: [\[75134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, by what date a third covid-19 booster vaccination will be displayed on the NHS covid pass.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 18 November 2021]: Work to assess the need to include boosters in the NHS COVID Pass is ongoing and we will provide a further update in due course.

Julian Sturdy: [\[78395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will review the decision not to use the free flu jab list as the basis for determining the eligibility of asthmatics for inclusion on the covid-19 booster priority list.

Maggie Throup:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's advice on the eligibility of asthmatics for the COVID-19 booster vaccine programme is kept under continuous review, based on any new advice from the British Thoracic Society.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[79301]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who have received their covid-19 booster jab, and who are not travelling abroad, will be able to display their vaccination records in the NHS app.

Maggie Throup:

Individuals can now demonstrate their booster vaccinations using the NHS COVID Pass via the NHS App and NHS.UK for international travel. Booster and third doses are not used to generate the NHS COVID Pass as it is not required for domestic certification.

Matt Vickers:

[79511]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to support those with severe trypanophobia accessing the covid-19 vaccine; and what steps he is taking to support exemptions for that group.

Maggie Throup:

COVID-19 vaccinators have received appropriate training to make sure individuals attending a vaccination appointment feel safe. NHS England and NHS Improvement recommend that individuals with a needle phobia contact the vaccination centre prior to attendance, to determine what mitigations they have for such patients and if any special arrangements could be made to help the recipient feel more comfortable.

Individuals can apply for a medical exemption by calling the NHS COVID Pass service on 119. The possible reasons for exemptions are limited, such as severe allergies to all currently available vaccines. Clinical judgement will then be used to determine whether an individual is exempt from vaccination or not.

Rachael Maskell:

[80372]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the reasons for lower take-up of the covid-19 booster vaccination across all age groups compared to the take-up of the first two doses of that vaccine.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: Assessment of uptake of the COVID-19 vaccines is a continuous part of the vaccine programme led by the National Health Service and with local partners. This is shared daily with local authority directors of public health to monitor emerging trends and act on any developing inequalities locally. Qualitative information and insight on the reasons for vaccine refusal is collected to inform local initiatives.

There are no current specific concerns about uptake of booster doses. Although the pace of the deployment of booster vaccines has been slower than the initial COVID-19 vaccination programme last winter, we have seen a significant increase in uptake in recent weeks. As of 24 November 2021, 16,383,575 million third primary doses and booster doses have been administered across the United Kingdom. Week-on-week uptake is trending positively, with 2.1 million doses delivered up to 14 November 2021.

The deployment began at scale to the most vulnerable from the week commencing 20 September 2021. On 15 November, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation published advice stating that all adults aged 40 to 49 years old should be offered a booster vaccination, six months after their second dose, irrespective of the vaccines they received for the first and second doses. The Government has accepted this advice.

A national 'BOOST your immunity this winter' communications campaign was launched in mid-October. This sets out the importance of those eligible receiving their COVID-19 booster and flu vaccinations this winter. There is regular coverage in the media, with calls to action to book a booster vaccine appointment. This is supported by leading voices including Ministers, scientists and clinicians, and community and faith leaders, alongside social media messaging.

Holly Lynch:

[\[80375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2021 to Question 73966 on Travel: Coronavirus, what his timescale is for ensuring that a NHS COVID Pass is available for fully vaccinated 12 to 15 year olds.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: We are looking at ways to provide fully vaccinated 12 to 15 year olds with a travel NHS COVID Pass. This will be available shortly, initially via a NHS COVID Pass travel letter. Further information will be made available in due course.

Hilary Benn:

[\[80913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to allow people who have a religious objection to being vaccinated against covid-19 to obtain a Covid pass; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

There are no plans to allow people with religious objections to obtain a NHS COVID Pass. The possible reasons for exemptions from vaccination are limited and apply to medical conditions. If an individual is not fully vaccinated, they can currently obtain a NHS COVID Pass for domestic use with proof of a negative lateral flow test, or proof of recovery within the last six months.

■ Dental Services

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[73860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) financial and (b) other steps his Department is taking to increase access to NHS dentistry in (i) Coventry, (ii) the West Midlands and (iii) England.

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[73861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the number of dental appointments that have been lost during the covid-19 outbreak in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 17 November 2021]: The Department is working with NHS England and NHS Improvement to increase the levels of National Health Service dental care that can safely be 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.

In the Midlands, NHS England and NHS Improvement have commissioned a weekend access scheme from August 2021 to March 2022 to provide additional access for an estimated 17,250 patients. In addition, to increase access for children, two dental providers within each local authority will provide additional treatment within community dental services. No assessment has been made of the number of dental appointments lost, as this data is not collected in the format requested.

Nick Gibb:[\[80899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the availability of NHS dentists in (a) England, (b) West Sussex, (c) Bognor Regis and (d) Littlehampton.

Maria Caulfield:

In 2020/2021 there were 23,733 National Health Service dentists in England and 527 in West Sussex. Data is not held for Bognor Regis and Littlehampton.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform**

Theresa Villiers:[\[80231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress he has made on implementing the recommendations of the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform relevant to his Department.

Edward Argar:

The Department has been working closely with the Cabinet Office Brexit Opportunities Unit to take forward the relevant recommendations set out in the Taskforce on Innovation Growth and Regulatory Reform report. Following announcements made earlier in the autumn, we continue to engage with officials and arm's length bodies on these proposals. Further details on the announcements is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/brexit-opportunities-regulatory-reforms>

■ **Drugs: Misuse**

Alex Sobel:[\[79457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to provide post-lockdown support to families affected by substance abuse.

Maggie Throup:

On 20 January 2021, we announced an extra £80 million for drug treatment services in England for 2021/22. The Government will publish a long-term drug strategy by the end of 2021. This will include details of treatment and recovery support for those affected by substance misuse and their families.

■ Endometriosis**Sarah Olney:**[\[81094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase funding for (a) research into and (b) treatment of endometriosis.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department, through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), has invested £8.4 million into research in endometriosis since 2013. It is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions, including allocating funding for future financial years. However, the NIHR's funding is available through open competition for endometriosis research and we encourage researchers to submit applications in this area.

At present, there are no plans to increase funding for treatment of endometriosis. A call for evidence was launched to inform the priorities, content and actions of the Women's Health Strategy which included questions on gynaecological conditions, such as endometriosis. Following analysis of the responses, we will detail our commitments on endometriosis within the Strategy.

■ Endometriosis and Polycystic Ovary Syndrome: Diagnosis**Sarah Olney:**[\[81093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce diagnosis times for people (a) with polycystic ovaries and (b) with endometriosis.

Maria Caulfield:

The National Institute of Health Research hosted research to explore the experiences of women presenting in primary care with endometriosis-like symptoms. The results were published earlier this year and will help to understand delays in diagnosis and inform our work on the Women's Health Strategy.

A call for evidence was launched to inform the priorities, content and actions of the Strategy and included questions on gynaecological conditions, including endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). Following analysis of the responses, we will detail our commitments on endometriosis and PCOS within the Strategy.

■ Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva: Research

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[66176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 October 2021 to Question 58780, on Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva: Research, if he will provide details of the eight studies into fibrodysplasia ossificans progressive (FOP) supported by funding through the National Institute for Health Research.

Maria Caulfield:

The titles of seven of the studies supported by the National Institute for Health Research on fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva (FOP) are as follows:

- Saracatinib Trial TO Prevent FOP (Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva);
- Isolation and Generation of Blood-derived Progenitor Cells from Patients with Cardiovascular Disease and TGF-beta Superfamily-related Diseases;
- A Phase 2 Randomized, Double Blind, Placebo Controlled Efficacy and Safety Study of a RAR γ -Specific Agonist (Palovarotene) in the Treatment of Preosseous Flareups in Subjects with Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva;
- A Phase 2, Open-Label Extension, Efficacy and Safety Study of a RAR γ -Specific Agonist (Palovarotene) in the Treatment of Preosseous Flare-ups in Subjects with Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva;
- A randomized, placebo-controlled study to assess the safety, tolerability, pharmacokinetics, and effects on heterotopic bone formation of REGN2477 in patients with Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva;
- A Phase 3, Efficacy and Safety Study of Oral Palovarotene for the Treatment of Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva; and
- A Phase 2, two-part, placebo-controlled, parallel-group, double-blind study to assess the efficacy and safety of two dosage regimens of oral IPN60130 for the treatment of fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva in male and female participants five years of age and older.

We are unable to provide details of the remaining study as this information is commercially sensitive.

■ General Practitioners

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[69098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many GPs there were in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England in each of the last 10 years; and how many GP vacancies there were in those areas in each of the last 10 years.

Maria Caulfield:

The data for Coventry North East constituency, Coventry and the West Midlands is not collected in the format requested, as general practice workforce data is not collected by constituency, city level or geographical region. The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) doctors in general practice in England between September 2021 and September 2015, the latest date for which comparable data exists, is shown in the following table.

SEPTEMBER 2015	33,056
September 2016	34,537
September 2017	34,320
September 2018	33,796
September 2019	34,433
September 2020	35,155
September 2021	36,275

Source: NHS Digital

Notes:

1. FTE refers to the proportion of full time contracted hours that the post holder is contracted to work. One would indicate they work a full set of hours (37.5), 0.5 that they worked half time. In GPs in Training Grade contracts one FTE equals 40 hours and in this table these FTEs have been converted to the standard measure of 1 FTE equals 37.5 hours for consistency.
2. Figures shown do not include staff working in prisons, army bases, educational establishments, specialist care centres including drug rehabilitation centres, walk-in centres and other alternative settings outside of traditional general practice such as urgent treatment centres and minor injury units.
3. Figures from September 2015 and September 2016 should be treated with caution as the data submission rates from practices were appreciably lower than for subsequent reporting periods. The reported figures for the early years of the collection may be lower than the true picture. In September 2015, which was the first extract from the new Workforce Minimum Data Set, only three of four Health Education England regions submitted data. Consequently, September 2015 figures should be treated with additional caution.
4. Data from September 2021 is the third release to be based on the monthly collection of general practice workforce information. Following stakeholder feedback and the move to monthly publications NHS Digital are reviewing the implementation of methodological changes introduced in the June 2021 publication. Until this review is complete, all published figures remain provisional and is not presented in a time

series. The time series will be reinstated once the review has been concluded and a methodology agreed.

5. Data as at the last day of the applicable month.

The data requested on vacancies in these areas are not collected centrally.

■ **General Practitioners: Disadvantaged**

Gill Furniss:

[81090]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support GP practices in the most deprived areas.

Maria Caulfield:

We have invested £250 million in the Winter Access Fund to expand capacity in general practice, in addition to £1.5 billion provided to the sector until 2023/24. Access to the Winter Access Fund is dependent on local systems demonstrating value including the scale of increased capacity and expected impact. A maximum indicative amount will be calculated on the clinical commissioning group primary care weighted capitation formula, which takes account of deprivation.

NHS England and NHS Improvement's Access Improvement Programme is supporting practices whose patients are experiencing the greatest challenges in providing good access to patients. NHS England and NHS Improvement are currently supporting over 900 practices to design and deliver tailored support packages. In October 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement introduced a new service specification and Impact and Investment Fund incentives for Primary Care Networks (PCNs) on 'Tackling neighbourhood health inequalities'. As part of the new specification, PCNs must identify and engage populations experiencing health inequalities within their area and co-design an intervention to address unmet needs.

■ **General Practitioners: West Sussex**

Nick Gibb:

[80900]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the number of General Practitioners in (a) West Sussex and (b) Bognor Regis and Littlehampton; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

There is no national recommendation for the number of general practitioners required in the general practice workforce therefore no specific assessment has been made. Each general practice is required to provide services to meet the reasonable needs of their registered population, including the range of health professionals available.

■ General Practitioners: Workplace Pensions

Theresa Villiers: [\[80228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with the Chancellor on the Exchequer of the adequacy of the level of taxation on GPs pensions.

Edward Argar:

The Department continues to have a regular discussion with HM Treasury on a range of issues relating to the NHS Pension Scheme.

The NHS Pension Scheme provides generous retirement benefits for National Health Service staff. Members who reach the £1.073 million lifetime allowance for tax-free saving will have accrued an annual pension of approximately £46,000 per year and tax-free lump sum of £139,000. This provides considerable financial security in retirement.

We are committed to ensuring that NHS staff do not find themselves reducing their work commitments due to the interaction between their pay, their pension and the relevant tax regime. The two thresholds which the tapered annual allowance applies to were each raised by £90,000 from 6 April 2020. Therefore no-one with a threshold income below £200,000 is affected by the tapered annual allowance. An estimated 96% of general practitioners are now out of scope of the tapered annual allowance based on their NHS earnings.

■ Health Services

Theresa Villiers: [\[79296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) treatments, (b) diagnostic tests and (c) operations undertaken by the NHS in each year since 2010.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 25 November 2021]: Data on the number of treatments and operations undertaken by the National Health Service is not available in the format requested. The following table shows the number of diagnostic tests conducted in year since 2010.

2010	14,871,766
2011	15,596,624
2012	16,716,609
2013	17,615,951
2014	18,777,918
2015	19,985,469

2010	14,871,766
2016	20,999,112
2017	21,842,681
2018	22,616,427
2019	23,619,514
2020	18,252,314

Source: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/>

Robert Halfon:

[80965]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that patients can access adequate healthcare services from (a) GPs and (b) local authorities.

Maria Caulfield:

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

The Department increased the Public Health Grant to £3.324 billion in 2021/22 and it will be maintained in real terms over the next three years. This will enable local authorities to deliver health services to improve the health and wellbeing of their local communities.

Robert Halfon:

[80966]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take in the event that patients are unable to access the healthcare they need.

Robert Halfon:

[80968]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help clear the NHS backlogs.

Robert Halfon:

[80969]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure patients are receiving the care they need.

Edward Argar:

NHS services are open for those who need them and we expect all patients to be able to access the healthcare that they need. This year, we are providing an extra £34 billion to support services.

To help to tackle backlogs in planned care, we have committed £2 billion this year, with £8 billion over the next three years. This could deliver the equivalent of around nine million more checks, scans and procedures. The delivery plan for tackling the elective care backlog will be published later this year.

Robert Halfon: **[80967]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance the Government has issued to healthcare providers on seeing patients face-to-face.

Maria Caulfield:

An update to Infection Prevention and Control guidance for healthcare providers has recently been published. The guidance continues to advise that a physical distance of at least one metre should be maintained between and among patients, staff, and all other persons in healthcare settings. This distance should be increased wherever feasible, especially in indoor settings. A copy of the guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control/covid-19-guidance-for-maintaining-services-within-health-and-care-settings-infection-prevention-and-control-recommendations>

■ **Hepatitis**

Rushanara Ali: **[77459]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the UK Health Security Agency plans to release data on the prevalence of the hepatitis C virus in (a) London and (b) England.

Maggie Throup:

The latest data on hepatitis C prevalence in London is published in 'Hepatitis C in London: annual reports' which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hepatitis-c-in-london-annual-review#history>

The latest data on hepatitis C prevalence in England is published in 'Hepatitis C in England and the UK' which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hepatitis-c-in-the-uk>

The UK Health Security Agency plans to publish the next national prevalence estimates in 2022.

■ Hepatitis: Disease Control

Rushanara Ali:

[\[77460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) reduce new hepatitis C virus infections and (b) support local authorities' efforts to tackle that transmission of that virus, such as needle and syringe programmes.

Maggie Throup:

NHS England and NHS Improvement delivers the Hepatitis C Elimination Programme in England, working towards elimination by 2025.

Since 2015/16, the National Health Service has treated 65,000 people with hepatitis C. In addition, a cross-Government Prevention and Harm Reduction Working Group has been established to develop a national process to identify and reduce reinfection amongst those already treated. NHS England and NHS Improvement provide local authorities with guidance on the provision of syringes, harm reduction messaging and encourages testing and treatment. NHS England and NHS Improvement also commissions community pharmacies to contact and conduct screening for injectors identified via their needle exchange programme.

■ Hospitals: Infectious Diseases

Martyn Day:

[\[80403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2021 to Question 66237 on Catheters: Urinary Tract Infections, what his timelines is for the delivery of the national manual for infection prevention.

Martyn Day:

[\[80404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 15th November 2021 to Question 66237 on Catheters: Urinary Tract Infections, whether the national manual for infection prevention will be subject to consultation.

Edward Argar:

The inaugural chapters were developed using an England-wide consensus group consisting of infection prevention and control experts. These chapters are now subject wider consultation with the consensus group and regional infection prevention leads in England.

While a specific date has not yet been confirmed, we anticipate the manual will be published in March 2022.

■ Hospitals: Visits

Robert Halfon:

[\[80970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent guidance his Department has provided to NHS Trusts on allowing more than one visitor to visit patients; and what steps he is taking to help ensure that guidance is followed.

Edward Argar:

Since the end of national restrictions in England, hospital visiting is subject to local discretion by trusts and other National Health Service bodies, who will take into account the local prevalence of COVID-19.

Hospitals: Waiting Lists**Derek Twigg:**[\[75821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of the additional funding for the NHS will have on hospital waiting times by (a) March 2022, (b) March 2023 and (c) March 2024.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 19 November 2021]: No formal assessment has been made.

Human Papillomavirus: Vaccination**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[79385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many school children received a (a) first and (b) second dose of the human papillomavirus vaccination in each month from April 2019 to September 2021 inclusive.

Maria Caulfield:

The information is not available in the format requested. The UK Health Security Agency publishes an annual report on human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination coverage by academic year cohort in the United Kingdom. The latest report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hpv-vaccination-coverage-in-adolescent-females-and-males-in-england-2019-to-2020>

The report shows that 64.7% of Year Nine females completed the two-dose HPV vaccination course in 2019/20. HPV vaccine coverage for the priming dose in 2019/20 was 59.2% in Year Eight females and 54.4% in Year Eight males. National HPV vaccine coverage data for the academic year 2020/21 will be published in winter 2021.

Long Covid**Bob Blackman:**[\[80281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to monitor long covid.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department uses estimates from the Office for National Statistics of self-reported ongoing symptoms following COVID-19 infection to inform decision-making. Since September 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement have also published activity data and demographic information for patients referred to a post-COVID-19 assessment service.

Additionally, the Department has invested over £50 million in dedicated research to improve knowledge and understanding of the condition.

■ **Meat: Novel Foods**

Anthony Browne:

[\[79505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to investigate the potential (a) acceptance of and (b) need for regulation on cultured meat as a food source.

Maggie Throup:

In 2019, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) commissioned a study on consumer views towards emerging technologies including cultured meat. The FSA also plans further work on consumer perceptions of cultured meat, with the findings due in early 2022. Cultured meats would require pre-market authorisation as they are likely to be novel foods and any applications would need to be assessed for safety under the process required by the Novel Food Regulations 2015/2283. This authorisation process will take consumer views into account in any recommendations to the Government.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Rosie Cooper:

[\[80255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 17 September 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, reference ZA57710.

Edward Argar:

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

■ **Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**

Damien Moore:

[\[80447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the length of waiting times for children to access treatment from CAHMS; and what criteria must be met before a child can be treated.

Gillian Keegan:

No assessment has been made as a national access and waiting times standard for child and adolescent mental health services has not yet been defined. There is not a nationally set or mandated clinical threshold for accessing National Health Service children and young people's mental health services. Referral and access is based on need and clinical judgement.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have consulted on the potential to introduce five new waiting time standards as part of its clinically-led review of NHS access standards. This includes a standard that children, young people and their families/carers presenting to community-based mental health services should start to

receive care within four weeks from referral. This consultation closed on 1 September 2021 and the outcomes will inform a recommendation to the Government on whether and how to implement this new access standard in due course.

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[81024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the average waiting time for children and adolescent mental health services in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England; and what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting lists for children and adolescent mental health services in those areas.

Gillian Keegan:

No such estimate has been made as a national access and waiting times standard for child and adolescent mental health services has not yet been defined.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have consulted on the potential to introduce five new waiting time standards as part of its clinically led review of National Health Service access standards. This includes a standard for children, young people, and their families/carers presenting to community-based mental health services, should start to receive care within four weeks from referral. This consultation closed on 1 September 2021 and NHS England and NHS Improvement will publish a response in due course.

On 5 March 2021, we announced an additional £79 million in 2021/22 for children and young people's mental health services, allowing approximately 22,500 more children and young people to access community health services, 2,000 more children and young people to access eating disorder services and accelerating the coverage of mental health support teams in schools and colleges in England. We are also investing £2.3 billion a year in mental health services by 2023/24 to allow 345,000 more children and young people to access support. NHS England and NHS Improvement have also announced a further £40 million in 2021/22 to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and young people's mental health.

■ Mental Health Services: Prisoners

Rosie Cooper:

[\[74942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many prisoners are residing in jail awaiting admission to mental health units in England as of 15 November 2021.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 18 November 2021]: The data for the number of prisoners residing in jail awaiting admission to mental health units in England is not currently available.

■ Neurology: Waiting Lists

Helen Hayes:

[\[78463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of patients who are currently waiting for specialist neurology appointments.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 24 November 2021]: No estimate has been made as the Department does not hold this data in the format requested.

■ NHS 111

Theresa Villiers:

[\[80229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of effectiveness of the NHS 111 service at (a) identifying and (b) recommending patients who can be treated in primary care settings instead of A&E departments.

Edward Argar:

No such assessment has been made. NHS England and NHS Improvement advise that NHS 111 seeks to recommend the best service for patients needs. This is based on the assessment of the stated symptoms either by NHS Pathways or by a clinician. Wherever possible, recommendation to an emergency department is avoided if another suitable service is available, including referral to primary care settings.

Theresa Villiers:

[\[80230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the NHS 111 service on trends in the level of patient numbers attending A&E departments in NHS hospitals.

Edward Argar:

No such assessment has been made. NHS England and NHS Improvement have advised that the proportion of NHS 111 callers referred to emergency departments has remained stable at approximately 11% since August.

■ NHS and Social Services: Migrant Workers

Sarah Owen:

[\[75145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2021 to Question 70322 on NHS and Social Services: Migrant Workers, if he will publish in any format available how many overseas NHS and care workers have received a reimbursement for the immigration health surcharge since the Government announced the policy in 2020.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 18 November 2021]: While the Home Office, UK Visas and Immigration Services and the NHS Business Services Authority manage the system of reimbursement and collect management information on the number of refunds that have been made, this information is currently unvalidated. The Home Office is

considering whether this information can be verified and released in line with data standards.

■ NHS: Conditions of Employment

Dan Carden: [\[75989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Health and Care Bill on NHS employment contracts.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 19 November 2021]: The Health and Care Bill does not make any changes to National Health Service employment contracts. The Health and Care Bill provides for clinical commissioning group staff to transfer to integrated care boards (ICBs) via a transfer order. This has now been extended to allow transfer orders to be used for other health care employees who are transferring to ICBs. All staff including board level will transfer via the transfer scheme. Board level colleagues will transfer in either their new designate role or as a displaced member of staff and part of the talent pool.

■ NHS: Procurement

Clive Lewis: [\[81071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to require all companies in receipt of NHS contracts to be based in the UK.

Edward Argar:

The National Health Service relies on overseas suppliers for essential medicines and equipment to operate effectively and provide patients with access to key treatments. We are committed to securing the future of this supply chain by allowing manufacturers of essential supplies and equipment to access United Kingdom markets, in order to maintain vital supplies

However, we have made it clear that protecting public services, including the NHS, is of the utmost importance. The UK's public health sector is protected by specific exceptions and reservations in all trade agreements.

■ Osteoporosis: Research

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[63726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much the Government spent on osteoporosis research in (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020-21.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 29 October 2021]: The following table shows spending by the National Institute for Health Research on osteoporosis research in each financial year from 2018 and 2021.

2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
£1,359,889	£1,011,547	£908,433

Spend is adjusted through the lifecycle of a project and may not be the same each year depending on the demands of the research required at each stage. In 2020/21 project life cycles will also have experienced significant new demands due to the COVID pandemic and would have to adapt accordingly, for example, research staff being deployed temporarily to frontline NHS services.

■ Pharmacy

Feryal Clark:

[\[81152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the role of community pharmacy in alleviating pressure on GPs and hospitals this winter and beyond.

Maria Caulfield:

The Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework sets out how community pharmacy will be better integrated in the National Health Service, providing more clinical services such as treatment for minor illnesses. The Community Pharmacist Consultation Service enables NHS 111 and general practitioners to refer patients with a minor illness to a pharmacist for a consultation. The Discharge Medicines Service enables hospitals to refer recently discharged patients to a community pharmacy for support with their medication. NHS England and NHS Improvement are promoting and incentivising such referrals into community pharmacy. In addition, community pharmacies are playing an increasing role in the COVID-19 and flu vaccination programmes.

■ Social Services: Children

Geraint Davies:

[\[80198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to take steps with the Secretary of State for Education to develop guidance for health, education and children's social care commissioners or providers on sharing information about a child with other relevant health, education and children's social care commissioners or providers.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: The Data Protection Act 2018 and the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation provide a framework to support appropriate and lawful secure data sharing relating to children and young people. The legislation also ensures that agencies and organisations are transparent and accountable in relation to their use of data.

Non-statutory guidance on information sharing, 'Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and

carers' was published in July 2018. This advice is being currently being revised and the updated guidance will be published in due course.

■ **Social Services: South East**

James Sunderland: [\[81135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the social care needs of working-age disabled adults in (a) Bracknell and (b) the South East.

Gillian Keegan:

No assessment has been made. Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities have a duty to assess the care needs of their local populations.

■ **Social Services: Vacancies**

Colleen Fletcher: [\[81027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the job vacancy rates in social care in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England; and what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of carers in the social care sector in those areas.

Gillian Keegan:

Skills for Care's 2020/21 annual estimates of the vacancy rate in the adult social care sector in Coventry, the West Midlands and England were 8.6%, 5.8% and 6.8% respectively. No estimate is made of vacancy rates by parliamentary constituency.

We have distributed a £162.5 million Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund to local authorities in England to increase adult social care workforce capacity over winter. This includes £18,133,213 for West Midlands across 14 local authorities, of which £1,050,198 has been allocated to Coventry.

■ **Solitary Confinement: Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients**

Rosie Cooper: [\[74943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many prisoners are being held in solitary conditions awaiting admission to a mental health bed in England as of 15 November 2021.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 18 November 2021]: This information is not collected centrally.

■ **Spinal Injuries: Continuing Care**

James Wild: [\[79501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will instruct NHS England to ensure that Continuing Healthcare assessments for spinal cord injured individuals are transferable between Clinical Commissioning Groups when a patient moves to a different area.

Gillian Keegan:

Existing legislation already sets out the responsibilities of clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) in relation to arranging NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC) services for an individual. This includes which CCG is responsible for a patient and ensuring appropriate care arrangements are considered for those who may have moved to a different area. The National Framework for NHS Continuing Healthcare and NHS-funded Nursing Care sets out that where an individual has been found eligible for CHC, regular reviews should be undertaken to ensure the care plan or arrangements remain appropriate to meet the individual's needs. Eligibility for CHC is not determined by clinical condition, but rather whether an individual has been assessed as having a 'primary health need'.

■ Strokes: Medical Treatments**Rachael Maskell:****[81053]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to help ensure that medical interventions for stroke are not de-prioritised in favour of elective surgery interventions in NHS priorities.

Edward Argar:

There are no formal plans to do so. All patients admitted or presenting to hospital services are treated in order of clinical need. Strokes are considered a medical emergency and would be treated as such by the National Health Service.

■ Surgery**Alex Sobel:****[71442]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department's elective recovery plan will include details on how hospital bed and surgical capacity should be prioritised to ensure the continuation of trauma and orthopaedic operations throughout the winter period.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 15 November 2021]: The focus of the elective recovery plan will be primarily on 2022/2023 to 2024/25 and will not include details of prioritisation for this winter.

The National Health Service has enacted their winter operating model from 1 November, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/BW1076-winter-preparedness-in-the-nhs-oct-2021-letter.pdf>

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Ms Lyn Brown: [73795]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing evidence of third booster vaccinations within the NHS Covid Pass; and whether he plans to implement that policy.

Maggie Throup:

There are currently no plans to record booster vaccinations in the NHS COVID Pass. Booster vaccinations are not required for domestic certification in England. We recognise that some countries are altering their vaccination requirements, therefore we are keeping this under review.

Dame Diana Johnson: [80244]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance he (a) has issued and (b) plans to issue on how children aged 12 to 17 years old are able to verify their covid-19 vaccination status when travelling overseas.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: The NHS COVID Pass is currently available to people aged 16 years old and over and can be used to demonstrate vaccination and recovery from COVID-19. Guidance on accessing a NHS COVID Pass is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-covid-pass#who-can-get-an-nhs-covid-pass-in-england>.

We are looking at ways to provide fully vaccinated 12 to 15 year olds with a travel NHS COVID Pass and further guidance will be made available in due course. This will be available shortly initially via a NHS COVID Pass travel letter. Further information will be made available in due course. While a few countries require full vaccination for under 16 year olds, most consider under 16 year olds as fully vaccinated, other countries accept testing and a small number accept recovery as equivalent to full vaccination.

Stephen Hammond: [80268]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure fully covid-19 vaccinated children aged 12 and over can demonstrate their vaccination status for the purposes of international travel.

Maggie Throup:

The NHS COVID Pass is currently available to people aged 16 years old and over and can be used to demonstrate vaccination and recovery from COVID-19. We are exploring ways to provide fully vaccinated 12 to 15 year olds with a travel NHS COVID Pass and further information will be available in due course. Most countries regard under 16 year olds as fully vaccinated, with others accepting testing or in a small number countries, recovery is accepted as equivalent to full vaccination.

■ Wound Dressings

Rosie Cooper:

[\[73783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has carried out any research on the effect on (a) patient outcomes, (b) healing rates and (c) quality of life of the reduced choice of wound care products available via NHS Supply Chain.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[73784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how the specifications used to procure wound care products are devised; who is responsible for devising those specifications; and how patient outcomes and quality of life impacts are considered as part of that process.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 17 November 2021]: NHS Supply Chain provides a wide range of products to meet the needs of clinicians and patients. NHS Supply Chain does not offer all products in a range, balancing the need for choice and diversity with the benefits of consistency and economies of scale.

As a wide variety of research into effectiveness of wound care products is conducted independently, the Department does not carry out such research. Experts involved in developing specifications include National Health Service clinicians, representatives of the tissue viability nurse community and the National Wound Care Strategy Programme. The specifications include a range of technical and usability factors which vary by product.

Clinicians can source products through alternative routes if required to meet specialist patient needs.

HOME OFFICE

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Drugs

Afzal Khan:

[\[81120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle the issue of spiking in nightclubs, bars and pubs.

Rachel Maclean:

Reports of spiking, whether that is adding substances to drinks or injecting people with needles, are extremely concerning. We have every sympathy with victims and anyone who might feel unable to enjoy a night out without fear. No one should feel frightened or vulnerable when they go out. We utterly condemn the people who perpetrated those attacks, and they should be brought to justice. This is an issue that the Government takes very seriously.

The Home Secretary has already asked the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to urgently review the extent and scale of the issue, and we are receiving regular

updates from the police. The police are working locally, regionally and nationally, including with our partners in the National Crime Agency.

The NPCC has convened a group of policing leads, including Deputy Chief Constable (DCC) Jason Harwin, the lead on drugs, and DCC Maggie Blyth, the Government's new lead on violence against women and girls, which is meeting regularly, with the aim of understanding the issue and ensuring that there is a strong police response.

My officials are working closely with NPCC leads and wider government to understand the scale of the issue and identify solutions to bring these offenders to justice. 11. There are a range of initiatives around the country that are already taking multi-agency action that we can seek to learn from. Several areas have introduced safe spaces – areas where a combination of medical assistance, supervised recovery and other support services is provided to intoxicated, injured or vulnerable individuals.

The abhorrent crimes of spiking also speak to broader issues of violence against women and girls. We published our new cross-Government tackling violence against women and girls strategy this summer, to help to ensure that women and girls are safe everywhere. We are delivering a pilot £5 million safety of women at night fund, focused on preventing violence against women and girls in public spaces at night, particularly in the night-time economy. That is in addition to the £25 million safer streets fund, which focuses on improving public safety, with an emphasis on the safety of women and girls, and their feelings of safety in public spaces.

■ Asylum: Local Government

Navendu Mishra:

[\[76843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government plans to make additional funding available for (a) schooling and (b) healthcare for local authorities with higher placements of asylum seekers.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office is working with Local Authority Chief Executives to ensure asylum seekers who require support because they would otherwise be destitute are dispersed equitably across the UK.

Any extra costs to local authorities caused by the placement of supported asylum seekers in their areas are being considered as part of this work.

■ Exploitation: Children

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[80929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the total number of children being criminally exploited in England and Wales.

Rachel Maclean:

The exploitation of children for criminal purposes is wholly unacceptable and this Government is determined to tackle it.

In 2020 there were 2544 National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referrals for Child Criminal Exploitation only. There were an additional 687 NRM referrals for children criminally exploited in addition to other exploitation types. The data is published on gov.uk : [Official statistics overview: Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism and Duty to Notify statistics UK, end of year summary 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

We are committed to increasing awareness of county lines exploitation amongst those best placed to spot it and have published guidance for frontline professionals on how to identify potential victims of county lines and appropriate referral routes. [Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: County Lines guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

■ Home Office: Scotland

Kenny MacAskill: **[80486]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many staff in her Department are operating in Scotland; and on which administrative sites those staff are based.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: The Home Office currently has total of 1108 members of staff based in Scotland, the majority are in Glasgow (700), Edinburgh (195) and Renfrewshire (155).

For the other locations in Scotland, providing the number of staff based there would reveal information on the security of our borders. Therefore, it is not possible to provide that due to national security.

■ Home Office: Staff

Robert Largin: **[78530]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many civil servants employed by her Department were based in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions on (a) 1 March 2021, (b) 1 June 2021 and (c) 1 September 2021.

Damian Hinds:

The below table provides the number of Paid Civil Servants working for the Home Office as at 30 June and 30 September.

GOR NUTS1	JUN-21	SEP-21
East Midlands (England)	231	245
East of England	1945	1906
London	13280	13253
North East (England)	1315	1331
North West (England)	7105	7093

GOR NUTS1	JUN-21	SEP-21
Scotland	1066	1104
South East (England)	3743	3866
South West (England)	398	420
Wales	636	643
West Midlands (England)	1036	1086
Yorkshire and The Humber	3649	3693
Northern Ireland	533	547

NOTE : 31ST MARCH 2021 DATA IS PUBLISHED ON GOV.UK AT

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2021>

■ Human Trafficking

Nick Thomas-Symonds: [81065]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police recorded cases of human trafficking there were in (a) 2021, (b) 2020, (c) 2019 and (c) 2018.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office routinely publishes the number of human trafficking offences recorded by the police in England and Wales. Such offences are recorded within the Modern Slavery” category in the quarterly police recorded crime open data tables which can be found here:

[Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-and-outcomes-open-data-tables)

■ Independent Office for Police Conduct: Complaints

Sir Alan Campbell: [78365]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what mechanisms are in place to lodge a complaint against the Independent Office for Police Conduct.

Kit Malthouse:

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) is required by law to have a complaints system in place to deal with complaints against its staff or service. Details are available on the IOPC'S website: [Our service - complaints, compliments and how to challenge our decisions | Independent Office for Police Conduct](https://www.iopc.gov.uk/our-service-complaints-compliments-and-how-to-challenge-our-decisions)

■ NHS: Migrant Workers

Sarah Owen:

[81139]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2021 to Question 78504, how many people have received refunds of the immigration health surcharge in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Kevin Foster:

The requested information is not published data or held centrally.

■ Schools: Demonstrations

Peter Kyle:

[81073]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many anti-vaccination protestors have been arrested for harassment and intimidation outside school gates since September 2021.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not centrally hold data regarding the number of anti-vaccination protestors arrested outside of school gates since September 2021.

The use of powers to manage protests is an operational decision for the police.

Through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, the Government is introducing new measures which will allow the police to take a more proactive approach in managing highly disruptive protests.

■ UK Border Force: Staff

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

[81066]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many staff were employed during (a) 2021 and (b) 2019 in Border force.

Damian Hinds:

The latest published staffing and finance figures for Border Force can be found in the Home Office Annual Report for 2020-2021 on page 107 at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-annual-report-and-accounts-2020-to-2021>.

The published staffing and finance figures for Border Force can be found in the Home Office Annual Report for 2018-2019 on page 85 at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-annual-report-and-accounts-2018-to-2019>.

■ Visas: Skilled Workers

Helen Hayes:

[81082]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in the context of no eligible prize holders having applied for her Department's fast-track Global Talent visa in the first six

months of that scheme, what steps she is taking to help ensure that the immigration system is accessible to talented (a) scientists, (b) academics and (c) creatives at all stages of their career.

Kevin Foster:

We have a very generous immigration offer, which enables talented scientists, academics and creatives to come to the UK through a number of different routes, including Global Talent, Skilled Worker, Creative and Temporary Worker Government Authorised Exchange (GAE) routes.

The new Points-Based System is working well, attracting the skills the UK needs, as demonstrated by the latest Immigration Statistics year end September 2021. Issuance of work visas across all routes is up on both 2020 and 2019 (pre-pandemic). Since launch, last year, the Global Talent route has seen a significant increase in applicants compared to the predecessor route, despite the impact of travel caused by the pandemic. The number of visas granted on this route has continued to grow from 422 between its launch in February 2020 to year end September 2020, to 1,709 applicants for the year ending September 2021.

We work closely with the endorsing bodies for the route, which include the country's leading science bodies, to develop the route to ensure it continues to meet the sector's needs. We ensure that the route makes it as easy as possible for those top scientists and academics coming to the UK, which is why we introduced the Prestigious Prizes pathway for those at the pinnacle of their career.

This was always intended to be for a very small number of those who may already use the Global Talent route. The only difference from the main route is the removal of the need to obtain endorsement for holders of prestigious prizes. Where individuals do not hold one of these prizes they continue to be able to use the wider route, which I am pleased to say they are doing so in strong numbers.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Exports

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[79329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to increase exports.

Mike Freer:

The refreshed Export Strategy, launched on 17 November as part of International Trade Week, is an action-led 12-point plan that reflects the Government's commitment to drive an exports-led economic recovery. It will encourage businesses across the UK to seize the export opportunities created by our new independent trade policy and market access work. HM Government will work in partnership with business to help them realise the benefits of international trade, by improving their capability and skills to export, internationalising key trading sectors, and raising the UK's exporting culture.

■ Financial Services: Exports

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[79332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department has taken to increase exports of financial services.

Mike Freer:

HM Government is committed to championing export opportunities for the Financial Services sector, where the UK is an existing global leader. We have done this by promoting Financial Services Trade and Investment, through targeted export campaigns supporting specific UK financial services. The Government has also signed ambitious progressive Free Trade Agreements, which will open new markets and reduce market access barriers for British financial services.

The Department for International Trade (DIT) has also recently published its updated Export Strategy, which outlines Government support available for British exporters, including financial services.

■ Overseas Companies

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[79335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department has taken to (a) reduce bureaucracy and (b) increase opportunities for British businesses internationally.

Mike Freer:

Through the Export Strategy, the Department is working across government to identify areas where we can reduce the regulatory burden, including through initiatives like the Single Trade Window. The Export Support Service provides a single point of entry for advice and support for businesses who export or wish to do so, and the Export Academy offers training on the technicalities of exporting such as Preferential Tariffs.

The Export Strategy is aligned with our independent trade policy, creating opportunities and making exporting easier for business by helping to deepen our bilateral relations and increase market access.

■ Overseas Trade

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[79333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department has taken to increase services and digital trade.

Mike Freer:

Services are the predominant driver of the UK economy, contributing 80% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2019 and employing over 26 million people (approximately 80% of total employment). Our Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

programme continually seeks a gold standard in services and digital trade, providing greater access to overseas markets for UK service businesses and making it easier to trade digitally.

Using our newly independent seat at the World Trade Organization (WTO), the UK is also actively engaged in a range of multilateral and plurilateral fora designed to further liberalise trade in services and create global rules for digital trade. Alongside the WTO, the UK also uses other multilateral groups such as the G7 and G20 to drive forward our ambitious trade agenda. Most recently, the UK led the G7's first ever 'trade track', bringing countries together to agree a set of ground-breaking Digital Trade Principles.

The Department also has a range of programmes designed to help British companies export. The recently announced Export Strategy outlines our ambition for trade in services, supported by promoting the role of services and digital trade within our FTA negotiations. Export campaigns such as in Financial, Professional and Business Services and the Creative Industries encourage companies nationwide to increase services exports and the Digital Exporting Programme is helping UK companies increase exports through digital commerce.

JUSTICE

■ Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre

Kate Osborne:

[\[79500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what contingency arrangements for legal advice provision will be put in place in response to the cancellation of the Detained Duty Advice Scheme procurement process for Derwentside immigration removal centre; which legal aid providers will be delivering advice under those contingency arrangements; and whether legal advice at Derwentside will be delivered in-person or remotely.

James Cartlidge:

The Legal Aid Agency (LAA) operates free legal advice surgeries in Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) in England. Individuals who are detained are entitled to receive up to 30 minutes of advice regardless of financial eligibility or the merits of their case. There is no restriction on the number of surgeries an individual may attend. If an individual who is detained requires substantive advice on a matter which is in scope of legal aid, full legal advice can be provided if the statutory legal aid means and merits criteria are met.

In order to provide access to the Detention Duty Advice Scheme (DDAS) services for women held at Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) from 1 January 2022, existing Providers at Yarl's Wood IRC will be invited to express interest in providing an additional 6 months of interim provision at Derwentside.

Under the contingency arrangements, 2 surgeries per week are planned for Derwentside DDAS. Appointments will be available as soon as women are held at the centre.

Following a change of operations in line with Government advice on social distancing, the LAA DDAS is currently operating by phone in IRCs. Detained individuals who wish to access this service are asked to advise centre staff, who will notify the duty solicitor under the scheme. The duty solicitor will contact the individual directly.

■ Ex Gratia Payments

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[78327]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Court of Appeal judgement, [2021] EWCA Crim 956, if he will make an ex gratia payment to the appellant in accordance with paragraph 104 of that judgement.

James Cartlidge:

Ex gratia offers are discretionary, and the Ministry of Justice is required to consider all the relevant information before making a decision on an individual case. Correspondence relating to this specific case is currently being considered.

■ Ministry of Justice: Staff

Robert Largan:

[78533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many civil servants employed by his Department were based in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions on (a) 1 March 2021, (b) 1 June 2021 and (c) 1 September 2021.

James Cartlidge:

Data for the number of civil servants employed by the Ministry of Justice by NUTS1 UK region as at 31 March 2021 are available at the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2021>

Data for the number of civil servants (headcount) employed by the Ministry of Justice by NUTS1 UK region as at 1 June 2021 and 1 September 2021 is provided in Table 1 below.

To align with published data an end of month position has been provided.

Table 1 - Ministry of Justice (including executive agency) payroll staff in post by NUTS1 region

	30-JUN-21	30-SEP-21
North East	4,902	4,953
North West	10,703	10,733
Yorkshire and the Humber	9,250	9,341
East Midlands	7,601	7,644
West Midlands	9,713	9,787

	30-JUN-21	30-SEP-21
East of England	7,555	7,509
London	16,002	15,956
South East	10,576	10,578
South West	5,762	5,724
Wales	4,371	4,342
Scotland	575	588
Northern Ireland	0	0
Unknown	41	78
Total	87,051	87,233

Staff are assigned to a NUTS 1 region based on their HR Location Postcode in the department's HR database.

Those with an Unknown region have either a blank or invalid HR Location Postcode in the department's HR database

■ Probation

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[78338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many probation red sites there were in the week commencing 15 November 2021, for each probation region in England and Wales.

Kit Malthouse:

In the week commencing 15 November 2021, there were six red sites situated in England, and none appointed for Wales. These were Kent, Buckingham and Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, Hertfordshire and HM Prison North Sea Camp.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[78340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much his Department has spent on the (a) hire or purchase, (b) installation, (c) maintenance and (d) replacement of shipping containers for use by probation services, in each of the last five years.

Kit Malthouse:

Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) provided front-line probation services for medium-low risk offenders from 2015 to June 2021. All front-line probation services transferred to the Probation Service on 26 June, in addition to assets that were required for the operation of services under the Unified Model.

CRCs will have had sub-contracting arrangements for their back-office operations, including shipping container installation and maintenance. These contractual relationships were between the CRC and their contractors.

During the lifetime of the contracts, CRCs were not obligated to provide an annual breakdown of spend on their back-office operations to the Authority and we, therefore, do not hold this data.

■ **Probation: Recruitment**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[78332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service workforce quarterly statistics, Probation Officer Recruitment Annex, September 2021, published on 18 November 2021, what assessment he has made of the impact on (a) probation officer workloads, (b) public protection and (c) rehabilitation of the probation officer vacancy rates in (i) Kent, Surrey and Sussex, (ii) South West, (iii) London, (iv) East Midlands and (v) other probation service regions.

Kit Malthouse:

There is not a process by which formal assessment is made of the published data that is referenced, rather the issues highlighted are monitored on an ongoing basis through operational management and plans around recruitment and retention.

The workload of Probation Officers is monitored through the Workload Measurement Tool (WMT) which considers the workloads of case holding Probation Practitioners. This reflects the current levels of staffing on an ongoing basis. The output of this is considered at both the operational and strategic level to support decision making. This tool prioritises public protection in how it operates affording the most time to cases with high levels of risk and need.

In response to known pressures in staffing across the country and in the identified areas, in 2020/21, we recruited a record 1,007 trainee probation officers. We are further increasing our recruitment to unprecedented levels, with a target 1,500 trainee Probation Officers being recruited this financial year (2021/2022).

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[78336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service workforce quarterly statistics, Probation Officer Recruitment Annex, September 2021, published on 18 November 2021, what steps he is taking to reduce probation officer vacancy rates in (a) Kent, Surrey and Sussex, (b) South West, (c) London, (d) East Midlands and (e) other probation service regions.

Kit Malthouse:

In April 2021 we published the first national Recruitment and Retention Strategy for the Probation Service which identified several key areas of focus.

The Probation Service is committed to increasing recruitment to fill Probation Officer vacancies, particularly in areas with significant local employment market challenges.

In 2020/21, we recruited a record 1,007 trainee probation officers. We are further increasing our recruitment to unprecedented levels, with a target 1500 trainee Probation Officers being recruited this financial year (2021/2022).

As outlined in the Recruitment and Retention Strategy, our focus is addressing recruitment and retention challenges within the Probation Service, particularly for those Probation Delivery Units (PDUs) with the highest average Probation Officer vacancy rates over a 12-month period.

We have identified 6 common drivers of attrition across those regions where it is more challenging to recruit and retain probation officers. These drivers include:

- o Pay and benefits
- o Newly Qualified Officers' (NQO) attrition
- o High caseloads
- o Lack of career progression
- o Wellbeing
- o Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination

Work is currently underway to address all drivers of attrition, including options to retain NQOs in their qualifying regions for a period post qualification and a targeted recruitment campaign to reduce probation officer vacancy rates in Kent, Surrey & Sussex (KSS), in an effort to fill 35 probation officer vacancies.

■ Probation: Work Experience

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[78339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many probation regions are using shipping containers as site accommodation for unpaid work staff; and at how many sites such containers are being used.

Kit Malthouse:

Shipping containers are used at some Community Payback sites, primarily as storage facilities. Staff working at sites with shipping containers will also have access to a Probation building in their region for office and welfare facilities.

Following unification of the service in June 2021, we are continuing to review the Community Payback estate, this includes assessing what sites are used for, the facilities available, and any storage amenities on site, including the number of shipping containers.

At this stage we are not able to provide an exact breakdown of the number of shipping containers currently on Community Payback sites.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[78342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when the Review of Unpaid Work under the Target Operating Model for the reunified national probation service will (a) commence and (b) complete.

Kit Malthouse:

The unified Probation Service assumed responsibility for the delivery of Community Payback in June 2021, providing significant opportunities for reform. The Target Operating Model outlines our ambition for Community Payback, including initiatives to improve delivery, increase placement quality and better meet the needs of offenders.

As part of these reforms, the Government is relaunching Community Payback to ensure offenders are visibly and publicly making reparations for their crimes by undertaking work that benefits their local areas. We are investing an additional £93m in Community Payback over the next three years to bolster delivery and facilitate the relaunch.

This work has commenced through our first national agreement (with the Canal and River Trust) which previews a new strategic approach to delivering high quality placements at scale, the introduction of a statutory duty to consult on Community Payback in the PCSC Bill and the piloting of a digital assessment.

Wider changes to Community Payback outlined in the Target Operating Model are part of a long-term investment in Probation services and will be implemented gradually.

■ Work Experience: Industrial Health and Safety**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[78341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the health and safety implications of using shipping containers as site accommodation for unpaid work staff.

Kit Malthouse:

All Community Payback facilities on site, including shipping containers, are subject to risk assessments. These assessments consider all foreseeable hazards and reduce the risk of harm to a reasonable level.

Shipping containers are primarily used as tool stores and our existing risk assessments outline the health and safety concerns associated with depots and tool stores.

Following unification of the Probation Service, HMPPS is developing a generic risk assessment for all Community Payback units, alongside a safe working practice document to detail the procedures for using the unit.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Building Safety Fund****Royston Smith:**[\[78443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many FTE officials in his Department are responsible for processing applications to the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

Departmental workforce numbers are published online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/workforce-management>.

Royston Smith:

[78447]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce the time taken to process applications to the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

We aim to progress eligible applications to the Building Safety Fund quickly and diligently. The planning and delivery of the remediation on a high-rise building can be complex. To help with this, we offer fund applicants pre tender funding and specialist expert support to speed up applications and the start of remediation. Detailed information on the Building Safety Fund application process and estimated timelines can be found in the Building Safety Fund application guidance available at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#building-safety-fund-application-process.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to submit correctly completed applications as soon as possible. The quicker an applicant submits their application, the quicker their application will be processed. A poorly completed full application will result in delays.

■ **Buildings: Repairs and Maintenance**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[81098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the number of leaseholders that are facing remediation costs for (a) non-compliant cladding and (b) non-cladding related building defects in (i) Slough, (ii) the South East and (iii) the UK.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government's £5.1 billion investment in building safety will fund the cost of replacing unsafe cladding for leaseholders in residential buildings 18 metres and over in England. This will make homes safer and protect leaseholders in those buildings from the cost of cladding remediation. Work is underway to collect data on a sample of 11-18 metre residential buildings in England. The information collected will include the existing building condition including the materials in use on the external wall system, and the costs of making the building safe. We will publish further details in due course.

The Government remains committed to protecting leaseholders from unaffordable costs, who bought their flats in good faith and are innocent parties. Further detail on the support offer for leaseholders in residential buildings of 11-18 metres will be released when all options have been fully considered.

■ Community Assets

James Sunderland:

[904425]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help communities protect their local assets.

Neil O'Brien:

The Government recognises the value of precious community assets. That is why we created legal protections for Assets of Community Value. And why we have launched the Community Ownership Fund, which will invest £150 million to support community groups to protect assets at risk.

The Fund is already supporting 21 groups, and over 4 years will help many more communities take ownership of local assets.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Meetings

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[80932]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2021 to Question 77410 on Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Meetings, when the predecessor departmental board, for the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government last met; and when his Department plans to publish minutes of those board meetings held since December 2016.

Eddie Hughes:

Prior to becoming the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) held its last full Departmental Board meeting in March 2021.

There are no plans to publish MHCLG's Departmental Board minutes from 2016 onwards.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Staff

Robert Largan:

[78525]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many civil servants employed by his Department were based in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions on (a) 1 March 2021, (b) 1 June 2021 and (c) 1 September 2021.

Eddie Hughes:

Information about the number of Civil Servants employed in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions can be found in Table 12 of the Department's annual civil service statistics at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2021>. Please note this information is published annually and most recently for the period up to 31 March 2021. Figures for the period after 31 March will be published in due course.

■ Devolved Matters**Marion Fellows:** [\[904427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the impact of the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 on intergovernmental relations.

Michael Gove:

I can assure the Honourable Lady that as the minister responsible for intergovernmental relations I speak to Cabinet colleagues regularly about the devolved governments' views on UK Government policy.

■ Housing: Complaints**Neil Coyle:** [\[79516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what progress he has made on establishing a Housing Complaints Resolution Service.

Eddie Hughes:

In summer 2019, the Department established the Redress Reform Working Group to help improve redress across the housing market and consider the options for a Housing Complaints Resolution Service. We are currently considering next steps and are taking forward a range of measures designed to improve redress across housing the housing market including provision for the New Homes Ombudsman scheme in the Building Safety Bill and measures to speed up access to the Housing Ombudsman by removing the need for residents to go to a designated person or wait eight weeks before approaching them (the Democratic Filter).

■ Housing: Construction**Jane Hunt:** [\[904424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the number of new homes.

Christopher Pincher:

We are driving up the supply of new homes by diversifying the market, investing in affordable housing, and increasing land supply for new homes by investing in infrastructure.

We have announced £10 billion investment in housing supply since the start of this Parliament, with our supply interventions due to unlock over 1 million new homes over the Spending Review period and beyond.

■ Members' Interests**Angela Rayner:** [\[80322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to pages 51-2 of the Committee on Standards in Public Life July 2018 report, MPs' Outside Interests, what recent discussions he has had with the Electoral Commission on

guidance on the registration of outside interests by candidates at parliamentary elections; and whether he plans to update that guidance.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: The recommendations in that Committee on Standards in Public Life report are primarily a matter for the House of Commons, and are currently being considered by the House.

In relation to the single recommendation on future outside interests of elected representatives, I would note that it is already the case that the press and public may ask questions of candidates on their intended outside interests if elected. And, indeed, such scrutiny is taking place in the current Parliamentary by-elections.

■ Oil: Exploration

Claudia Webbe:

[\[78518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it his policy to end Government support for Oil Drilling in Horse Hill, Surrey in the context of the UK's climate commitments under the Paris and Glasgow COP Agreements.

Christopher Pincher:

As the case remains before the Courts following the recent hearing, it would not be appropriate to comment.

■ Rents: Arrears

Ms Karen Buck:

[\[79265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the (a) number of tenants in rent arrears as a result of the covid-19 outbreak and (b) total amount of those arrears.

Eddie Hughes:

According to the Household Resilience Study (Wave 3, Apr-May 2021), 7% of privately renting households are in arrears, and of these, over 60% are in arrears of 1 month or less. 13% of socially renting households are in arrears, and of these, almost 40% are in arrears of 1 month or less

We continue to closely monitor the impacts of the pandemic, as well as the efficacy of the significant support measures put in place to support tenants and sustain tenancies.

Ms Karen Buck:

[\[79266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if she will commission independent research to estimate the (a) number of tenants in rent arrears as a result of the covid-19 outbreak and (b) total sum of those arrears.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department has commissioned survey research to understand the financial resilience of privately and socially renting households throughout the pandemic. The

Household Resilience Study is a follow up study to the 2019-20 English Housing Survey. It examines how household and housing circumstances have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Household Resilience Study Wave 3 results are based on surveys conducted between April-May 2021.

This data is used, alongside regular engagement with stakeholders, to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on tenants and the efficacy of the significant support measures put in place to support tenants and sustain tenancies.

■ Social Rented Housing: County Durham

Mary Kelly Foy:

[904423]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of social housing provision in County Durham.

Michael Gove:

This Government is conscious that we need to do more to support social housing. That is why we have created the new Affordable Homes Programme, which will deliver up to 180,000 affordable homes, if economic conditions allow. Across the North East, £213 million investment from this programme will help to create 4,000 new homes across the region.

This builds on our progress of delivering over 4,000 affordable homes across County Durham since 2010, almost 3,000 of which have been for social and affordable renters.

■ Temporary Accommodation: Children and Families

Colleen Fletcher:

[81023]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the number of families with children living in temporary accommodation in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Eddie Hughes:

Time spent in temporary accommodation means people are getting help and it ensures no family is without a roof over their head.

The latest figures show that on 30 June 2021 the number of households with children in temporary accommodation in England was 60,490, a 3.5% reduction compared to the same quarter the previous year. The number of households with children in temporary accommodation in Coventry is 257. Data is available by local authority only and so is not available for the Coventry North East parliamentary constituency. A breakdown of the temporary accommodation figures for individual local authority areas within the West Midlands Combined Authority is available on Gov.uk at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-april-to-june-2021>

The Government is committed to reducing temporary accommodation and preventing homelessness before it occurs. In 2021-22 local authorities received £375 million through the Homelessness Prevention Grant, which represents a £112 million increase on the previous year's funding, to give them the funding they need to prevent homelessness and help more people sooner.

■ Tribunals: Private Rented Housing

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[78346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities,, what procedure is available for investigating conduct of court appointed managing agents.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to making sure that those living in the leasehold sector are protected from abuse and poor service. This commitment includes raising professionalism and standards amongst managing agents, protecting consumers while defending the reputation of good agents from the actions of rogue operatives. Property agents can play an important role in the management and upkeep of buildings and protect the value of people's homes. Many take a professional approach, but others do not. We therefore welcome the ongoing work being undertaken by the industry itself to raise professionalism and standards across the sector.

Section 24 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 gives the First-tier Tribunal the power to appoint a manager to take over the landlord's right to manage the building under specific circumstances. As part of the process leaseholders are expected to nominate a suggested manager (which may include a managing agent), and the First-tier Tribunal will seek assurances that the nominated person is capable of performing the role before issuing an Order.

Following appointment, leaseholders can access the Government-recognised redress scheme that the agent is obliged by law to belong to for the resolution of any conduct or behavioural issues that may arise. Where the agent is a voluntary member of an established trade association, leaseholders may make a complaint to that association where appropriate. Any party may also apply to the First-tier Tribunal to have the Section 24 Order varied or discharged.

■ Woodhouse Colliery

Claudia Webbe:

[\[78517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it his policy to end Government support for the Whitehaven Coal Mine in the context of the UK's climate commitments under the Paris and Glasgow COP Agreements.

Christopher Pincher:

A public inquiry examining the proposal for a new coking coal mine in Cumbria took place in September and October. Following the close of that inquiry, the independent planning Inspector who oversaw it is preparing a report and recommendation for

Ministers to consider. As with all planning cases that come to Ministers to decide, once that report is received a timetable for issuing a final decision will be set.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Freight: Northern Ireland

Ruth Jones: [\[79481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he last met representatives of the haulage industry in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Conor Burns:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I meet regularly with the haulage industry, and a wide range of businesses, in Northern Ireland to enable a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced and to ensure that the appropriate support and practical solutions are available. I am looking forward to further discussions in the weeks ahead.

■ Northern Ireland Government

Louise Haigh: [\[80377\]](#)

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

Conor Burns:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: We continue to work with the Northern Ireland parties and the Irish Government to arrange the second Implementation Review Meeting, as set out under New Decade, New Approach. We hope that a progress update can be agreed by consensus and published at that stage.

Progress to date includes the release of over £700 million of the £2 billion of funding agreed in the deal, a series of events marking the centenary of Northern Ireland, and the implementation of institutional reforms via the Northern Ireland (Ministers, Elections and Petitions of Concern) Bill.

■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland

Louise Haigh: [\[79420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he plans to invite leaders from the Northern Ireland Executive to the Multiparty Talks on Legacy.

Conor Burns:

[Holding answer 25 November 2021]: The UK Government, as set out with the Irish Government at the British and Irish Intergovernmental Conference in June, has been engaging with the Northern Ireland parties regularly since the formal engagement process started.

This has included a roundtable with the Irish Government and the leaders of the Northern Ireland parties on 16 July, and numerous engagements with a range of stakeholders to discuss legacy issues with the two governments and representatives from the Northern Ireland parties.

PRIME MINISTER

■ **Brexit: France**

Jim Shannon:

[\[80992\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, what recent discussions he has had with his French counterpart on the operation of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement.

Boris Johnson:

President Macron and I speak regularly. As neighbours and historic partners, the UK and France work together on a huge range of issues, including the operation of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement

The UK is committed to implementing the Withdrawal Agreement in the best interests of UK nationals in the EU, EU citizens in the UK and businesses across the UK including Northern Ireland. We have been maintaining extensive discussions with the EU and its Member States on all areas of Withdrawal Agreement implementation, including notably on the Northern Ireland Protocol and citizens' rights.

I have raised the operation of the Northern Ireland Protocol with President Macron on several occasions, including during our discussion at the G20 Summit last month.

■ **David Cameron**

Ruth Jones:

[\[79480\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, when he last met David Cameron.

Boris Johnson:

Formal Ministerial meetings with external organisations are published each quarter on gov.uk

SCOTLAND

■ **Scotland Office: Staff**

Robert Largan:

[\[78536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many civil servants employed by his Department were based in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions on (a) 1 March 2021, (b) 1 June 2021 and (c) 1 September 2021.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland is a small Ministerial Department, which does not employ staff directly. Those that join do so on an assignment, loan or

secondment from other government Departments, principally the Scottish Government and the Ministry of Justice who remain the employers.

The Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland and Office of the Advocate General provide combined headcount reporting through the Office of National Statistics and other Civil Services bodies. Such information is routinely published in National Statistics, Civil Service Statistics, the latest of which are as at 31 March 2021.

However, specific staffing information relating to the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland is as follows:

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND	NUTS –	NUTS -REGION
	REGIONSCOTLAND/EASTERN SCOTLAND/CITY OF EDINBURGH	ENGLAND/INNER LONDON WEST /WESTMINSTER
30 March 2021	45	38
30 June 2021	45	35
30 September 2021	42	39

TRANSPORT

■ A46

Harriett Baldwin:

[\[80294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information his Department has received from Highways England on plans for the A46 between Teddington Hands roundabout and Evesham; and what records his Department holds on the number of (a) crashes and (b) fatal accidents on that route in each of the last five years.

Trudy Harrison:

National Highways is currently undertaking safety studies and speed surveys on the A46 between Junction 9 and Evesham to understand if any future improvements are needed. National Highways continues to engage with West Mercia Police about the possible review of the speed limit on this section of the A46 and will be able to provide a more comprehensive update in Spring next year.

The number of reported personal injury road accidents on the A46 between Teddington Hands roundabout and Evesham for the last 5 available years can be found in the table below.

REPORTED ROAD ACCIDENTS ON THE A46 BETWEEN TEDDINGTON HANDS ROUNDABOUT AND EVESHAM, 2016 TO 2020

Year	Fatal	All
2016	0	6

REPORTED ROAD ACCIDENTS ON THE A46 BETWEEN TEDDINGTON HANDS ROUNDABOUT AND EVESHAM, 2016 TO 2020

2017	0	6
2018	0	9
2019	1	10
2020	0	4

Source: DfT, STATS19

■ Babcock International: CHC Helicopter

Alex Cunningham:

[80985]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the offshore helicopter market, following CHC's takeover of Babcock International's offshore oil and gas crew transportation services on the UK Continental Shelf.

Robert Courts:

It has not been necessary for the Secretary of State for Transport to have any such discussions.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), as the UK's independent competition regulator, is reviewing this transaction. After conducting an initial review, on the 18 November the CMA announced its intention to progress to a more in-depth Phase 2 review unless the parties can offer acceptable undertakings to address the CMA's concerns.

Alex Cunningham:

[80986]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment the Civil Aviation Authority has made of the impact of CHC's takeover of Babcock International's offshore oil and gas crew transportation services on (a) passenger safety and (b) commercial pressure on offshore helicopter transport services.

Robert Courts:

Offshore helicopter services provide a vital link to ensure the viability of the United Kingdom's oil and gas industry and high standards of air safety are of fundamental importance.

As the United Kingdom's aviation safety regulator, the Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA) concern is whether the commercial environment has any impact on safety. The CAA

monitors all aspects of the operations of offshore helicopter companies and any risks to safe operation through its safety oversight programme.

As with any significant organisational change, the CAA will oversee how the change is managed and how any potential safety risks are assessed so that safety is maintained.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), as the UK's independent competition regulator, is reviewing this transaction. After conducting an initial review, on the 18 November the CMA announced its intention to progress to a more in-depth Phase 2 review unless the parties can offer acceptable undertakings to address the CMA's concerns.

■ Biofuels: Agriculture

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[80195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to support rural production of (a) biogas and (b) biomethane on farms for use as a vehicle fuel to replace red diesel.

Trudy Harrison:

Recognising the potential environmental benefits of biomethane, the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation scheme was amended in 2015 to reward biomethane used in transport and non-road mobile machinery on the basis of its energy content rather than volume. As a consequence biomethane is eligible to receive 1.9 RTFCs per kg, an increase on 1 RTFCs per kg, and double that number when produced from wastes such as manure.

■ Biomethane and Hydrogen: Rural Areas

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[80197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the use of biomethane and hydrogen in rural areas that are not connected to the gas grid.

Trudy Harrison:

Renewable fuels such as biomethane and green hydrogen for use in transport are supported by the Department's Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO).

The use of biomethane and hydrogen in applications outside transport would be a matter for the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

■ Biomethane: Rural Areas

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[80196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the use of biomethane to replace diesel in the rural haulage sector.

Trudy Harrison:

The Low Emission Freight and Logistics Trials funded by the department included emissions testing on a range of dedicated gas heavy goods vehicles and compared emissions to equivalent diesel models. This research estimates the use of biomethane could reduce CO₂ emissions from between 67-85%, however emissions of harmful air pollutant emissions were in some cases higher than the diesel comparators they were tested against.

■ **Department for Transport: Meetings****Owen Thompson:**[\[80390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department takes to ensure that at least one official from his Department is present during all (a) meetings and (b) phone calls relating to Government business between Ministers and third parties.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Ministers holding meetings or phone calls on government business are routinely accompanied by a private secretary or other official, in line with the expectations of paragraph 8.14 of the Ministerial Code

■ **Department for Transport: Senior Civil Servants****Robert Largan:**[\[80501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many senior civil servants employed by his Department were based in each of the 12 NUTS1 regions of the UK on (a) 1 March 2019, (b) 1 March 2020, (c) 1 March 2021 and (d) 1 September 2021.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

DFT and its Agencies have staff located across the country with a commitment to increasing our senior civil service presence outside of London.

(a) 1 March 2019

REGION	HEADCOUNT
London	160
North East	1
South East	7
South West	7
Wales	7
West Midlands	1

(b) 1 March 2020

REGION	HEADCOUNT
London	166
North East	1
South East	8
South West	8
Wales	7

(c) 1 March 2021

REGION	HEADCOUNT
London	200
North East	1
South East	11
South West	8
Wales	7
West Midlands	3
Yorkshire and The Humber	1

(d) 1 September 2021

REGION	HEADCOUNT
London	211
North East	1
South East	11
South West	8
Wales	7
West Midlands	3
Yorkshire and The Humber	1

■ **Department for Transport: Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform**

Theresa Villiers:

[\[80235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent progress he has made on implementing the recommendations of the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform relevant to his Department.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As set out in Lord Frost's letter of 16 September, and his statement to the House of Lords on the same date, the Government welcomed the report of the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform (TIGRR), and the transport regulatory reform recommendations that it contained.

Space Industry Regulations were approved by Parliament in July this year, paving the way for the first space launch from the UK next year and tackling the challenge of liability identified by TIGRR.

Our Future of Transport Regulatory Review consultation – which closed on 22 November – also sought views in relation to a number of the recommendations. We are currently analysing the responses to this consultation and will publish a response in due course.

In addition, we are exploring Parliamentary vehicles and potential funding mechanisms to deliver further measures arising from the recommendations.

■ **Department for Transport: UN Climate Conference 2021**

Ruth Jones:

[\[80469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2021 to Question 75126 on UN Climate Conference 2021: Government, how many Ministers in his Department travelled to COP26 by airplane.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

No Ministers from the Department travelled to COP 26 by airplane.

■ **Department for Transport: Working Hours**

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[81161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what records relating to staff working times are kept by his Department under Regulation 9 of the Working Time Regulations 1998; and how long those records are kept for.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Most DfT staff are recorded on payroll as being required to work a standard FTE week of 37 hours, well within the maximum hours permitted by the regulations. Standard DfT contracts do not require staff to work at night.

When staff are required to work unsocial hours or additional hours (overtime), this is reflected in their pay and is likewise recorded through payroll data, which is retained for a minimum of seven years.

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[81166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the compliance of his Department's staff working from home with the Working Time Regulations 1998.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The department's assessment is that staff working from home continue to comply with working time regulations just as they did while working in DfT workplaces. Home and hybrid working offer staff greater autonomy over working time and location, but we will continue to remind staff of their obligation to comply with the regulations (e.g. taking breaks, using annual leave allowances).

■ **Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Databases**

Derek Twigg:

[\[80915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the accuracy of driver's address records held by the DVLA.

Trudy Harrison:

All drivers have a legal responsibility to ensure that the address on their driving licence is correct. Not doing so is an offence which can be subject to a fine of up to £1000. It is important that drivers ensure that the address held on the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)'s record is accurate so that they can receive important information, for example reminders when their licence is due for renewal. The DVLA relies on the public to provide accurate information and only becomes aware that an address on its records is inaccurate when it is notified of such.

To help ensure records are accurate, the DVLA maintains a database of suspect addresses which is updated regularly, and places markers on individual licence records where there is information to indicate that the address held is incorrect. No further licences are issued until any issues have been investigated.

■ **Driving Tests: Languages**

Angela Crawley:

[\[79416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of including more language options for UK driving theory tests.

Trudy Harrison:

There are no plans to reintroduce voiceovers, or interpreters, on theory and practical tests.

A consultation exercise on the level of foreign language support during theory and practical tests showed that over 70% of respondents supported removing voiceovers and interpreters on tests. The research showed that people were worried and concerned that if tests were conducted in languages other than English, then road safety may be impacted, and fraud may occur.

■ Driving Tests: Sheffield

Gill Furniss:

[\[78480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, by what date his Department estimates the backlog of driving practical tests at DVSA Middlewood test centre, Sheffield, will be cleared.

Trudy Harrison:

As of 23 November 2021, the average waiting time for a car practical driving test at Middlewood test centre, Sheffield, is 24 weeks. The suspension of testing due to the pandemic has meant some candidates are having to wait longer than usual to take their driving test. Middlewood test centre is operating at full capacity and offering overtime to examiners to increase test availability. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency is in the process of a recruitment campaign to increase the number of examiners, including at Middlewood.

■ Electric Scooters: Lighting

Ruth Jones:

[\[79475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether electric scooters are required to have lights.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government is running trials of rental e-scooters to assess their safety and wider impacts. We require trial e-scooters to meet minimum standards of design, through administrative vehicle orders (VSOs) issued by the Secretary of State under s.44 and s.63 of the Road Traffic Act. The VSO includes an obligatory requirement for e-scooters to have front and rear lights and an optional requirement for indicators and brake lights.

While trials are running, privately-owned e-scooters remain illegal.

■ Electric Vehicles: Bicycles

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[79503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it is his Department's policy that (a) electric bikes require licencing and (b) bicycles that have been modified with electric motors require licencing.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Electric bikes or bicycles that have been modified with electric motors do not require licensing as long as they comply in full with the requirements of the Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycle Regulations 1983 (as amended). These requirements include that:

- The bicycle must be fitted with pedals that are capable of propelling it;
- The maximum continuous rated power of the electric motor must not exceed 250 Watts;

- electrical assistance must cut-off when the vehicle reaches 15.5 mph.

If a bicycle does not comply with the Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycle (EAPC) regulations then it is to be treated as a motor vehicle when used on roads, which means that it must be licensed and insured.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: North East

Rachael Maskell:

[\[78442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands, published on 18 November 2021, what consultation his Department carried out ahead of the publication of that plan with local economies affected by the decision not to proceed with the East Midlands-Leeds high-speed line and the reduction to the Northern Powerhouse Rail project.

Andrew Stephenson:

Ministers and officials had frequent meetings with leaders and representatives from the North and Midlands, including a series of roundtables, to discuss the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP). The Department is allocating £100m on work which will include consideration of the best way to take HS2 trains to Leeds from the East Midlands, and the Department will be seeking to engage local representatives as part of that work.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: York

Rachael Maskell:

[\[78435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his rail enhancement plans include the expansion of HS2 to York via the East Coast Main Line.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Integrated Rail Plan has set out the Government's plans for how HS2 will be delivered alongside other major rail projects in the North and Midlands across the next 30 years. This includes building HS2 from the West Midlands to East Midlands Parkway and upgrading the East Coast Main Line (ECML). Upgrades to the ECML will reduce journey times by up to around 15 minutes.

We are providing £100 million for development work on the West Yorkshire mass transit system and to look at the most effective way to run HS2 trains to Leeds. Any decisions on taking trains to York via the East Midlands will be subject to the outcome of this work.

■ London Underground: Pay

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[78392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the average financial package received by drivers on the London Underground.

Trudy Harrison:

Transport in London is devolved, and it is for the Mayor and Transport for London (TfL) to take decisions regarding financial packages for their workforce.

However, in the most recent funding agreement of 1 June 2021, the Government stated its expectation that TfL would freeze pay in line with the public sector pay pause.

Motor Vehicles: Insurance**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[80222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with representatives of the motor insurance industry on encouraging the shared use of cars by increasing the availability and affordability of appropriate policies.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department for Transport is always looking to work with the motor insurance industry to encourage the use of vehicles in ways that are better for the environment. My officials regularly engage with representatives of the insurance industry on a variety of issues and this is one of them, and they will continue to do so. The Association of British Insurers has a web page providing advice on car sharing, and the British Insurance Brokers' Association run a not for profit 'find a broker' service, and they maintain a list of brokers who specialise in car sharing.

Motorways: Repairs and Maintenance**Sarah Champion:**[\[81012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether contracts have been issued for smart motorway projects on the (a) M62, (b) M40 and (c) M42 as of 24 November 2021; and what his planned timetable is for commencing that work on those motorways.

Trudy Harrison:

We are currently considering the Transport Committee's recommendations contained in its report, *Rollout and safety of smart motorways*, and their practical applications, and will be providing a formal response in due course.

Contracts have been previously issued for smart motorways projects on the (a) M62 Junctions 20 to 25 and the M40/M42 Interchange, which is treated as one scheme.

Early design and enabling works contracts were awarded in early 2019 for the M62 Junctions 20 to 25 and M40/M42 Interchange, with work commencing late 2019. This included detailed surveys, hard shoulder strengthening and limited site clearance. Full detailed design was awarded on 11 June 2020 followed by full construction works on 23 October 2020 through a package contract to the Smart Motorways Alliance.

Main construction works for the M62 Junctions 20 to 25 is scheduled for January 2023. Main construction works for the M40/42 Interchange commenced in October

2021 with limited vegetation clearance and ecological mitigation for communications cable diversions.

■ Ports: Scotland

Kenny MacAskill: [\[81136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, who regulates and sets the charging fees for Scottish ports.

Robert Courts:

The Harbours Act 1964 (the Act) sets out the legal framework relating to charges levied by ports and Statutory Harbour Authorities (SHAs) across Great Britain. The functions and powers of the Secretary of State in the Act relating to charges have been devolved to Scottish Ministers for SHAs in Scotland.

The Act gives SHAs the power to levy charges for use of their harbour. It requires that certain charges of SHAs are reasonable (see section 27 of the Act) and also provides a right of objection to ship, passenger and goods dues levied by an SHA (see section 31), amongst other provisions. For SHAs in Scotland, the right of objection in section 31 is to the Scottish Ministers.

■ Railways

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[81111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the timeline is for the completion of the Whole Industry Strategic Plan.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Secretary of State set out in May the government's ambitions for Britain's railways through the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail. This included the commissioning of a 'Whole Industry Strategic Plan' that will become the first 30-year strategy for rail, providing clear, long-term plans for transforming the railways to strengthen collaboration, unlock efficiencies and incentivise innovation. The strategy will be produced for Ministers by Great British Railways, the new body established to provide strong and unified leadership across the rail network, enabling government to set clear direction for the railways in support of national priorities. The first strategy will be ready in 2022, with partners across the rail sector and beyond it consulted as it develops.

■ Railways: North of England

Rachael Maskell: [\[78423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Integrated Rail Plan sets out (a) capacity improvements on the Transpennine Route and (b) the potential effect of his proposals on Northern Powerhouse Rail on transport from York.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) sets out the improvements proposed across the Northern Powerhouse Rail core network including the Transpennine Route. This includes more than doubling capacity between Leeds and Manchester, and more than trebling capacity between Liverpool and Manchester and Liverpool and Leeds. Northern Powerhouse Rail plans set out in the IRP will also cut current journey times from York to Manchester from around 83 minutes to 55 minutes, and York to Leeds from 22 minutes to 19 minutes.

Rachael Maskell:[\[78434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he will take to ensure the Integrated Rail Plan ensures equality of economic effects to Yorkshire and the North East.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) sets out how Yorkshire and the North East will benefit from improved rail services including reduced journey times, increased frequency, and increased capacity. By improving regional connectivity, the IRP will unify labour markets, so that people can access a much wider range of jobs; bring businesses closer together; and improve access to key international gateways and markets so they become even more attractive locations for business investment.

■ Railways: Repairs and Maintenance**Rachael Maskell:**[\[78428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he will take to tackle rail disruption during his proposed improvement works on existing rail routes.

Andrew Stephenson:

Enhancements to existing lines, which will ease bottlenecks and make rail services more reliable, will bring some disruption for the existing railway's passengers and freight users. The Department will work closely with the rail industry to minimise disruption as schemes are developed and delivered.

■ Railways: York**Rachael Maskell:**[\[78426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of his proposals for (a) HS2 and (b) Northern Powerhouse Rail on journey duration from York to (i) Birmingham, (ii) London, (iii) Manchester and (iv) Leeds.

Andrew Stephenson:

The plans set out in the Integrated Rail Plan will reduce journey times across each of these routes from York as follows (based on current journey times): Birmingham - 147 to 110 minutes; London - 112 to 98 minutes; Manchester – around 83 to 55 minutes (typical fastest time ranges from c.80 to 86 minutes depending on Manchester station), and Leeds - 22 to 19 minutes.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[78427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will published the proposed journey times between York and (a) Newcastle and (b) Edinburgh after the Integrated Rail Plan. plan is delivered

Andrew Stephenson:

The Integrated Rail Plan proposals are expected to reduce journey times between York and Newcastle from around 56 to 47 minutes, and between York and Edinburgh from around 146 to 130 minutes (figures are subject to change as work develops and depend on stopping pattern).

Rachael Maskell:

[\[78431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish (a) his plans on establishing a rail operation centre in York, (b) the role of that centre in the delivery of the Integrated Rail Plan, and (c) operational coverage of that centre after the Integrated Rail Plan has been delivered.

Andrew Stephenson:

Network Rail has already established a Rail Operations Centre in York which is expected to run part of the network set out in the IRP. It is envisaged this centre will fulfil an increasingly important role as railway signalling systems are modernised

■ Road Traffic Offences

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[79340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2021 Question 31379, Road Traffic Offences, for what reason a review was announced by the Government in 2014 in the context of the statement in that Answer that the Department takes road safety seriously and keeps the law under regular review.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[79344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the outcome was of the full review of all driving offences and penalties, to ensure people who endanger lives and public safety are properly punished, announced 6 May 2014.

Trudy Harrison:

Following the announcement of a review of driving offences and penalties in 2014, the Government conducted a review of driving offences that focused on the most serious offences that involve death or injury. The results of this review are being brought forward as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

In addition, and as part of the Government keeping the law under regular review consideration is being given to a call for evidence on part of the Road Traffic Act. The Government is not able to provide further details at this stage because they are still being worked on.

■ Roads: Accidents

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[79341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many (a) deaths and (b) serious injuries occurred on roads in (i) Hendon constituency, (ii) London and (iii) England in each of the last three years.

Trudy Harrison:

The number of reported road deaths and serious injuries in Hendon constituency, London, and England, in each of the last three years, can be found in the table below. Figures for serious injuries have been adjusted to account for changes in severity reporting systems used by the police to record casualty severity.

REPORTED ROAD DEATHS AND ADJUSTED SERIOUS INJURIES IN HENDON CONSTITUENCY, LONDON, AND ENGLAND, FROM 2018 TO 2020

Year	Severity	Hendon	London	England
				d
2020	Fatal	1	96	1,246
2020	Serious (adjusted)	35	2,972	19,590
2019	Fatal	0	125	1,489
2019	Serious (adjusted)	55	3,781	24,509
2018	Fatal	2	112	1,521
2018	Serious (adjusted)	41	3,967	25,495

Source: DfT, STATS19

■ Roads: Japanese Knotweed

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[80212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help prevent the growth of invasive Japanese knotweed alongside highways.

Trudy Harrison:

National Highways has a legal responsibility to prevent Japanese knotweed from spreading to adjoining land where it is on the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and where National Highways is the landowner.

National Highways works on the principle that once a location has been identified and the extent of the infestation established, an appropriate method of control is then enacted to ensure eradication and to prevent re-infestation. Where Japanese knotweed is identified on adjacent land, National Highways will work with landowners to ensure eradication and prevention. National Highways, its service providers and

supply chain, follow the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Environment Agency guidance.

On the local network, local highway authorities have a duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highways network in their area, this includes issues such as overgrown vegetation. The Act does not set out specific standards of maintenance, as it is for each individual local highway authority to assess which parts of its network need repair and what standards should be applied, based upon their local knowledge and circumstances.

■ Transport for London: Incentives

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[78391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will ensure that Transport for London does not pay bonuses to senior management for the next two years as part of a bailout plan.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government has provided Transport for London (TfL) with more than £4 billion of support through three extraordinary funding and financing agreements since May 2020. These agreements have taken steps to put TfL on a sustainable financial footing while ensuring a fair deal for the taxpayer.

Transport in London is devolved, and it is for the Mayor and TfL to take the difficult decisions necessary to ensure a balanced budget. However, in the most recent funding agreement, of 1 June 2021, paragraph 28 stipulated, "Any bonus pay awards will not be paid for through extraordinary Government funding and TfL will have to demonstrate prudence in making any such payments. The Government does not expect TfL to authorise individual bonus pay awards."

■ Transport for London: Pay

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[79515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make representations to the Mayor of London on the potential increase in the number of employees receiving salaries in excess of £100,000 at Transport for London since 2016.

Trudy Harrison:

Transport in London is devolved, and it is for the Mayor and Transport for London (TfL) to take the decisions necessary to ensure a balanced budget.

The Government has provided TfL with more than £4 billion of support through three extraordinary funding and financing agreements since May 2020. These agreements have taken steps to put TfL on a sustainable financial footing while ensuring a fair deal for the taxpayer.

In the most recent funding agreement, of 1 June 2021, paragraph 28 stipulated, "The Government announced that it would pause headline pay awards across the public

sector on 25 November 2020. We expect TfL to freeze pay in line with the public sector pay pause [...], while TfL is in receipt of significant extraordinary funding.”

TREASURY

■ **Agricultural Shows: Non-domestic Rates**

Theresa Villiers:

[80924]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether agricultural shows and agricultural show grounds will qualify for the 50 per cent discount for Business Rates announced in the Budget 2021 for businesses in the hospitality, leisure and retail sectors.

Lucy Frazer:

Guidance setting out eligibility for the 2022-23 retail, hospitality and leisure relief will be published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in due course.

■ **Agricultural Shows: Red Diesel**

Theresa Villiers:

[80925]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will allow agricultural shows and agricultural showgrounds to continue to use red diesel given their classification by his Department and animal health bodies as agricultural and licensed and regulated as such.

Helen Whately:

Following consultation in 2020, the Chancellor confirmed at Spring Budget 2021 that the Government will remove the entitlement to use red diesel from April 2022, other than for specific purposes, including vehicles and machinery used in agriculture, fish farming, forestry and horticulture.

The specific purposes where rebated diesel can be used in agriculture are set out at section 9 of Excise Notice 75: Fuel for use in vehicles, which is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/fuels-for-use-in-vehicles-excise-notice-75>

■ **Amazon Web Services: Finance**

Chi Onwurah:

[78408]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the impact on the revenues of Amazon Web Services of the changes to research and development tax credits to include cloud services announced in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021.

Lucy Frazer:

At Autumn Budget 2021, the Chancellor announced reforms to Research and Development tax reliefs to support modern research methods. Expenditure on data and cloud costs will qualify for tax relief. Further details will be announced at Tax Administration and Maintenance Day on 30 November 2021.

■ Business: Taxation

Rachael Maskell:

[\[78439\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with representatives of HMRC on the challenges faced by businesses in the payment of their tax as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[78440\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will enable businesses to schedule the repayment of tax owed by businesses as a result of financial challenges caused by the covid-19 outbreak.

Lucy Frazer:

Treasury Ministers and officials have regular meetings with HMRC officials as part of policy development and delivery. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on taxpayers has formed part of these discussions.

HMRC is doing everything it can to help businesses with temporary cash-flow issues to survive as the economy grows, and to provide individuals with support they need.

HMRC's longstanding Time to Pay policy allows businesses in temporary financial difficulty to schedule their tax debts into affordable and sustainable instalment arrangements with no maximum repayment period. These arrangements are flexible and can be amended if the business's circumstances change.

At the end of September 2021, there were almost 890,000 Time to Pay arrangements in place, worth over £4.6 billion. This is a substantial increase from the end of the year 2019-20, when HMRC had around 650,000 arrangements worth around £2.0 billion.

Any taxpayer concerned about their ability to pay should contact HMRC to discuss the support available.

■ Energy: Conservation

Ben Lake:

[\[78497\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason VAT is payable on domestic cavity wall insulation and other energy efficiency measures; and if he will make a statement.

Lucy Frazer:

Under UK VAT rules, most goods and services are subject to the standard rate of VAT of 20 per cent. While there are exceptions to the standard rate, these have always been limited by both legal and fiscal considerations.

One exception is the 5 per cent reduced rate that applies to the installation of certain energy-saving materials, including insulation for walls, in residential accommodation. Further information can be found in VAT Notice 708/6 Energy-saving materials and heating equipment, which is available at: www.gov.uk.

■ Government Departments: Fines

John Healey:

[80907]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of (a) 10 November 2021 to Question 68120 on Ministry of Defence: Fines and (b) 19 November 2021 to Question 75808 on Government Departments: Fines, what information his Department holds on remedial actions imposed by his Department on (i) the Ministry of Defence and (ii) other Government Departments, in the latest period for which data is available.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Treasury answered UIN 68120 on 10 November 2021 confirming that the department does not hold a central record of the remedial actions that have historically been taken, and such actions can take many forms.

The Minister for Defense Procurement's answers of 9th and 10th November (to questions UIN 68119 and 68120) explained the actions taken in respect of the cases reported in the department's annual reports and accounts, and explained the reasons why these were reportable. Other Government departments will report fines in their annual reports and accounts in a similar manner.

Fines imposed by the Treasury on other government departments are considered fruitless payment, a form of loss. [Managing Public Money](#) directs departments to report fruitless payments in the Loss Statement of the Parliamentary Accountability section of their annual report and accounts.

Departments are in the process of laying and publishing annual reports and accounts for the 2020-21 period. Annual reports and accounts for central government departments for 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 are linked in the [Central Government Department's annual reports and accounts central landing page](#).

■ Health and Social Care Levy: Scotland and Wales

Ben Lake:

[78496]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the (a) Welsh and (b) Scottish Governments on the use of payroll messaging facilities and the new Health and Social Care levy in their nations.

Lucy Frazer:

HM Treasury Ministers and officials have had several discussions with the devolved administrations, including the Welsh and Scottish Governments, on the implementation of the Health and Social Care Levy.

These discussions cover a range of issues and will continue until and beyond its introduction from April 2022.

■ Mathematics: Education**Bridget Phillipson:** [79358]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on assessing the (a) impact and (b) value for money of the Multiply programme announced in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021.

Mr Simon Clarke:

I and HMT officials had regular discussions with the Secretary of State for Education and his officials on the Spending Review.

■ Post Office Card Account: Ceredigion**Ben Lake:** [79449]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people in Ceredigion in receipt of (a) tax credits, (b) child benefit and (c) guardian's allowance payments hold only a Post Office card account.

Mr Simon Clarke:

This information is not available.

■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services**Bridget Phillipson:** [80979]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls made to the HMRC self-assessment helpline were (i) answered and (ii) not answered within five minutes in each of the last 36 months.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC performance information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-quarterly-performance-updates>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-monthly-performance-reports>

■ Treasury: Meetings**Jack Dromey:** [80938]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what meetings (a) Ministers, (b) special advisers and (c) civil servants in his Department had with the hon. Member for Milton Keynes North between 1 May 2020 and 31 January 2021.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ **Treasury: Staff**

Robert Largan:

[78531]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many civil servants employed by his Department were based in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions on (a) 1 March 2021, (b) 1 June 2021 and (c) 1 September 2021.

Helen Whately:

The number of Civil Servants employed by HM Treasury split by the 12 NUTS1 UK regions are as follows:

A) 1 March 2021

Information as at the 31st March 2021 can be found within the published Annual Civil Service Employment Survey (ACSES) national statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2021>

B) 1 June 2021

NUTS1	DESCRIPTION	1 JUNE 2021
1	North East	1
2	North West	
3	Yorkshire and Humber	
4	East Midlands	
5	West Midlands	
6	East of England	60
7	London	2006
8	South East	
9	South West	
10	Wales	
11	Scotland	
12	Northern Ireland	

C) 1 September 2021

NUTS1	DESCRIPTION	1 SEPTEMBER 2021
1	North East	7
2	North West	

NUTS1	DESCRIPTION	1 SEPTEMBER 2021
3	Yorkshire and Humber	
4	East Midlands	
5	West Midlands	
6	East of England	55
7	London	1991
8	South East	
9	South West	
10	Wales	
11	Scotland	
12	Northern Ireland	

WALES

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Drugs

Ruth Jones:

[\[79476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on steps to tackle drink spiking in Wales.

Simon Hart:

I have regular discussions with my Cabinet colleagues on a wide range of subjects, including the steps required to tackle drink spiking across the UK.

Reports of spiking, whether that is adding substances to drinks or injecting people with needles, are extremely concerning, and this is an issue that the Government takes very seriously. We have every sympathy with victims and anyone who might feel unable to enjoy a night out without fear.

The Home Secretary has already asked the National Police Chiefs' Council to urgently review the extent and scale of the issue, and we are receiving regular updates from the police who are working locally, regionally and nationally, including with our partners in the National Crime Agency.

The abhorrent crimes of spiking also speak to broader issues of violence against women and girls. We published our new cross-Government tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) strategy this summer to help to ensure that women and girls are safe everywhere. We are delivering a pilot £5 million safety of women at night fund, focused on preventing violence against women and girls in public spaces

at night, particularly in the night-time economy. This is in addition to the £25 million safer streets fund, which focuses on improving public safety, with an emphasis on the safety of women and girls and their feelings of safety in public spaces.

■ Freight: Wales

Ruth Jones:

[\[80460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, when he last met with representatives of the haulage industry in Wales.

Simon Hart:

I have regular discussions with representatives from various industries, including those in the haulage industry.

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Wales hosted a roundtable with Welsh hauliers and their representative bodies earlier this year to discuss issues facing the industry.

The Department for Transport has discussions with the Devolved Administrations on issues relating to road haulage. The Minister for Transport Baroness Vere is due to talk to her counterpart in December on the HGV situation in Wales.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Leeds

Ruth Jones:

[\[79469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what assessment he has made of the impact on Welsh commuters of the Government's decision not to proceed with the HS2 rail extension to Leeds.

Simon Hart:

By improving regional connectivity, the Integrated Rail Plan will unify labour markets, so that people can access a much wider range of jobs; bring businesses closer together; and improve access to key international gateways and markets so they become even more attractive locations for business investment.

Crewe Northern Connection would improve connections from North Wales to the HS2 network, potentially bringing many passengers within 2 hours 15 minutes of London. Work to progress options on completing the Midlands Rail Hub could give passengers from South Wales easy access to the HS2 network at Birmingham Curzon Street.

■ RSPCA Cymru

Ruth Jones:

[\[79471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, when he last met representatives of RSPCA Cymru.

Simon Hart:

I have regular discussions with representatives from various stakeholders in relation to animal welfare.

Whilst animal welfare policy is a devolved matter in Wales, as well as in Scotland and Northern Ireland, both the Office for Secretary of State for Wales and Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs engages with stakeholders across the UK to promote our animal welfare policy objectives or to seek views where appropriate to do so.

■ Wales Office: Meetings

Owen Thompson: [\[80401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what steps his Department takes to ensure that at least one official from his Department is present during all (a) meetings and (b) phone calls relating to Government business between Ministers and third parties.

David T C Davies:

Ministers holding meetings or phone calls on government business are routinely accompanied by a private secretary or other official, in line with paragraph 8.14 of the Ministerial Code.

■ Wales Office: Senior Civil Servants

Robert Largan: [\[80510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how many senior civil servants employed by his Department were based in each of the 12 NUTS1 regions of the UK on (a) 1 March 2019, (b) 1 March 2020, (c) 1 March 2021 and (d) 1 September 2021.

Simon Hart:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Wales has five SCS roles (including job shares). They are split between our London and Cardiff offices as follows:

1 MARCH 2019	CARDIFF 1	LONDON 3
1 March 2020	Cardiff 1	London 5
1 March 2021	Cardiff 1	London 5
1 September 2021	Cardiff 1	London 5

■ Wales Office: UN Climate Conference 2021

Ruth Jones: [\[80473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2021 to Question 75126 on UN Climate Conference 2021: Government, how many Ministers in his Department travelled to COP26 by airplane.

Simon Hart:

No Ministers from the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales travelled to COP26 by air. I travelled to the conference by train. No other Wales Office Ministers attended.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Conversion Therapy: Crime

Feryal Clark:

[\[79509\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether her Department has plans to introduce a new criminal offence for people aiding and abetting the removal of a person from the UK for the purpose of sexual orientation or gender identity conversion therapy.

Mike Freer:

This Government is committed to banning the practice of all coercive conversion therapy in this country. Our approach is to target practitioners and those who promote this abhorrent practice, while providing support to victims and those at risk. We are consulting on our proposals for how to legislate for a ban on conversion therapy until 10 December. Responses to the consultation will inform the Government's final approach.

This Government wants to ensure that no one is taken abroad to undergo conversion therapy under any circumstance. Certain violent and sexual offences that could be committed in the course of conversion therapy, including rape and grievous bodily harm, already have extraterritorial effect so that, where appropriate, UK nationals and residents who commit those offences outside the UK may be prosecuted in the UK.

We also propose to introduce Conversion Therapy Protection Orders, which could set out certain conditions to protect a person from undergoing the practice overseas, including removing a passport for those at risk of being taken abroad or any requirement that the court considers necessary to protect that person.

■ Conversion Therapy: Gender Recognition

Alicia Kearns:

[\[78507\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the Government's consultation on Banning conversion therapy, published on 29 October 2021, and the consultation document which states that the proposals do not alter the existing clinical regulatory framework or the independence of regulated clinicians working within their professional obligations, if the Government will commit to ensuring that a forthcoming ban on conversion therapy will protect access to healthcare for transgender people who are under 18 years old.

Mike Freer:

It is important that people are able to have open and explorative conversations that allow them to come to the right decision for themselves. People who are transgender or are exploring their transgender status, including under 18s, will remain able to access the support they need from qualified health professionals without change. Our proposed approach to banning conversion therapy will complement the existing clinical regulatory framework and not override the independence of clinicians to offer support in line with professional obligations. We will work with the relevant authorities

to ensure that our legislative interventions operate effectively, with no unintended impact on clinical practitioners.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Coronavirus: Government Assistance

Kim Leadbeater:

[80518]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2021 to Question 76056 on Coronavirus: Government Assistance, for what reason that Answer did not provide details of the specific assistance the Government is providing 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; and if she will make a statement.

Mims Davies:

The Government does not collate data on whether someone who is seeking support has 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. DWP supports people who are in a range of challenging circumstances, and there is a broad spectrum of support, financial and practical, that could be available to such a person, subject to their individual circumstances and the eligibility rules applicable to that support.

For this reason, it is not possible to provide details of the specific assistance the Government is providing to people in the circumstances described in Question 76056.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Staff

Robert Largan:

[78527]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many civil servants employed by her Department were based in each of the 12 NUTS1 UK regions on (a) 1 March 2021, (b) 1 June 2021 and (c) 1 September 2021.

Guy Opperman:

a) As published in the National Statistics and taken from the Annual Civil Service Employment Survey which can be accessed here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2021>, on the 31st March 2021, DWP had the following headcount in each of the following NUTS1 UK Regions;

REGION	HEADCOUNT
North East	9,550

REGION	HEADCOUNT
North West	17,710
Yorkshire and Humber	9,250
East Midlands	4,490
West Midlands	7,600
East of England	4,570
London	10,030
South East	6,660
South West	5,740
Wales	5,640
Scotland	8,820
Northern Ireland	..
Not Reported	900
All Employees	90,950

1 Numbers are rounded to the nearest ten, and cells containing between one and five employees are represented by '..'.

2 Workplace postcode data is used to derive geographical information.

3. Figures relate to paid employees only and are shown in staff in post (SiP)

4. Numbers may not sum due to rounding to the nearest 10

b/c) Consistent figures are available for the 30th June 2021 and 30th September 2021, DWP had the following headcount in each of the following headcount in each of the following NUTS1 UK Regions;

b)

30th June 2021

REGION	HEADCOUNT
North East	9,720
North West	17,920
Yorkshire and Humber	9,500

REGION	HEADCOUNT
East Midlands	4,610
West Midlands	7,890
East of England	4,700
London	10,310
South East	6,650
South West	5,720
Wales	5,670
Scotland	9,030
Northern Ireland	..
Not Reported	960
All Employees	92,690

c)

30th September 2021

REGION	HEADCOUNT
North East	10,500
North West	18,680
Yorkshire and Humber	9,710
East Midlands	4,710
West Midlands	7,990
East of England	4,800
London	10,510
South East	6,740
South West	5,790
Wales	5,860
Scotland	9,160

REGION	HEADCOUNT
Northern Ireland	..
Not Reported	920
All Employees	95,370

1 Numbers are rounded to the nearest ten, and cells containing between one and five employees are represented by '..'.

2. Figures relate to paid employees only and are shown in staff in post (SiP)

3. Numbers may not sum due to rounding to the nearest 10

■ Household Support Fund

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[78539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure elderly residents are able to keep warm during winter 2021-22; and what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the Household Support Fund.

Guy Opperman:

The Government has committed to keeping the winter fuel payment. This winter we will pay households with individuals who reached state pension age on or before 26 September and are below age 80, £200; and households with someone aged 80 and over, £300. Cold Weather Payments of £25 are also paid to vulnerable customers on qualifying benefits, including older people on Pension Credit, for every week of severe cold weather between 1 November and 31 March.

Vulnerable households across the country will also be able to access a new £500 million support fund to help them with essentials. The Household Support Fund will provide £421 million to help vulnerable people in England with the cost of food, utilities and wider essentials. Local Authorities in England have discretion to design their own bespoke local schemes, within the overall parameters of the Household Support Fund, with help primarily focused on food and utility bills. Up to 50% of the fund is available for councils to use on households without children, including those of state pension age. Local Authorities will use their resources to identify vulnerable households who are in most need in their area and can apply their own discretion to eligibility and the size of the award.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is responsible for the Warm Home Discount and customers in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit can receive a £140 rebate providing their energy supplier is part of the scheme.

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.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Hospitals: Construction

Daisy Cooper:

[62857]

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

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 1 November 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Edward Argar:

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

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

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business Update

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Science, Research and Innovation) (George Freeman):

[\[HCWS431\]](#)

The Government is announcing today a guarantee to provide a financial safety net for successful UK applicants to Horizon Europe, whilst we push to formalise our association as soon as possible.

We agreed terms for association under the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). When the TCA was agreed in December 2020, the UK and EU signed a *Joint Declaration on Participation in Union Programmes and Access to Programme Services*. This sets out the parties' shared commitment for the UK to associate to Horizon Europe alongside Euratom R&T, Fusion for Energy and Copernicus at the earliest opportunity. The Government remains committed to securing this outcome so that research collaboration can continue, and we stand ready to formalise our association, but disappointingly there have been persistent delays from the EU, which has led to uncertainty for the UK sector and their European partners.

UK and EU researchers and businesses have a long history of successful collaboration. As Europe's leading R&D and science centre with world class universities, scientists and innovators, the UK will bring a significant amount to the Programme. Further delays will benefit neither the EU nor the UK.

The Government's priority remains association to Horizon Europe. UK researchers, businesses and innovators have been able to apply to calls as 'Associated Candidates' since early 2021. So to provide reassurance to UK-based applicants, the Government has decided to guarantee funding for the first wave of eligible, successful applicants to Horizon Europe who have been unable to sign grant agreements with the EU.

The guarantee is a short-term measure intended to address the continued delays from the EU to formalise the UK's association to Horizon Europe. The funding will be delivered through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) who will publish details on how the guarantee will work including eligibility, scope and how to apply in the coming weeks.

The Government has always been clear that our priority is to support the UK's research and development sector and we will continue to do this in all future scenarios. As announced in the 2021 Spending Review, in the event that the UK is unable to associate to Horizon Europe, the funding allocated to Horizon association will go to UK government R&D programmes, including those to support international partnerships.

The Government looked at the practicalities of handling such a situation in 2020 and developed a detailed set of alternatives plans, which included continued support for international research, innovation collaboration and domestic research support. This work is being refreshed and we remain ready to implement these plans should they become

necessary. I have written an open letter to the sector to set out my early thinking on the policy priorities should we be unable to associate, and will be inviting their views over the coming weeks.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Standard for Algorithmic Transparency

Paymaster General (Michael Ellis):

[[HCWS428](#)]

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

The Cabinet Office's Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) has today published a cross-government standard for algorithmic transparency. This move makes the UK one of the first countries in the world to make progress on developing a national algorithmic transparency standard. The CDDO was established in January 2021 as the new strategic centre for Digital, Data and Technology for the government.

Several leading organisations in the field, such as the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation (CDEI), Ada Lovelace Institute and Alan Turing Institute, as well as renowned academic and international institutions, including the Oxford Internet Institute, AI Now Institute and OECD, have called for greater transparency to help manage the risks associated with algorithmic decision-making, bring scrutiny to the role of algorithms in decision-making processes and help build public trust.

In the [National Data Strategy](#), the government committed to working with leading organisations in the field to explore what an effective mechanism to deliver greater algorithmic transparency would look like. It reiterated this commitment in the [response](#) to the [National Data Strategy](#) consultation, and announced that it was developing a public sector algorithmic transparency standard in the [National AI Strategy](#).

While designing the first version of the standard, CDDO has worked closely with the CDEI. It has convened stakeholders from across government, civil society and academia, and conducted a deliberative public engagement exercise with the CDEI and BritainThinks, to ensure that a diverse range of views have been taken into account.

Proactive transparency in this field is a natural extension of the UK's long-standing leadership in data ethics and open data. Several public sector organisations will trial the standard in the coming months, and provide user feedback to CDDO. CDDO is also seeking further feedback from stakeholders outside of government. Following the pilot, CDDO will iterate the standard based on feedback gathered and seek formal approval from the Data Standards Authority in 2022.

This development comes after the government has consulted on a proposal to introduce transparency reporting on the use of algorithms in decision-making for public authorities, government departments and government contractors, as part of the [wide-ranging consultation](#) on the future of the UK's data protection regime. It sought views on the role

that such reporting would play in building public trust, as well as what the key contents of mandatory transparency reporting should be and whether any exemptions should apply.

I have deposited a copy of the standard and accompanying guidance in the libraries of both Houses, and published both on GOV.UK.

HOME OFFICE

■ Annual Report of the Biometrics Commissioner

The Minister of State for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): [\[HCWS429\]](#)

My Noble Friend the Minister of State, Home Office (Baroness Williams of Trafford) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I am pleased to announce that my Rt Hon Friend the Home Secretary is today publishing the Annual Report of the Biometrics Commissioner, together with the Government's response.

The Biometrics Commissioner is an independent office holder, who is appointed by the Home Secretary under section 21 of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. This is the first report submitted by the Commissioner, Professor Fraser Sampson, who was appointed earlier this year.

The Report covers the exercise of the Biometrics Commissioner's statutory functions over the reporting year, a large proportion of which fell to his predecessor.

I am grateful to Professor Sampson for this report, which we have published in full.

Copies of the report will be available from the Vote Office. The Government's response will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

TREASURY

■ Financial Conduct Authority Mortgage Review

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen): [\[HCWS430\]](#)

The issue of mortgage prisoners is one of my key priorities. I recognise the difficult position these borrowers are in and understand the stress that many experience as a result. I remain committed to examining what further can be done to assist borrowers and this is why I asked the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to conduct a review on mortgage prisoners to provide the further detail necessary to continue this important work. The *Mortgage Prisoners Review* [CP 576] has today been laid in Parliament.

The review identifies that there are now around 47,000 mortgage prisoners – these are borrowers who are up to date with payments, who are unable to switch, and who could potentially benefit from switching if they were eligible for a new deal. Most mortgage prisoner loans originate from prior to the financial crisis, when lending standards were looser, and this means that many affected borrowers struggle to switch as a result of not meeting post-financial crisis risk appetite.

The report is clear that the underlying reasons mortgage prisoners are unable to switch are complex, and it is therefore crucial to understand the facts and data around this issue in order to consider our approach. The FCA's review provides important insight into the mortgage prisoner population which the Treasury will now examine to determine if any further practical and proportionate solutions can be found for affected borrowers who struggle to obtain a new mortgage deal.

More widely the review shows that the number of borrowers with inactive firms has materially decreased since the FCA last collected data in this area in 2019. This partly reflects the ability of many borrowers in closed books to switch to an active lender if they so choose. I would encourage all mortgage borrowers to examine their switching options to ensure they are on as competitive a rate as possible for their circumstances.

I am also encouraged to see that the interest rates paid by almost all borrowers in closed books are less than the rates they signed-up to when they took out their mortgage, with a third paying at least 3.5 percentage points less.

However, it is clear that challenges remain in addressing this issue. While there is evidence that some mortgage prisoners have switched as a result of significant regulatory interventions made to date, it is also clear that the number of borrowers who have benefited is small. This new report also makes clear that the reasons borrowers struggle to switch are complex and varied, and that there are no simple solutions to increase the number of borrowers who are able to switch to better rates with active lenders.

Nevertheless, I remain committed to this issue, and am grateful for the work undertaken by the FCA on this review which provides the crucial insight necessary to consider any further action. I am also grateful to the industry partners who have committed to continue to work together on this issue and look forward to further engagement with them.

With the data from this review, the Treasury will now target our work to determine if there are any further practical and proportionate solutions for affected borrowers, including consideration of means through which we can help borrowers better position themselves to meet lender risk appetite. While I am approaching this further piece of work with appropriate ambition and optimism, I am also keen to manage borrower expectations by emphasising that any solutions tabled must avoid the potential for significant risk of moral hazard to consumers in the wider mortgage market or those who aspire to obtain a mortgage and must be value for money for the taxpayer. Any announcements on this will be made when the Treasury has had sufficient time to examine the review's findings and consider any options available to address this complex issue.

Copies are available in the Vote Office and on

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mortgage-prisoner-review>