



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 30 November 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:43 P.M., 30 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

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Clean Steel Fund

Seema Malhotra: [\[78411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department will publish its spending proposals for the Clean Steel Fund.

Lee Rowley:

The Government recognises the vital role that the steel sector plays across the United Kingdom economy. We will continue to work with the sector to support its decarbonisation. Funds such as the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (IETF) and the Industrial Decarbonisation and Hydrogen Revenue Support (IDHRS) scheme have been announced to support decarbonisation by the Government. Further proposals, including the approach to the Clean Steel Fund, will be brought forward in due course.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Ben Everitt

Jack Dromey: [\[80939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 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.

George Freeman:

[Holding answer 29 November 2021]: Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Ministers and Special Advisers have had no one-on-one meetings with my Hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes North between 1 May 2020 and 31 January 2021. Ministers have participated in MP-Roundtables, All-MP calls and MP tea surgeries during this period, some of which the Hon. Member for Milton Keynes North attended or received an invitation for. Details of meetings held by civil servants are not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Diesel Fuel and Petrol: Prices

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[79289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the reasons for the increase in petrol and diesel prices over the last six months.

Greg Hands:

The Department's analysis shows that changes in retail prices of petroleum products, such as petrol and diesel, are primarily driven by changes in global market prices for crude oil and exchange rates.

Recognising that fuel is a major cost for households and businesses, the Government has kept fuel duty frozen. This is the twelfth consecutive freeze saving the average UK car driver a cumulative £1,900, compared to the plans the previous Government set out in 2010.

■ **Holiday Leave**

Ruth Jones:

[\[79468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on staff health and wellbeing of policies on holiday similar to that offered by FinnCap.

Paul Scully:

Almost all workers are legally entitled to 5.6 weeks paid holiday a year and employers should do everything reasonably practicable to ensure that they are able to take as much of their leave as possible in the year to which it relates. Employers can offer more holiday than the statutory minimum, which would be agreed as part of individual contracts.

The Government is also exploring additional ways that employers can offer flexibility to workers to balance work and other responsibilities. We are consulting on a series of measures to change the existing legislative framework so that it is more effective at supporting flexible working.

■ **Offshore Industry: Continental Shelf**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[80983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many offshore oil and gas workers were employed on installations on the UK Continental Shelf in (a) January 2020, (b) January 2021 and (c) in the latest month for which figures are available.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 29 November 2021]: The Department has not made an estimate of the number of workers employed on offshore oil and gas installations on the UK Continental Shelf. However, industry does compile statistics on the offshore workforce and these figures are provided in the Oil and Gas UK Workforce and Employment Insight Report 2021 (<https://oguk.org.uk/product/workforce-insight-report-2021/>), which shows the total number of offshore oil and gas workers (personnel on board) at approximately 10,000 in July 2021. This is an increase from around 7,000 offshore oil and gas workers in April 2020.

■ **Solar Power: Space Technology**

David Johnston:

[\[79488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allocating funding to the development of space based solar power.

George Freeman:

A report which includes some of those potential merits is available on the Government website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/space-based-solar-power-de-risking-the-pathway-to-net-zero>.

■ **Utilities: Natural Gas****Jim Shannon:****[79371]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support the sustainability of gas suppliers in the UK.

Greg Hands:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have held a series of bilateral and roundtable events with a range of energy suppliers. We are continuing to engage with these stakeholders regularly to hear about the challenges they currently face and discuss the way forward.

It is the responsibility of Ofgem, as the independent regulator, to engage with suppliers considering exiting the market.

In a competitive market, it is normal from time to time for energy suppliers who cannot finance their activities to exit the retail energy market. We have, however, seen large and unprecedented gas price spikes which has resulted in acute financial pressure on suppliers recently, driving a higher number of market exits.

We are working with the energy industry to put them on a more stable footing in the longer-term. That includes continuing to build a robust domestic renewable energy sector so that we are less exposed to global trends in natural gas supply and demand.

■ **Wind Power: Celtic Sea****Dr Alan Whitehead:****[80893]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2021 to Question 74871, what assessment he has made of the merits of developing floating wind energy projects in the Celtic Sea.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 29 November 2021]: The Government considers floating offshore wind as a vital component of the UK's energy mix. In addition to the test and demonstration floating projects already in early development, the Crown Estate has commenced work on a floating wind leasing round in the Celtic Sea which could bring forward up to 4GW of new projects. The leasing round will focus on early commercial scale projects of 300-350MW and full commercial scale projects of up to 1GW. The Government recently announced up to £160 million to support large-scale floating offshore wind ports and factories to be built across the UK.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office: Meetings

Owen Thompson:

[\[80384\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, 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.

Michael Ellis:

Ministers holding meetings with external organisations on government business are routinely accompanied by a Private Secretary or other official. Where a Minister finds themselves discussing official business without an official present, any significant content is passed back to the department as soon as possible, in line with the expectations of paragraph 8.14 of the Ministerial Code.

COP26

■ Climate Change: China

Jim Shannon:

[\[79374\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he plans to take to help ensure that China is held accountable for the adequacy of its response to climate change.

Jim Shannon:

[\[80993\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what plans he has to make representations to his Chinese counterpart on tackling climate change.

Alok Sharma:

The Glasgow Climate Pact is a historic agreement. We have a roadmap to keep 1.5°C alive but this is based on commitments made and relies on concerted and dedicated delivery by all countries. We will continue to demonstrate strong UK leadership over our Presidency year to make sure promises are kept and delivered to the highest standards, working with parties and civil society partners to advance rapid progress.

Leading up to and at COP26, I held regular discussions with China's Special Climate Envoy, Xie Zhenhua, and I look forward to continuing to work with China throughout the UK's COP26 Presidency to implement and build on the pledges China has made this year.

■ Coal: China and India

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[76658\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what assessment he has made of the actions that (a) China and (b) India will take to reduce the amount of coal burned in those countries as a result of COP26.

Alok Sharma:

At COP26, all parties agreed to phase down the use of coal. The Glasgow Climate Pact secured its specific mention for the first time ever. In addition, China and India have both made commitments to act on climate change, and have endorsed the Glasgow Breakthrough Agenda. At COP26, Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister Johnson jointly launched the Green Grids Initiative – One Sun One World One Grid, with over 80 signatories. India also announced a new commitment to have 50% electricity capacity from renewable sources by 2030, and China has committed to peak their carbon emissions before 2030. On coal power, both China and India committed to end overseas coal financing in the run-up to COP26.

UN Climate Conference 2021**Mr Steve Baker:****[R] [73822]**

To ask the President of COP26, what estimate he made of the total (a) energy usage and (b) emissions before offsetting by the operation of COP26.

Mr Steve Baker:**[R] [73823]**

To ask the President of COP26, what estimate he has made of the total number of (a) flights and (b) air miles for delegates attending COP26 during the period of that Conference.

Alok Sharma:

Based on available estimates of floor areas for the Blue Zone and Green Zone, energy usage amounted to approximately 900,000 kWh electrical and 2,500,000 kWh thermal. This accounts for the build, live-event, and de-rig phases of the conference.

We have estimated total emissions of 102,500t of CO₂ which includes a wide range of sources – including delegate and visitor transport, accommodation, catering, energy usage, and policing and security impacts. COP26 will be a carbon neutral event, achieved through mitigating impacts in delivery and then offsetting unavoidable emissions.

Regarding flights, this data will be forthcoming from UNFCCC and will inform our final carbon reporting.

DEFENCE**Afghanistan: Refugees****Stephen Farry:****[79512]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason the online application form linked from the Gov.uk webpage entitled Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy: further information on eligibility criteria, offer details and how to apply, can no longer be accessed; and what steps his Department has taken to ensure its immediate reinstatement.

James Heappey:

On 22 November 2021, we became aware of a technical issue affecting the ARAP online application form, and the Contact Us form. Resources were quickly re-directed in order to fix this and ensure immediate reinstatement of both forms. I can confirm that the Contact Us form was restored on 23 November, and the Application form was restored on 24 November. The forms can be found at the below link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy-information-and-guidance>

■ Armed Forces: Social Security Benefits**David Linden:****[80435]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on fully exempting military compensation from financial assessments for social security benefits.

Leo Docherty:

This is a matter for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and it would not be appropriate for the Ministry of Defence to seek to interfere or intervene in a non-Defence matter. Issues relating to eligibility for social security benefits and exemptions from financial assessments are the responsibility of the DWP. As such, there have been no discussions on this issue between the Secretary of State for Defence and his counterpart in the DWP.

■ Army: Kenya**Kenny MacAskill:****[82102]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what injuries were sustained by the civilian who was hit by unexploded ordnance at Archers Post Training Area in 2021; what the (a) age, (b) gender and (c) nationality was of the victim; and what the date was of the incident.

James Heappey:

The incident in which a civilian was injured after finding an unignited mini flare on Archer Post Training Area occurred on 23 January 2021. The civilian was a 13 year old Kenyan child, he sustained minor injuries (lacerations and burns) and required medical attention. The matter was investigated by the Kenyan authorities as the incident took place on Kenyan land and the child was a Kenyan national.

Kenny MacAskill:**[82103]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of whether British munitions were responsible for the explosion at Archers Post Training Area in 2021 that injured a civilian.

James Heappey:

On 23 January 2021 a mini-flare was discovered and inadvertently deployed by a Kenyan civilian. This flare is consistent with British munitions that had been used in

the area. The matter was investigated by the Kenyan authorities as it took place on Kenyan land and involved a Kenyan national.

■ Bassingbourn Barracks

Anthony Browne: [\[79504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to close Bassingbourn Barracks.

Jeremy Quin:

Following the update to the House by the Secretary of State for Defence on 25 November, I am pleased to confirm that there are no plans to close Bassingbourn Barracks, and the Mission Training and Mobilisation Centre (MTMC) will continue to be based there.

■ China: Taiwan

Jim Shannon: [\[80990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has held discussions with the Foreign Secretary on potential UK Government support for the Government of Taiwan in the context of the political situation across the Taiwan Strait.

James Heapey:

The Foreign Secretary and Defence Secretary meet regularly to discuss a wide range of international issues. These meetings often cover multiple topics and countries at appropriate classification.

■ Clyde Naval Base: Fire and Rescue Services

John Healey: [\[79281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2021 to Question 74892, what the location is of the High Reach vehicle that the Scottish Fire and Rescue service can provide to tackle high-rise fires at HMNB Clyde.

Jeremy Quin:

All high-rise buildings at HMNB Clyde are equipped with modern Fire Safety Systems which are designed to detect a fire in its early stages and provide an alarm throughout the building. It is MOD policy to evacuate buildings on the sounding of the fire alarm and this is regularly practised and recorded. The Fire alarm system is connected to a central control room who dispatch the on-site DFR FRS to the scene of the alarm. Therefore, the DFR FRS are expected to arrive at any incident at an early stage and to utilise internal access to commence firefighting activity. Internal fire-fighting is the primary and preferred option in tackling a fire.

Firefighting crews will always seek to use early intervention and the preferred option of internal firefighting actions, which would reduce the requirement to pitch any ladder for external access.

The number and of types of appliances, equipment and personnel attending any incident is determined by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and initial Incident Commander on the scene, based on the specifics of the incident. The High Reach vehicle, a Rosenbauer aerial ladder platform, is not closely proximate to the base but could be requested from its standing location at Falkirk Community Fire Station.

■ **Cyprus: Military Bases**

Bambos Charalambous: [\[82043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to Cyprus Environment Department Strategic Environmental Assessment opinion regarding the Non Military Development Policy statement that applies to the sovereign base areas, whether the Chief Officer's final decision on the agreement will reflect that of the Republic of Cyprus's Environment Department Strategic Environmental Assessment decision.

Bambos Charalambous: [\[82044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to Cyprus Environment Department Strategic Environmental Assessment opinion regarding the Non Military Development Policy statement that applies to the sovereign base areas, for what reason provision for isolated housing and large tourism developments is included in the policy statement in the context of the high biodiversity value and sensitivity of those areas.

James Heappey:

The Sovereign Base Areas Administration takes its environmental responsibilities extremely seriously, however, no final decisions on the new Non-Military Development Policy Statement have been taken yet.

Bambos Charalambous: [\[82045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the non-military development agreement between the Republic of Cyprus and the Government that applies to the sovereign base areas, what his timescale is for issuing a management plan and correct zoning plan for the Akrotiri Peninsula that addresses development pressures.

James Heappey:

No decisions on the future timing of new management plans have been taken yet.

■ **Glencorse Barracks: Staff**

Owen Thompson: [\[82020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has plans to amend the number of personnel at Glencorse Barracks from that as of 25 November 2021.

James Heappey:

As announced by the Secretary of State for Defence earlier this year, there will be a reduction in size of the British Army. Following detailed work, it has been confirmed that 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, which is based at Glencorse Barracks, will re-role to a Light Infantry battalion with a commensurate decrease in

size. However, subject to final confirmation, Balaklava Company, 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland will move from Redford Barracks to Glencorse Barracks. This will result in an overall small uplift to the number of personnel based at Glencorse Barracks.

Overall, plans announced as part of Future Soldier will see seven major regular units based in Scotland rather than the current six, and it will be home to a greater proportion of the Army than it is today.

■ Ministry of Defence Guard Service: Career Development

Jack Dromey: [\[79322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 45090, on Ministry of Defence Guard Service: Conditions of Employment, how many of the 20 applications were made by MGS staff seeking promotion.

Leo Docherty:

The Civil Service recruitment and selection process is anonymous. The recruiting Line Manager only gains more information on the status of individual candidates should they be selected for an interview. It is therefore not possible to ascertain the number of MGS employees who applied for promotion during the referenced recruitment campaign.

■ Ministry of Defence Guard Service: Conditions of Employment

Jack Dromey: [\[79318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 45088, Ministry of Defence Guard Service: Conditions of Employment, if he will place in the Library a redacted copy of any impact assessments made prior to the introduction of Operational MGS Employment Contracts.

Jack Dromey: [\[79319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 45088, Ministry of Defence Guard Service: Conditions of Employment, if he will arrange for trade union representatives to have access to the OMEC impact assessments.

Leo Docherty:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 24 November 2021 to Question number 75991 to the hon. Member for Portsmouth South (Stephen Morgan).

Attachments:

1. 75991 - Ministry of Defence Guard Service [75991 - Ministry of Defence Guard Service.docx]

Jack Dromey: [\[79320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 45089, Ministry of Defence Guard Service: Conditions of Employment, how much of the estimated £63 million savings over 10 years of the introduction of

Operational MGS Employment Contracts is expected to be realised (a) by year and (b) by other savings categories on which his Department holds data.

Leo Docherty:

The table below shows the projected Operational Ministry of Defence Guard Service Employment Contracts savings, by year, as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	PROJECTED SAVINGS £MILLION
2022-23	1.349
2023-24	2.774
2024-25	4.350
2025-26	6.155
2026-27	7.922
2027-28	8.001
2028-29	8.081
2029-30	8.162
2030-31	8.244
2031-32	8.326
Total	63.364

There are no other savings categories which contribute to this savings projection.

Jack Dromey:

[\[79321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 45089, Ministry of Defence Guard Service: Conditions of Employment, whether a value-for-money analysis including the potential effect on staff (a) health, (b) safety, and (c) wellbeing was undertaken before the introduction of OMEC contracts.

Leo Docherty:

A value-for-money analysis was provided through cost modelling and external benchmarking before the introduction of the OMEC contracts. The potential effects on staff health, safety and wellbeing were not specifically included as part of this analysis.

Staff health, safety and wellbeing are managed routinely through the application of Defence Joint Service Publication (JSP) 892 and in accordance with MOD Civilian HR Policy, Rules and Guidance.

■ Ministry of Defence: Incentives

John Healey: [\[79283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has paid out in bonuses to civilian personnel in each year since 2010.

Leo Docherty:

All non-consolidated performance related pay (NCPRP) for each year is published here: [MOD non-consolidated performance related pay - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-non-consolidated-performance-related-pay). The figures in the below table represent the core MOD and exclude arms length bodies and trading funds.

YEAR	TOTAL BONUS SPEND
2010-11	£42,224,617
2011-12	£26,975,320
2012-13	£24,371,479
2013-14	£22,781,283
2014-15	£16,168,134
2015-16	£17,315,730
2016-17	£11,051,511
2017-18	£16,264,835
2018-19	£12,081,258

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2019-20 and 2020-21 figures are not currently held. The publications from the Cabinet Office have been delayed and are expected to be published in early 2022.

■ Ministry of Defence: Labour Turnover

John Healey: [\[79284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many civilian personnel in his Department have left on average in each year since 2015.

Leo Docherty:

All data for civilian personnel leaving the Civil Service is published on Gov.UK in the Biannual Civilian Personnel Report on the below link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-biannual-civilian-personnel-statisticsindex>

Data prior to 2018 can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-civilian-personnel-quarterly-statistics-index>

Tables 4 or 5 will show a total exit value for each 12-month period, including detailed breakdown by TLB and Organisation or Reason for Leaving. These tables also list exit rate for overall totals if the Honourable Member is seeking to understand the Turnover Rate (Average Strength in a listed 12 month period divided by totals exits within that period).

■ Ministry of Defence: Meetings

Owen Thompson:

[80397]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, 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.

Leo Docherty:

In line with the expectations of paragraph 8.14 of the Ministerial Code, Ministers holding meetings or phone calls on Government business are routinely accompanied by a private secretary or other official. Private offices in the Ministry of Defence operate in accordance to this.

■ Ministry of Defence: Staff

John Healey:

[79285]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer 17 November 2021 to Question 73729, on Army: Costs, what recent estimate he has made of the average cost to his Department of employing a civilian personnel; and what estimate he has made of that cost in each year between 2016-17 and 2020-21.

Leo Docherty:

The Department reports a median of the total remuneration of civilian staff as part of the Accountability Report - Pay Multiples analysis included in our Annual Report and Accounts. The following reflects an extract from the published Annual Report and Accounts (ARAc) from 2016-17 to 2019-20. The 2020-21 ARAc is subject to final review and approval and will be published shortly.

	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Median total remuneration of civilian staff	31,392.86	30,192.96	29,828.00	29,188.47

■ **Ministry of Defence: York**

Rachael Maskell: [\[82005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has plans to move civil servant jobs in (a) his Department and (b) non-departmental public bodies and government agencies associated with his Department to York.

Leo Docherty:

As part of Budget 2020, the Government committed to relocating 22,000 Civil Service roles from Greater London to locations across the UK, including York, with the Places for Growth Portfolio delivering on this commitment.

We will decide on our locations taking into account a range of factors including our operating models, workforce and location analysis. We will select places that we judge to have the skills, transport links and capacity to meet our needs and flourish in our chosen locations, as well as ensuring locations are suitable for the long term success and sustainability of the Civil Service.

■ **Porton Down: Labour Turnover**

Stephen Morgan: [\[81117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many members of staff have left the Defence, Science and Technology Laboratory in each of the last three years.

Jeremy Quin:

THE NUMBER OF STAFF WHO HAVE LEFT DSTL SINCE 2019 ARE SET OUT IN THE TABLE BELOW: YEAR LEAVERS LEAVERS AS A PERCENTAGE OF OVERALL HEADCOUNT 2019 6886.45% 2020 5966.09% 2021* 4675.69%

*To 26.11.2021

■ **Porton Down: Pay**

Stephen Morgan: [\[81118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of a potential pay disparity between employees of the Defence, Science and Technology Laboratory and those directly employed by his Department.

Jeremy Quin:

The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), is an Executive Agency of the MOD and operates a workforce model, distinct to that of the wider MOD, which reflects its specialist role.

MOD and Dstl have their own individual pay priorities. Dstl has delegated authority to determine the organisation's rates of pay and terms and conditions for civil servants, and to put arrangements in place that meets its particular needs, subject to the Civil Service Pay Guidance and Treasury approvals.

A pay benchmarking exercise was conducted in March 2020 that compared Dstl's pay ranges to broad MOD equivalents using a small sample of jobs and job families.

Stephen Morgan:

[\[82059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish benchmarking data on the pay disparity between Defence, Science and Technology Laboratory staff and those directly employed by his Department.

Jeremy Quin:

The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), is an Executive Agency of the MOD and has delegated authority to manage its workforce arrangements to meet its objectives. Dstl's organisational model is different to that of MOD as a result of its specialist role.

Dstl undertook a pay benchmarking exercise in 2020 that compared Dstl's pay ranges to broad MOD equivalents. The benchmarking exercise was limited in that it used a small sample of jobs and job families. The data, from March 2020, relates to pay only and non-financial elements of the overall offer are not included. It should be noted that this pay data is now eighteen months old.

Dstl has a different pay range structure to MOD, with Dstl having more pay levels than MOD grades. This is particularly the case between Dstl levels 6-8, which equate to MOD Grade 7-6. Dstl's pay ranges are also much wider.

The table below sets out the median and mean data from March 2020. The percentages representing the Dstl figure as a proportion of the MOD equivalent.

Dstl and MOD practice

Dstl (£)	DSTL LEVEL		MOD GRADE	MEDIAN PRACTICE		MEAN PRACTICE
	MOD (£)	%	Dstl (£)	MOD (£)	%	
4	HEO	28,652	32,425	88	28,247	32,965 86
5	SEO	37,322	39,511	94	37,633	40,180 94
6	G7 smaller	46,087	53,107	87	46,416	53,566 87
7	G7/G6	56,354	53,107/ 62,528	106/90	57,416	53,566/107/9 63,328 1
8	G6 larger	66,440	62,528	106	66,918	63,328 106

Note: the analysis is from National pay scales so the figures exclude London Weighting.

■ Ranger Regiment: Equipment**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[81875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to deploy new equipment with the Rangers Regiment.

James Heappey:

Rangers will be equipped to deliver what is asked of them; this may include new vehicles, weapons, surveillance and target acquisition systems, drones and communications. As part of the Army Special Operations Brigade, the Ranger Regiment is designed to deploy globally and conduct a range of different tasks, operating alongside both regular and irregular partners and proxies in high-threat and hostile environments.

■ Sentinel Aircraft: USA**John Healey:**[\[79280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total value is of his Department's contract to sell the retired Sentinel R1 fleet to the US.

Jeremy Quin:

The Defence Equipment Sales Authority has sold the retired Sentinel R1 fleet of five aircraft to a US consortium of three companies, Springfield Air, Raytheon US and Bombardier. The aircraft are not currently in an airworthy condition and the potential receipt to defence will depend upon the ability of the consortium to regenerate and fly at least one aircraft.

I am withholding the value of the sale as it may prejudice commercial interests.

■ Type 45 Destroyers: Repairs and Maintenance**John Healey:**[\[79279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Type 45 Destroyers have undergone work to upgrade their propulsion system through the Power Improvement Project; and when does he expect all Type 45s to have received that upgrade.

Jeremy Quin:

One Type 45 Destroyer, HMS DAUNTLESS, has undergone work under the Power Improvement Project (PIP). HMS DAUNTLESS is currently at the Cammell Laird shipyard in Birkenhead where equipment is being set to work following installation. The next phase of the programme will see HMS DAUNTLESS undertake a rigorous trials programme in harbour and subsequently at sea. It is expected that all six Type 45 Destroyers will have completed their PIP conversions by 2028.

The programme is dependent on the availability of ships to undertake the upgrade, balanced against the Royal Navy's current and future operational commitments. For these reasons we do not comment in detail on the future PIP timelines. PIP conversions are planned to take into account the regular Upkeep cycle to maximise

overall class availability and meet the readiness profile required to meet Defence outputs.

■ **UN Climate Conference 2021: Aviation**

Ruth Jones:

[\[80474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, 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.

Leo Docherty:

No Ministers in the Ministry of Defence travelled to COP26 by airplane.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Football Index: Compensation**

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[81899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government plans to compensate people who lost money as a result of the collapse of Football Index; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The Government appreciates the significant impact that the collapse of the novel gambling product Football Index had on former customers. BetIndex, the company which operated Football Index, went into liquidation on 5 November. The process is continuing and it is likely that this will result in some amounts being reimbursed to creditors. There is no compensation scheme for losses caused by a gambling firm ceasing to operate and the government does not think it would be appropriate to use public funds for these purposes.

■ **Swimming Pools: Closures**

Munira Wilson:

[\[82104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many public swimming pools have remained closed since being closed in 2020 in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health and all generations and communities should be able to enjoy the health, wellbeing, social and other benefits of being active

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

June 2021 there have been 14 public pools that have not reopened after closing during the pandemic.

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

EDUCATION

■ Arts: Education

Rachael Maskell: [\[80362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a specific arts premium in the education system.

Mr Robin Walker:

The government is committed to high-quality education for all pupils, and the arts and music are integral to this. With the significant impact of COVID-19 on children's learning, the department's priorities have inevitably had to focus on education recovery in the recent Spending Review. The government remains committed to the ambitions in the Plan for Cultural Education published in 2013, and will give consideration for a future arts premium in due course

In recognition of the merit of these subjects and how they contribute to a broad and balanced education in and out of school settings, the department will continue to invest around £115 million per annum in cultural education over the next three years, though our music, arts and heritage programmes.

■ Arts: Secondary Education

Caroline Lucas: [\[80949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential contribution of the arts and creative development subjects to secondary school pupils' education recovery following disruption caused by the covid-19 outbreak; and, with reference to page 4 of the costings document for the Conservative and Unionist Party manifesto 2019, if he will make it his policy to deliver an arts premium to secondary schools in (a) 2021-22, (b) 2022-23 and (c) 2023-24; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Robin Walker:

The government is committed to high-quality education for all pupils, and the arts and music are integral to this. With the significant impact of COVID-19 on children's learning, the department's priorities have inevitably had to focus on education recovery in the recent Spending Review. The government remains committed to the ambitions in the Plan for Cultural Education published in 2013, and will give consideration for a future arts premium in due course.

In recognition of the merit of these subjects and how they contribute to a broad and balanced education in and out of school settings, the department will continue to

invest around £115 million per annum in cultural education over the next three years, though our music, arts and heritage programmes.

With the real terms per pupil increases to core school funding and the additional £1 billion new funding announced specifically for recovery, schools will continue to have the flexibility to deliver a broad and ambitious curriculum and enrichment activities.

■ Business: Education

Seema Malhotra:

[80308]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his Department's most recent policy is on the teaching of enterprise education in schools.

Mr Robin Walker:

Financial capability is a key component of successful entrepreneurship and in 2014 financial literacy was made statutory within the citizenship national curriculum. Pupils are now taught the functions and uses of money, the importance of personal budgeting, money management and the need to understand financial risk. We have also strengthened the national curriculum for mathematics to give pupils the necessary mathematics knowledge and skills they need to make important financial decisions.

The computing curriculum should prepare pupils to apply existing digital technologies confidently and effectively. It will also provide them with the fundamental knowledge and skills for the next stage of their education and life.

Schools are free to cover enterprise and entrepreneurship education within their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. PSHE is compulsory in independent schools, and although it is not a mandatory subject in maintained schools or academies, schools are encouraged to teach it as part of their duty to teach a broad and balanced curriculum. Teachers have the freedom to design lessons in PSHE that meet their pupils' needs and are encouraged to develop their practice with the support of specialist organisations, such as subject associations.

The careers statutory guidance, originally published in 2015 and updated in 2018, requires schools in England to provide opportunities for pupils to develop entrepreneurial skills for self-employment. This should help pupils gain the confidence to compete in the labour market by providing opportunities to gain the practical know-how and attributes that are relevant for employment.

The department funds the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) to provide support to secondary schools and colleges and make links to employers, to increase young people's exposure to the world of work. There are more than 4,000 schools and colleges in the CEC's Enterprise Adviser Network, working with business volunteers to strengthen employer links. The result is 3.3 million young people now having regular encounters with employers, many of whom are entrepreneurs.

While it is for schools to decide how best to provide entrepreneurship education, we know that contact with entrepreneurs and businesses is essential. Modern careers guidance is as much about inspiration and aspiration as about advice.

■ Condition Improvement Fund

Peter Kyle: [\[82029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many repair projects funded by the Condition Improvement Fund in 2021-22 (a) have been completed and (b) are on-track to be completed by summer 2022 as at 25 November 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

The total number of Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) projects approved in the 2021-22 round was 1,486.

For the CIF 2021-22 round:

(a) 75 projects have completed on site and provided a completion return to the department.

(b) Based on the latest monitoring return and our forecasted slippage assumptions, we anticipate a further 893 projects will be completed by the end of August 2022.

This information is correct as at 26 November 2021.

■ Department for Education: Meetings

Owen Thompson: [\[80387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, 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.

Michelle Donelan:

Ministers are bound by the Ministerial Code, which states in paragraph 8.14:

“Ministers meet many people and organisations and consider a wide range of views as part of the formulation of Government policy. Meetings on official business should normally be arranged through Ministers’ departments. A private secretary or official should be present for all discussions relating to Government business. If a Minister meets an external organisation or individual and finds themselves discussing official business without an official present – for example at a social occasion or on holiday – any significant content should be passed back to the department as soon as possible after the event. Departments will publish quarterly, details of Ministers’ external meetings. Meetings with newspaper and other media proprietors, editors and senior executives will be published on a quarterly basis regardless of the purpose of the meeting.”

Every effort is made to accompany Ministers to planned meetings. Where Ministers are unexpectedly asked about government business without officials, they feed this information back to their private office, who make a note.

■ Department for Education: Staff**Robert Largan:**[\[80497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, 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.

Michelle Donelan:

The information requested can be found in the attached table.

Attachments:

1. 80497_table [80497_table_showing_NUTS1.xls]

■ Financial Services: Education**Kim Leadbeater:**[\[79513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many hours of financial education are required to be taught to pupils at (a) primary and (b) secondary school.

Kim Leadbeater:[\[79514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many hours of political literacy education are required to be taught to pupils at (a) primary and (b) secondary school.

Mr Robin Walker:

All schools are required to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. Financial education and political literacy are important aspects of the citizenship programmes of study, which are statutory at key stages 3 and 4 in maintained schools.

The department has also introduced a rigorous mathematics curriculum, which provides young people with the knowledge and financial skills to make important financial decisions. In the primary mathematics curriculum, there is a strong emphasis on the essential arithmetic knowledge that pupils should be taught. This knowledge is vital, as a strong grasp of numeracy and numbers will underpin pupils' ability to manage budgets and money, including, for example, using percentages. There is also some specific content about financial education, such as calculations with money. At secondary level, there is more specific content related to financial education in both the secondary mathematics curriculum and in the mathematics GCSE content. Pupils are taught how to solve problems such as loan repayments and interest rates and personal finance problems such as compound interest.

The government does not specify how schools should allocate their time to deliver the curriculum. School managers will need to design their timetables to meet their curriculum requirements. Teachers are encouraged to develop their practice in a way that meets the specific needs of their pupils.

■ National Leaders of Education: Training**Peter Kyle:** [\[81074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many National Leaders of Education (NLEs) have been trained over the last twelve months.

Mr Robin Walker:

Over the past 12 months, National Leaders of Education (NLE) and multi-academy trust (MAT) leaders have been trained to support this year's Trust and School Improvement Offer. As at 25 November 2021, there are 234 NLEs and 93 MAT leaders supporting schools and trusts as part of the offer.

■ National Tutoring Programme**Peter Kyle:** [\[81072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils have received (a) at least one and (b) more than one tutoring session as part of the National Tutoring Programme as at 24 November 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

In the 2020/21 academic year, the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) reached over 300,000 pupils in its initial year. The programme has been significantly expanded and aims to engage up to 2 million pupils in the 2021/22 academic year.

In addition to tutoring delivered through tuition partners and academic mentors, this year we have also provided funding direct to schools to allow them the flexibility of choosing their own qualified staff to deliver school-led tutoring.

NTP participation data for has not yet been published. We continue to collect data from schools for all three strands of the programme and will be publishing this in due course following validation in accordance with the Statistical Code of Practice.

■ NHS: Children**Geraint Davies:** [\[80199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will have discussion with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the merits of using the NHS Number as a single unique identifier for children.

Mr Robin Walker:

The primary identifiers for education are the unique pupil number for school aged pupils and the unique learner number for post-16 and adult education. These identifiers are developed to provide operational and analytical linkage between departments, and sector facing services, and are essential for delivery of policy and operational analysis both within the department and the wider sector.

However, the department is continually analysing the effectiveness of its unique identifiers for stages in education and will work with colleagues across government,

including from the Department of Health and Social Care, on improving the effectiveness of how identifiers contribute to the broader interoperability of data across our shared domains and the life events of citizens. This will include consideration of the merits of greater use of the NHS number as an identifier for children.

■ Primary Education

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[79506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many primary schools have (a) been opened and (b) closed by (i) local authority area and (ii) constituency in each year since 1997.

Mr Robin Walker:

The tables attached show the numbers of primary schools that have opened by year, local authority area and constituency between 1997 and 2021, and between 2000 and 2021 for schools that have closed. This includes new local authority maintained schools, free schools and new academies.

Prior to 2000, the department's records do not capture the information for closed schools in a way which would allow us to respond fully to my hon. Friend, the member for North West Durham's question.

Attachments:

1. 79506_table [79506_table_showing_primary_schools_opening_and_closing.xls]

■ Schools: Demonstrations

Peter Kyle:

[\[79424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many incidents of anti covid-19 vaccination protestors harassing schools and pupils have been recorded in 2021 as of 22 November 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

[Holding answer 24 November 2021]: The department continues to closely monitor anti-vaccination activity occurring around schools alongside the Department of Health and Social Care and other government departments.

There is a close working relationship between the vaccine programme, local police, local authorities and other partners to gather intelligence and provide proportionate mitigations to keep people safe.

Peter Kyle:

[\[79425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the prevalence of covid-19 anti-vaccination protests outside school gates (a) nationally, (b) regionally and (c) by local authority.

Mr Robin Walker:

[Holding answer 24 November 2021]: The right to peaceful protest is a vital part of a democratic society. However, this does not extend to unlawful behaviour, and it is never acceptable for anyone to intimidate pupils and teachers. Should a protest contravene the law, the police have comprehensive powers to deal with activities that spread hate or deliberately raise tensions through violence or public disorder. The use of these powers and the management of demonstrations are an operational matter 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.

Separately, the Department for Education and the UK Health Security Agency have provided information in guidance for schools on how to handle any misinformation or disruption. In the event of a protest or disruptive activity outside a school, or if schools know a protest is planned, they should alert the School Age Immunisation Service provider, local authority and local police contacts to discuss the best way to manage the situation.

■ Schools: Discipline

Peter Kyle: [\[81075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools have been supported by the Behaviour Hubs programme as of 24 November 2021.

Peter Kyle: [\[81076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much and what proportion of the £10 million funding for Behaviour Hubs has been allocated to schools as of 24 November 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

Since April 2021, the £10 million behaviour hubs programme has supported 22 lead schools and two multi-academy trusts (MATs), who have been working with 34 partner schools and two MATs. A second cohort of 41 partner schools and two MATs have been recruited and their induction took place in September 2021.

Of the £10 million funding, around 70% is being used to fund teachers' and senior leaders' time to engage with the programme and implement action plans. The remainder is being used to contract behaviour and programme delivery experts to develop and deliver specialist training and resources for schools.

■ Students: Finance

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[81108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the financial impact of interest-bearing student loans on Muslim students.

Michelle Donelan:

The government undertook an assessment of the impact of interest-bearing loans on Muslim students in the impact assessment for the Higher Education and Research Act, which was published in December 2017, and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-and-research-act-impact-assessments>.

■ Students: Loans**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[81109]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will carry out an impact assessment of potential increases to student loans contributions on graduates' standard of living.

Michelle Donelan:

I refer the hon. Member for Slough to the answer I gave on 22 November 2021 to Question [74983](#).

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[81110]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effects of increasing student loan contributions for graduates on the accessibility of higher education for people from lower-income backgrounds.

Michelle Donelan:

The student loan system in England removes financial barriers for those hoping to study higher education courses, while sharing its costs between learners and the general taxpayer.

In 2020, record rates of English 18-year-old state school students who were in receipt of free school meals at age 15 were accepted on full time university courses (up 1.4 percentage points to 20.3%). These students were 74% more likely to go to university in 2020 than in 2009.

After finishing study, monthly student loan repayments are linked to income, not to interest rates or the amount borrowed. This protects lower earners, and any outstanding debt is written off after 30 years at no detriment to individual borrowers.

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

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Air Pollution****Geraint Davies:**[\[81862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on (a) implementing a place-based, community-centred approach to air pollution and (b) using that approach to protect low income communities who may experience higher exposure to air pollutants.

Jo Churchill:

The improvement of air quality remains a priority for the Government. We are taking a range of actions to reduce air pollution, including through the landmark Environment Act 2021.

In line with commitments in the Act, we are currently reviewing the National Air Quality Strategy and will be publishing a revised Strategy in 2023. We aim to develop a strong support and capability-building framework to ensure local authorities have the necessary tools to take local action and to clarify the available powers and levers. The revised Strategy will also support greater local action to identify and address air pollution inequalities and reduce the impacts on vulnerable groups and communities disproportionately impacted by air pollution. Engagement with a wide range of stakeholders will be undertaken in coming months.

Through the Environment Act we are improving the Local Air Quality Management Framework, for example by broadening the range of bodies required to collaborate with local authorities in developing local Air Quality Action Plans. We are developing revised Local Air Quality Management statutory guidance in which we propose to include more emphasis on community engagement to increase public awareness of air quality issues, and additional information to support the consideration of air quality inequalities in local Air Quality Action Plans. We are engaging with a range of stakeholders, and especially local government as we develop and implement policies and guidance to support local action on air quality.

Geraint Davies:[\[81865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to update the Daily Air Quality Index to align it more closely with the new World Health Organisation air quality guidelines published on 22 September 2021.

Jo Churchill:

We are conducting a holistic review of the way we communicate air quality information and advice. This will ensure the public is provided with timely and relevant information about air pollution, the actions people can take to limit their personal exposure, the impacts of air pollution on their health, and their own influence on air quality. The Daily Air Quality Index is included in the scope of this review.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Supply Chains

Bill Esterson:

[\[81938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the supply of wine and spirits over the festive period 2021-22.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain, as demonstrated throughout the Covid-19 response, and it is well equipped to deal with situations with the potential to cause disruption. Defra has well established ways of working with the industry and across Government to monitor risks that may arise. We do not anticipate disruption to the supply of alcohol this Christmas.

The Government has acted quickly to tackle the challenges to our supply chains, which were brought on by global pressures including the pandemic and the international shortage of HGV drivers.

Some of these Government-led key measures include the Driver and Vehicle Standard Agency's action to increase HGV tests to 3,000 per week, the introduction of 16-week skills bootcamps to train new and returning drivers and the Department for Transport's action to streamline HGV testing with a minimised regulatory framework adding around 50,000 more tests to be conducted.

In addition to this, the Transport Secretary relaxed driver hours regulation, allowing more deliveries to be made during unprecedented times of national driver shortage to manage food supply chain bottlenecks. This relaxation will last up to 9 January 2022 in England, Scotland and Wales covering the Christmas peak demand period for food across the supply chain.

■ Avian Influenza: Disease Control

Geraint Davies:

[\[81863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether additional resources have been allocated to (a) Animal and Plant Health Agency and (b) other bodies to tackle the ongoing avian influenza outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has tried and tested contingency and outbreak response plans and these are currently working well in the face of the current outbreak. The plans include being able to draw on the support of culling and disposal contractors from contingency framework contracts and being able to deploy additional vets from the veterinary delivery partnership. APHA is also working closely with other agencies from within the Defra group to provide additional surge capacity as needed. The resourcing situation is kept under review during outbreaks.

■ Countryside: Access

Caroline Lucas:

[\[79327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to protect public rights of access where tree planting, funded by Government grants, takes place on open access land.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK Forestry Standard clearly states that existing rights of access must be respected and not obstructed. In England and Wales, responsible access must be allowed on mapped access land, including woodland dedicated under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, unless a Direction is in place to restrict or exclude access. All government supported planting, such as under our England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO) and Countryside Stewardship Scheme, must comply with these requirements.

Our Woodland Creation Partnerships will maintain existing public access on land that is planted and explore ways to enhance access provision. Additionally, we are working with land managers to promote access provision within their woodland plantations, for example via voluntary EWCO access grants.

Through the England Trees Action Plan, we are committed to ensuring the provision of safe and appropriate public access as a feature of as many woodlands as possible and to work with landowners and woodland users to develop and implement a plan to improve the quantity, quality, and permanency of public access to new and existing woodlands.

■ Fishery Agreements

Jim Shannon:

[\[79375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his French counterpart on access to fisheries.

Victoria Prentis:

As the Trade and Co-operation Agreement is between the UK and the EU, any discussions arising from it take place between the UK and Commission, with Member States present as observers for some of those meetings as appropriate. Discussions at all levels are ongoing.

I met Annick Girardin, the French Fisheries Minister, to discuss this issue on 21 September and 21 October 2021.

■ Flood Protection

Stuart Anderson:

[\[79484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to protect communities against the risk of flooding.

Rebecca Pow:

This Government is acting to drive down flood risk from every angle. We are investing a record £5.2 billion in around 2,000 new defence schemes. This investment will better protect 336,000 properties from flooding and coastal erosion. We also announced £170 million to accelerate the building of 22 flood schemes across the country - on top of our record £5.2 billion investment in flood and coastal defences.

In July 2020, we published a long-term Policy Statement which sets out our ambition to create a nation more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk. The Policy Statement includes five policies and over 40 supporting actions which will accelerate progress to better protect and prepare the country against flooding and coastal erosion. A year on from its publication, we published an update on the significant progress that has been made to deliver these commitments and the further steps that we are taking to strengthen action. These include:

- The Government published its Investment Plan which sets out what will be achieved from the record investment of £5.2 billion, how the portfolio of projects will be developed to improve the country's flood and coastal defences, and how the investment will be managed.
- The Government committed to allow insurers to help flooded households to make their homes more resilient to future flooding using products such as air brick covers, flood doors and flood resistant plasterboard - and benefit from discounted insurance premiums if they have resilience measures installed.
- The Government published a review of policy for development in areas at flood risk. The review has found that there are robust measures in place to protect people and property from flooding and has identified opportunities to further strengthen the system. The Government is taking forward new actions in response to these findings.
- The Government published a report setting out the progress that has been achieved against the Surface Water Management Action Plan and a response to the independent review into the arrangements for determining responsibility for surface water and drainage assets.
- In addition, the Government published the terms of reference for a new advisory group which will be established by the end of 2021 and will bring together key bodies to inform the government's future policy proposals for reform to local flood risk management planning by 2026.

Taken together, these actions will help to create a thriving and resilient nation which is on the right footing to better manage and adapt to the risks of flooding and coastal erosion now, and in the future, reducing the risk of harm to people, businesses and communities.

■ Glass: Recycling

Alex Sobel:

[\[82062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to section 57 of the Environment Act 2021, whether all local authorities in England will be required to collect glass directly from households by October 2023.

Jo Churchill:

The Environment Act will require all local authorities to collect glass, as well as metal, plastic, paper and card, food and garden waste.

In 2021 we published our second consultation on 'Consistency in Household and Business Recycling in England,' which sought views on increasing consistency in recycling. We expect to set out the government response to this consultation, which will include timelines for new requirements on local authorities, early next year.

■ Nature Conservation

Olivia Blake:

[\[82123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act specified in the Information Pack for the next Quinquennial Review of certain schedules, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the new method for listing animal species; and what assessment he has made of the impact on (a) pine martens, (b) stag beetles and (c) other wildlife in England remaining as animal species which receive statutory protection under that Act.

Rebecca Pow:

The Quinquennial Review of Schedules 5 and 8 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) is an independent process undertaken by the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and NatureScot), working jointly through the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). The JNCC has now launched its stakeholder consultation on its recommendations for the addition or removal of species listed under Schedule 5 & 8 of the WCA. It will then make final recommendations early next year to Defra, the Scottish Government, and the Welsh Government. Changes to species protection have not yet been recommended, nor have any decisions been made.

This Government has committed to leave the environment in a better state than we inherited it, which is underpinned by our target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030. Species protections are an important part of that work.

■ Pigs

Jim Shannon:

[\[79373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to prevent a mass cull of pigs in the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

We have been working closely with industry throughout this period to understand how best to support it in response to the challenges caused by the pandemic, including the loss of the Chinese market to several processing plants, disruption to CO2 supplies, and a temporary shortage of labour, specifically skilled butchers in the processing sector. In response to these challenges, we recognise that in recent months a significant number of pigs have had to be kept on farm

On 14 October, the Government announced a package of measures to support the pig industry and to seek to reduce the animal welfare implications of pigs backing up on farms.

The package of measures for support includes the approval of up to 800 visas for pork butchers, a Private Storage Aid scheme, and a Slaughter Incentive Payment Scheme to increase the throughput of pigs at processors and working to identify new export markets for pork with the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), particularly lightly-processed pork.

In England and Scotland, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board and Quality Meat Scotland have both introduced a suspension on the statutory levy for pig farmers and producers during November 2021 – suspending payments of the levy pig farmers and producers are required to pay. This will amount to savings for the sector of just under £1 million.

The Government will continue to monitor the evolving situation and work closely with the industry through this challenging period.

Water: Pollution**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[81927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the health of people participating in river-based activities, such as swimming, fishing and paddling, is not harmed by polluted water.

Luke Pollard:[\[82068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that water in English rivers, lakes and seas does not pose a serious risk to human health.

Olivia Blake:[\[82124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that rivers do not pose a risk to human health.

Stephen Morgan:[\[82368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential risk to human health from rivers.

Rebecca Pow:

Improving water quality is a Government priority and we are taking significant action in this area for people and nature. The Environment Act sets a duty on the Government to publish a storm overflow discharge reduction plan by September 2022. This plan will address reducing the adverse impacts on public health of sewage discharges from storm overflows.

Where rivers are designated as Bathing Waters, the Environment Agency monitors water quality and classifies bathing waters in line with the health protective standards of the Bathing Water Regulations (2013) and publishes an annual classification of Poor, Sufficient, Good or Excellent. It must also exercise its pollution control powers to achieve at least Sufficient status. Currently there is one river with designated Bathing Water Status, the River Wharfe at Ilkley. This was monitored for the first time during the 2021 Bathing Water Season (15th May - 30th September). The classification result will be published in January 2022.

The Environment Agency publishes a profile for each designated Bathing Water on its Swimfo website (<https://environment.data.gov.uk/bwg/profiles/>), which provides water quality testing results, the annual classification and information on pollution sources affecting each Bathing Water.

The Environment Agency and the UK Health Security Agency (formerly Public Health England) have published Swim Healthy guidance on Gov.UK

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/swim-healthy-leaflet>).

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Paul Blomfield:****[904450]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to help tackle the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

Amanda Milling:

We are doubling our assistance for Afghanistan, taking this to £286 million this financial year. On 31 October, the Prime Minister announced the allocation of a further £50 million of this to provide over 2.5 million Afghans with food, health, shelter and warm clothing.

Mr John Baron:**[904451]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to support British soft power overseas.

Vicky Ford:

The Integrated Review highlighted the importance of building positive perceptions of the UK, creating strong people-to-people links and familiarity with our values; and it sets out the Government's role in this area. The FCDO continues to fund projects and

programmes that promote 'brand Britain' for the long term, including the British Council, BBC World Service and our Chevening, Marshall and Commonwealth scholarships. Our international leadership on important international issues is an important part of how others perceive the UK, as we are seeing through our hosting of the G7 and COP26, and our support for a globally accessible Covid-19 vaccine.

Robert Largan:

[R] [\[904453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps she has taken to strengthen the UK's economic and security relationship with Israel.

Amanda Milling:

Just yesterday (29 November), the Foreign Secretary hosted the first UK-Israel strategic dialogue with Israeli Foreign Minister Lapid. They held substantive discussions on how to broaden and deepen the bilateral relationship, including cooperation across science, technology, trade and innovation. The Foreign Secretary and Foreign Minister Lapid also signed an MOU, committing to the development of a UK-Israel Bilateral Roadmap that will define bilateral cooperation for the next decade. We hope to agree the Roadmap in 2022.

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[904455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the political and human rights situation in Egypt.

Vicky Ford:

Our strong bilateral relationship with Egypt allows us to raise human rights concerns frankly when we have them. These rights and freedoms are essential for Egypt's long-term stability, and we call on Egypt to implement its new human rights strategy. We welcome Egypt lifting its state of emergency, and will monitor closely what this decision means in practice.

Nick Smith:

[\[904458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the prospects for a negotiated peace settlement in Yemen.

Amanda Milling:

A negotiated political settlement is the only way to bring long-term stability to Yemen. The UK supports fully the efforts of the UN Special Envoy, Hans Grundberg, to drive forward the political process in Yemen. We urge the parties to engage constructively in negotiations to end the conflict.

Ms Diane Abbott:

[\[904460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations she has made to the government of Iran on (a) Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, (b) Anoosheh Ashoori and (c) the other British nationals detained in Iran.

Amanda Milling:

The Foreign Secretary most recently discussed the cases of British dual nationals with the Iranian Foreign Minister on 8 November. The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa raised these cases with the Deputy Foreign Minister on 11 November. Our Ambassador in Tehran regularly raises their cases.

Fleur Anderson:[\[904461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will take steps to introduce a Government strategy for atrocity prevention.

Vicky Ford:

We believe it is not necessary. As most atrocities occur in and around armed conflict, the Government has dedicated significant resources to preventing conflict. We are committed to a more integrated approach to government work on conflict and instability, placing greater emphasis on addressing the drivers of conflict, atrocity prevention and strengthening fragile countries' resilience to external influence.

■ Africa: LGBT people**Catherine West:**[\[82038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to support LGBTQ+ people in refugee camps in Africa.

Vicky Ford:

The UK Government is fully committed to the promotion and protection of LGBTQ+ human rights globally and continues to urge countries that criminalise LGBTQ+ individuals, and same sex conduct to uphold the universality of human rights. We are very concerned about the criminalisation of homosexuality, and recognise that there is a long way to go before all LGBTQ+ people are able to live free and equal lives, including in some parts of Africa. The UK works closely with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, who remain deeply committed to the protection of LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum-seekers across the world, including in refugee camps in Africa. The UK allocated £105 million to support the work of UNHCR in 2020. We also remain committed to funding £3 million of LGBTQ+ rights projects this year, including project work with a focus on tackling discriminatory legislation.

■ China: Olympic Games**Lisa Nandy:**[\[81946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 3 November 2021 to Question 66188, on China: Olympic Games, when the Government plans to decide on the (a) political and (b) diplomatic representation of the UK at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

Amanda Milling:

The participation of the national team at the Olympics and Paralympics is a matter for the British Olympic Association and British Paralympic Association, which are

required to operate independently of the Government under International Olympic Committee regulations.

The Prime Minister has been clear that he is not in favour of sporting boycotts. As the Government has previously made clear, no decisions have yet been made about Government attendance at the Beijing Olympics and Paralympics in 2022.

We regularly engage across government departments and with international partners on a range of issues related to China and human rights.

Lisa Nandy:

[\[81947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with (a) her United States counterpart and (b) other international counterparts on (i) political and (ii) diplomatic representation of the UK at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

Amanda Milling:

The participation of the national team at the Olympics and Paralympics is a matter for the British Olympic Association and British Paralympic Association, which are required to operate independently of the Government under International Olympic Committee regulations.

The Prime Minister has been clear that he is not in favour of sporting boycotts. As the Government has previously made clear, no decisions have yet been made about Government attendance at the Beijing Olympics and Paralympics in 2022.

We regularly engage across government departments and with international partners on a range of issues related to China and human rights.

Lisa Nandy:

[\[81948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans her Department has made for UK political and diplomatic representation at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics including (a) accommodation booking, (b) travel arrangements and (c) attendance at events.

Amanda Milling:

The participation of the national team at the Olympics and Paralympics is a matter for the British Olympic Association and British Paralympic Association, which are required to operate independently of the Government under International Olympic Committee regulations.

The Prime Minister has been clear that he is not in favour of sporting boycotts. As the Government has previously made clear, no decisions have yet been made about Government attendance at the Beijing Olympics and Paralympics in 2022.

We regularly engage across government departments and with international partners on a range of issues related to China and human rights.

Lisa Nandy:

[\[81949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she plans to have discussions with the British Olympic Association on its participation in the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games.

Amanda Milling:

The participation of the national team at the Olympics and Paralympics is a matter for the British Olympic Association and British Paralympic Association, which are required to operate independently of the Government under International Olympic Committee regulations.

The Prime Minister has been clear that he is not in favour of sporting boycotts. As the Government has previously made clear, no decisions have yet been made about Government attendance at the Beijing Olympics and Paralympics in 2022.

We regularly engage across government departments and with international partners on a range of issues related to China and human rights.

■ **Developing Countries: Family Planning and Female Genital Mutilation**

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[80945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will restore funding for (a) women and girls to access family planning and contraceptive supplies and (b) efforts to end female genital mutilation.

Wendy Morton:

The UK continues to support and strengthen partner countries' own ability to deliver life-saving maternal, reproductive and child health services, promote and support family planning and address efforts to end female genital mutilation. We continue to fund partnerships such as the Global Financing Facility and FP2030 - the family planning initiative- to work on these issues. Funding levels will be confirmed after departmental planning processes taking place over the coming months.

■ **Developing Countries: Females**

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[80948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make it her policy to allocate increased funding to local women and girl-led organisations that play a leadership role in responding to humanitarian crises.

Vicky Ford:

The UK knows that Women's Rights Organisations and women-led civil society are critical to achieving lasting transformation in women's and girls' rights. This is recognised in the Integrated Review which specifically commits the UK to promote gender equality by "working with women's rights organisations". The UK continues to promote the rights of women and girls including in humanitarian crises and emergencies, through our commitments made under our G7 Presidency, where we galvanised international action through the G7's first ever Compact on famine

prevention and humanitarian crises, committing G7 nations to supporting women and girls in such contexts.

Last week I announced more than £20 million of new funding to help stop violence against women and girls around the world, including a £3 million boost to fund women's rights organisations on the frontline, to tackle this issue through the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, bringing our total contribution to £25 million since 2014. In addition our latest Spending Review showed, we will increase aid funding for our highest priorities, including support for women and girls.

■ **Ethiopia: Armed Conflict**

Stephen Doughty:

[\[81965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support she is providing to (a) internally displaced people and (b) refugees in the region in response to the situation in Ethiopia.

Vicky Ford:

The conflict in Tigray has had significant consequences and has displaced millions of people including more than 63,000 Ethiopian refugees who have sought safety in Sudan. The UK has provided £6.1 million in funding to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the Danish Refugee Council to address urgent needs arising from the Tigray crisis in Sudan. This is part of an overall UK commitment of more than £76 million to respond to the humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict, making the UK the second largest donor. Our priority is to ensure that all Ethiopians including internally displaced people (IDP) and irrespective of ethnicity, religion and political affiliation, receive life-saving aid.

■ **Ethiopia: British Nationals Abroad**

Stephen Doughty:

[\[81961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) UK nationals and (b) people with leave to remain in the UK are registered with her Department as being present in Ethiopia.

Vicky Ford:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) does not require British nationals to register with an Embassy / High Commission when they travel or live abroad. Any registration process would quickly become dated as British nationals would not reliably update their location. British nationals are encouraged to follow FCDO Travel Advice for the latest information and advice on what to do if they are in Ethiopia.

■ Ethiopia: Overseas Aid**Stephen Doughty:**[\[81964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has suspended or re-allocated any Official Development Assistance to Ethiopia in the last three months.

Vicky Ford:

We remain a major development and humanitarian donor - and one of the biggest donors to Ethiopia with an overall UK commitment of more than £76 million to respond to the humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict, making the UK the second largest donor. Given the severity of needs, in the last three months, funds have been drawn from ongoing development programmes in Ethiopia, as well as from bilateral development interventions which we have not been able to deliver due to insecurity or were not delivering lifesaving activity. Some planned funding originally earmarked for the Government of Ethiopia has also been re-directed towards humanitarian agencies operating in Afar, Amhara and Tigray. No Official Development Assistance (ODA) has been suspended. The UK is committed to ensuring that our aid is fully accountable. While we continue to urge all sides involved in the Tigray conflict to de-escalate and halt violence, we must make sure our ODA only serves to improve conditions for the intended beneficiaries. We will always review ODA when circumstances around its use may change.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Equality**Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[80947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans she has to ensure that gender equality remains a strategic priority for her Department.

Vicky Ford:

Fundamentally, our new foreign and development policy is about freedom, the freedom for men and women alike to live and thrive around the world, empowered by education and enterprise. Throughout this year's UK's G7 Presidency, we have prioritised action on gender equality guided by the 3E's: 'Educating Girls, Empowering Women and Ending Violence against women and girls' which continues to reflect FCDO priorities. Last week I announced how women and girls will be at the centre of our foreign policy priorities, with more than £20 million of new funding to help stop violence against women and girls around the world, exploring options to strengthen the international response to sexual violence in conflict, including exploring a new Convention and plans for an international conference in 2022.

We will be refreshing FCDO's Strategic Vision for Gender Equality in the new year, which will look to 2030 and show how FCDO will continue to prioritise women and girls. In addition, our latest Spending Review showed, we will increase aid funding for our highest priorities, including support for women and girls, focusing on giving more

girls a quality education; ending the extremely harmful practice of female genital mutilation and supporting girls' health.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Meetings

Owen Thompson:

[\[80394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department takes to ensure that at least one official from her Department is present during all (a) meetings and (b) phone calls relating to Government business between Ministers and third parties.

Amanda Milling:

It is standard practice for FCDO Ministers holding meetings or telephone calls on government business to be routinely accompanied by their private secretary or another official, in line with the expectations of paragraph 8.14 of the Ministerial Code.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Senior Civil Servants

Robert Largan:

[\[80504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, 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.

Amanda Milling:

FCDO Senior Civil Servants by NUTS1 regions

	MAR-19	MAR-20	MAR-21	SEP-21
London	240-259	240-259	280-299	260-279
Scotland	10-19	10-19	10-19	10-19
South East England	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 10

■ Malawi: Politics and Government

Ruth Jones:

[\[79463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the political situation in Malawi.

Vicky Ford:

Malawians can be rightly proud of their commitment to resolving political differences through their country's democratic institutions and processes, in particular during the last electoral period. When my predecessor visited Malawi in October 2020, he congratulated President Chakwera and Vice President Chilima on Malawi's peaceful

transition of power, and explored areas where the UK could support the government's reform agenda, including on anti-corruption, long-term economic development and supporting the poorest.

As a long term friend of Malawi, we continue to work with the Malawian Government to tackle the issues that matter to Malawians. We welcome Malawi's strong engagement this year at the Global Education Summit, on climate change negotiations through COP26, and its effective Presidency of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

■ **Somalia: Humanitarian Situation**

Ruth Jones: [\[79464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the humanitarian situation in Somalia.

Vicky Ford:

The UK is deeply concerned by the humanitarian situation in Somalia. The UK is working closely with the Somali Government, the UN and partners to support an early and rapid response.

Eighty percent of the country is now facing severe famine, and the Government of Somalia has declared a 'humanitarian emergency'. There is the potential for famine if the situation doesn't improve and effective international action isn't mobilised. Multiple shocks, including threats from Covid-19, desert locusts and floods, have deepened Somalia's protracted climate and conflict-induced humanitarian crisis with over 7.7 million people expected to be in need of assistance and disrupted progress towards stability and economic recovery. In 2020 the UK provided 2.5 million vulnerable Somalis with life-saving cash assistance (874,409), nutrition (303,938), health (453,639) and emergency WASH-Water and Sanitation (895,002).

■ **South Africa: Homicide**

Ruth Jones: [\[79465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the murder rate in South Africa; and if she will make a statement.

Vicky Ford:

There remains a high level of violent crime in South Africa. According to the South African Police Service, 6,163 people were killed between July and September 2021, which is an increase of 1,056 compared to the corresponding period last year. This is unacceptably high and every death is a tragedy. Our High Commission in South Africa raises issues of concern with the South African authorities where necessary, and in particular, where UK nationals are involved. We are also working with South African law enforcement, providing training and capacity building and supporting links between our legal systems.

■ Yemen: Armed Conflict

Gill Furniss:

[R] [\[82040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the situation in (a) Marib and (b) Al-Hudaydah in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

We condemn the Houthis' escalation of violence around Marib and their intensifying of cross-border attacks on Saudi Arabia, which is exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. On 20 October the UK supported a UN Security Council Press Statement calling for an immediate end to the Houthi escalation in Marib. On 9 November we achieved international agreement to impose sanctions against Houthi military leaders for leading offensives, orchestrating cross-border attacks against Saudi Arabia and using their position to seize the assets of opponents and circumvent the UN arms embargo.

The Houthis, and all other parties to the conflict, need to engage constructively in negotiations. Dialogue is the only way to sustainably end this conflict and alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis.

■ Yemen: Humanitarian Aid

Gill Furniss:

[R] [\[82041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with her international partners to help ensure access for humanitarian aid to Marib and Al-Hudaydah, Yemen.

Gill Furniss:

[R] [\[82042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with her counterparts in the Middle East on Yemen since taking office.

James Cleverly:

UK Ministers and officials engage with their international and regional counterparts on Yemen regularly and use the monthly briefings to the UN Security Council to encourage efforts towards a political solution, deliver further economic support and bring an end to the humanitarian suffering. Administrative restrictions imposed on humanitarian partners remain the principal driver of access constraints across Yemen. We are clear that humanitarian aid must not be used as a political tool and call on all parties to abide by UN Security Council Resolution 2451 by facilitating safe, rapid, and unhindered access for the humanitarian response.

On 20 October the UK supported a UN Security Council Press Statement calling for an immediate end to the Houthi escalation in Marib, and the Foreign Secretary also visited Riyadh where she discussed the conflict in Yemen with Saudi counterparts. We urge the parties to engage constructively with the UN process and call on all states to release humanitarian funding commitments promptly.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Alzheimer's Disease: Health Services****Jim Shannon:**[\[79376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will allocate more funding for Alzheimer diagnosis and treatment.

Gillian Keegan:

In 2021/22, we have allocated £17 million to NHS England and NHS Improvement to address dementia waiting lists and increase the number of diagnoses. This funding was made available to clinical commissioning groups in June 2021.

We are supporting research into dementia, including diagnosis and treatment and we have committed to invest £375 million in neurodegenerative disease research over the next five years. We are currently reviewing options to significantly boost further research on dementia. A new dementia strategy is being developed with stakeholders which will set out our plans on dementia care in England in 2022.

■ **Ambulance Services: East of England****James Wild:**[\[79502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the East of England Ambulance Service's average response time was for (a) category 1 calls, (b) category 2 calls, (c) category 3 calls and (d) category 4 calls in each of the last 12 months.

Edward Argar:

The following table shows East of England Ambulance Service's mean average response time in hours, minutes and seconds for each category of call in the last 12 months.

	CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3	CATEGORY 4
November 2020	0:06:41	0:19:54	0:49:28	1:08:29
December 2020	0:07:18	0:26:36	1:24:36	1:37:25
January 2021	0:07:31	0:29:36	1:36:54	2:01:47
February 2021	0:06:44	0:18:19	0:43:23	1:06:05
March 2021	0:06:38	0:18:18	0:45:29	1:13:06
April 2021	0:06:49	0:20:01	0:54:44	1:31:27
May 2021	0:07:31	0:25:31	1:23:51	1:47:07
June 2021	0:08:07	0:32:03	1:45:46	2:27:22
July 2021	0:08:44	0:38:08	2:01:19	3:03:24

	CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3	CATEGORY 4
August 2021	0:09:11	0:41:03	2:03:37	2:52:13
September 2021	0:09:55	0:48:34	2:30:37	3:17:37
October 2021	0:10:37	0:56:01	3:04:29	3:38:36

Source: NHS England

■ Cancer: Diagnosis

Helen Hayes:

[\[82032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle staff shortages in the cancer diagnostic workforce.

Edward Argar:

The Spending Review 2020 provided £260 million to continue to increase the National Health Service workforce and support commitments made in the NHS Long Term Plan. This included £52 million in 2021/22 for Health Education England to further invest in the cancer and diagnostics workforce, increasing the number of clinical endoscopists and training more radiographers in image interpretation and reporting. As of August 2021, there are an additional 4% of doctors working in clinical oncology and a further 5% working in radiology since August 2020.

Following the outcome of Spending Review 2021, plans for individual budgets for 2022/23 to 2024/25, including for training and recruiting diagnostic staff and wider cancer workforce, will be subject to a detailed financial planning exercise and finalised in due course.

■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments

Jeff Smith:

[\[80354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will clarify guidance on the ability for a prescription for medical cannabis given by a specialist to subsequently be taken over by a GP under a shared care arrangement.

Maria Caulfield:

The law requires that unlicensed cannabis-based products for medicinal use (CBPMs) be supplied under either the prescription or direction of a clinician on the General Medical Council's (GMC) Specialist Register. As with all areas of clinical practice, the GMC's guidance states that all doctors must recognise and work within the limits of their competence. This is supported by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guideline 'Cannabis-based medicinal products', which states that after the initial prescription, subsequent prescriptions of CBPMs may be issued by another prescriber as part of a shared care agreement under the direction of an initiating specialist prescriber, if:

- shared care is appropriate and in the person's best interest;
- the person's clinical condition is stable; and
- the other prescriber is confident to make a fully informed prescribing decision about cannabis-based medicinal products.

If a general practitioner (GP) accepts ongoing shared care responsibilities and continues prescribing once a patient has been initiated and stabilised on CBPMs, they must be confident to accept the associated legal and professional responsibilities associated with doing so, which are increased in the case of an unlicensed product. This includes accountability for the quality of the product prescribed. Treatments initiated privately would not usually be prescribed by a GP under shared care unless the requested treatment is approved under existing National Health Service policies or there are exceptional circumstances. This remains the case even if that privately funded treatment has been shown to have clinical benefit for the individual patient. This applies to all treatments.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Elliot Colburn: [\[79495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of care home staff have received a covid-19 booster vaccine.

Gillian Keegan:

By 26 October 2021, 100,305 care home staff were reported to have received a COVID-19 booster vaccine or approximately 18% of all reported care home staff.

■ Catheters

Martyn Day: [\[66240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the management of urinary catheters in (a) NHS hospitals and (b) the community.

Edward Argar:

In 2019, the National Health Service published tools developed for hospitals and community settings as part of the antimicrobial resistance programme. The 2021/2022 programme supports integrated care systems to use Right Care data packs to plan and implement appropriate interventions, including the management of urinary catheters in these settings.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Senior Civil Servants

Robert Largan: [\[80503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, 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.

Edward Argar:

In line with headcount reporting for Annual Civil Service Employment Survey, statistics are provided as at respective month-ends and numbers are rounded to the nearest ten.

As at 31 March 2019, the Department employed 1,620 civil servants in the following NUTS1 regions:

- 20 civil servants in North West;
- 570 civil servants in Yorkshire and the Humber; and
- 1,030 civil servants in London.

As at 31 March 2020, the Department employed 1,660 civil servants in the following NUTS1 regions:

- 20 civil servants in North West;
- 580 civil servants in Yorkshire and the Humber; and
- 1,060 civil servants in London.

As at 31 March 2021, the Department employed 3,520 civil servants in the following NUTS1 regions:

- 30 civil servants in North West;
- 1,040 civil servants in Yorkshire and the Humber;
- 2,440 civil servants in London; and
- 10 civil servants in South East.

As at 30 September 2021, the Department employed 4,210 civil servants in the following NUTS1 regions:

- 30 civil servants in North West;
- 1,180 civil servants in Yorkshire and the Humber; and
- 3,000 civil servants in London.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**Daisy Cooper:**[\[76022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 61224, tabled by the hon. Member for St. Albans on 22 October 2021.

Edward Argar:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer of 23 November to Question [61224](#).

Daisy Cooper:[\[76023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 61225, tabled by the hon. Member for St. Albans on 22 October 2021.

Edward Argar:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer of 24 November to Question [61225](#).

Mr Gregory Campbell:[\[81872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Question 58745 on Smoking tabled by the hon. Member for East Londonderry on 19 October 2021.

Edward Argar:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer of 25 October to Question [58745](#).

■ Endometriosis and Polycystic Ovary Syndrome**Feryal Clark:**[\[57448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce diagnosis times for endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome in (a) Enfield, (b) London and (c) England.

Maria Caulfield:

Endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome can be difficult to diagnose. Endometriosis can only be definitively diagnosed through a laparoscopy under general anaesthetic. Accordingly, it can be more appropriate to treat mild symptoms of endometriosis without a definitive diagnosis.

NHS England and NHS Improvement do not currently have plans to undertake a review of diagnosis times in England or London specifically. However, the North Central London Integrated Care System (ICS), which includes Enfield, has an ICS-wide clinical network to look at prioritisation and reducing waiting lists for gynaecology.

■ General Practitioners: Shifnal**Mark Pritchard:**[\[79304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will (a) hold discussions with Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin CCG on extending the provision of GPs services in Shifnal and (b) agree a timetable for the completion of the proposed new GP surgery in Shifnal.

Maria Caulfield:

We have no current plans to do so. NHS England advises that the final business case for the proposed new surgery in Shifnal is due to be presented at the next Primary Care Commissioning Committee in December.

■ Integrated Care Systems**Mary Glendon:**[\[79370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the delegation of certain specialised services to Integrated Care Systems (ICS) under proposed reforms

to the NHS, when he plans to announce the specialised services that will (a) remain under NHS England commissioning and (b) be delegated to ICSs.

Edward Argar:

There are no plans to fully delegate NHS England's functions for specialised services in 2022/23. Subject to the passage of the Health and Care Bill, certain specialised services may become subject to joint commissioning arrangements between NHS England and integrated care boards during 2022/23. The services which would benefit from this more integrated commissioning approach remain under consideration. Further details will be provided before April 2022.

NHS England will remain accountable for all specialised services, including those that are jointly commissioned or delegated. NHS England will retain responsibility for setting national standards and clinical policies determining access to both new and existing treatments. There are currently no plans to delist any services as specialised services.

■ **Mechanical Thrombectomy: Robotics**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[81054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what research his Department has conducted on robotics in the delivery of mechanical thrombectomy; and whether his Department has plans to fund such research.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 29 November 2021]: The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) While it is not currently funding specific research on robotics in the delivery of mechanical thrombectomy, the NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health. Applications to the NIHR are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality.

■ **Medical Technologies Directorate**

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[76636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) role and (b) responsibilities the Medical Technologies Directorate will have in supporting the (i) uptake and (ii) use of innovative medical technologies.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: The Medical Technologies Directorate within the Department was announced in May 2021. The Directorate's role is to build a thriving sector in the United Kingdom and ensure the health and social care system can reliably access safe, effective, innovative and medical technologies for the delivery of high quality care and excellent patient outcomes. It is also responsible for overseeing the regulation of medical devices and supports regulatory practices which allow the adoption of new technology at speed and scale.

■ Medicine: Education**Elliot Colburn:** [\[79497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Royal College of Physicians' 2020 census finding that 38 per cent of advertised consultant posts were unfilled in south London, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the number of medical school places in England.

Edward Argar:

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

■ Members: Correspondence**Robert Largan:** [\[59115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the enquiry from the hon. Member for High Peak of 6 August 2021, reference RL24481.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 26 October.

Feryal Clark: [\[63908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to respond to the letter dated 6 July 2021 from the hon. Member for Enfield North on funding for public health services in Enfield, reference FC3987.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 1 November 2021.

■ Midwives: Coronavirus**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[69667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many student midwives have died as a result of covid-19 from March 2020 to November 2021.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 9 November 2021]: The data is not held in the format requested.

■ Midwives: Labour Turnover**Alberto Costa:** [\[79412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to retain NHS midwives.

Edward Argar:

The NHS People Plan, published in July 2020, focuses on building resilience with a recruitment, retention and support package. The People Recovery Task Force is developing a framework and set of interventions to ensure that National Health Service staff, including midwives, are safe and supported as we deliver the restoration of services. All staff have access to a psychological support package, including apps, a text service and 40 mental health hubs across the country.

■ **Nurses: Vacancies****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[79338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many nursing vacancies there are in the NHS.

Edward Argar:

NHS Digital statistics show there are 39,813 nursing and midwifery vacancies, or 10.5% of the workforce, in National Health Service hospital trusts as of September 2021. Some of these vacancies will be filled by bank and agency staff.

■ **Patients: Travel****Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[80182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to prevent unnecessary patient journeys as set out in the NHS's plan for Delivering a Net Zero National Health Service, published on 1 October 2020.

Dr Alan Whitehead:[\[80183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of (a) the proportion of NHS greenhouse gas emissions attributed to patient transport and (b) what proportion is attributed to patients receiving in-centre dialysis.

Dr Alan Whitehead:[\[80184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the cost to the NHS of patient transport for people receiving dialysis in treatment centres.

Edward Argar:

The National Health Service is preventing unnecessary patient journeys through improved preventative medicine and enhanced digital care. As set out in Delivering a Net Zero National Health System, patient travel accounts for 5% of all NHS emissions. The Improving Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services (NEPTS) report published in August 2021 estimates that NEPTS journeys emit approximately 51,000-58,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent annually. This constitutes approximately 20% of NHS direct travel emissions. NEPTS deliver 11-12 million journeys a year with approximately 37% for patients requiring renal dialysis. Each year, approximately £460 million is spent on NEPTS with the average cost per patient journey at £38.

No such assessment has been made on the proportion of greenhouse gas emissions or the cost of patient transport attributed to patients receiving in-centre dialysis.

■ Prescription Drugs

Justin Madders: [80344]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the provision of monitored dosage systems by pharmacies.

Edward Argar:

No such assessment has been made. However, under the Equality Act 2010, pharmacies must make reasonable adjustments to their services, which can include the provision of monitored dosage systems. In addition, where appropriate, NHS England and NHS Improvement's local teams can commission an enhanced medicines assessment and compliance support service from community pharmacies, which could include the provision of monitored dosage systems to meet the needs of their local population.

Justin Madders: [80347]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on reviewing prescription guidelines following the decision by the Competition and Markets Authority to fine Advanz for the inflation of the price of Liothyronine.

Edward Argar:

We have had no discussions. NHS England and NHS Improvement's guidance, 'Items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs' identifies items which are clinically effective but where more cost-effective products are available. The guidance includes liothyronine and is available at the following link: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/conditions-for-which-over-the-counter-items-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-guidance-for-ccgs/>

NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to review this guidance to ensure that any updated evidence on clinical and cost effectiveness is considered.

■ Salbutamol: Storage

Dan Carden: [60499]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of allowing non-prescribed storage of salbutamol inhalers in commercial kitchens.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 26 October 2021]: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has not made an assessment of the potential merits of allowing non-prescribed storage of salbutamol inhalers in commercial kitchens. In order to amend Human Medicines Regulations as required, evidence to support such a

change should demonstrate that the medicine could be handled safely, used in the proposed emergency circumstances and that any risks could be mitigated.

■ **Social Services: Occupational Therapy**

Elliot Colburn: [\[80487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of local authority referrals into social care are allocated to occupational therapists.

Elliot Colburn: [\[81138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the proportion of local authority referrals into social care that are allocated to occupational therapists.

Gillian Keegan:

Local authorities have a duty to meet eligible care needs of their local populations. This includes, where appropriate, referrals to an occupational therapist. The information on the proportion of local authority referrals into social care which are allocated to occupational therapists is not held centrally.

■ **Social Services: Recruitment**

Bill Esterson: [\[56661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using recruitment and retention payments to tackle staff shortages in the social care sector.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: We have no current plans to issue recruitment and retention payments directly to social care staff. The vast majority of care workers are employed by private sector providers who ultimately set their pay and remuneration, independent of central Government.

To provide additional support to the sector over the winter, on October 21st we announced a new £162.5 million Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund (WRRF). We expect local authorities to work closely with care providers on how this funding is spent, which may include one-off recruitment and retention payments.

We are continuing to work closely with providers, councils, and partners to assess workforce capacity pressures and to consider what further action may be necessary.

■ **Transplant Surgery: Coronavirus**

Jim Shannon: [\[67155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that scheduled donor transplants go ahead during the covid-19 outbreak.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have published guidance for local systems to support the restoration and recovery of solid organ transplants. Its regional teams have developed recovery plans, which include streamlined pathways for the provision of solid organ transplantation and the associated critical care capacity. NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to work with NHS Blood and Transplant and transplant units to optimise activity.

NHS Blood and Transplant data for 2021/22 shows 91% of normal deceased donation activity, which is an increase of 19% on the previous year. Ninety seven transplants were performed during week commencing 18 October 2021, which is the highest number since the start of the pandemic.

HOME OFFICE■ **Biometric Residence Permits****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[79429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken to reduce the waiting time for replacement biometric residence permits.

Kevin Foster:

For those granted temporary leave, the service standard for processing applications for a replacement biometric residence permit (BRP) is 8 weeks from the date of application, subject to the applicant enrolling their biometrics. For those granted permanent leave, the service standard is 6 months. To ensure that applications for a replacement BRP are processed within those service standards, we have been training and allocating additional resources and also looking at ways to streamline the process to improve processing times and customer service.

■ **Drugs: Organised Crime****Peter Gibson:**[\[79485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of enabling the British Transport Police to access train operating companies' on board CCTV in real time for the purposes of tackling county lines drug trafficking.

Kit Malthouse:

This Government is determined to crack down on the county lines gangs who are exploiting our children and have a devastating impact on our communities.

We are aware that rail networks remain a key method of transportation for county lines gangs. As part of our County Lines Programme investment, we have increased disruption on the rail networks through the British Transport Police's (BTP) dedicated County Lines Taskforce. BTP work collaboratively with national police forces and rail industry partners to grip the national rail network, providing targeted disruption to help

tackle the lines and safeguard vulnerable individuals involved in this exploitative and violent model of drug distribution.

The Department for Transport has no plans to mandate BTP being able to access on-board CCTV on trains, but BTP are currently in the process of connecting to real-time forward-facing train cameras with several operators. This is being delivered this financial year with the ambition that, if expected benefits are proved, this would be rolled out across the industry.

■ Immigration Controls: Afghanistan

Peter Kyle:

[81078]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 30 September 2021 to Question 51783 on the revised policy on overseas fee waivers, how many urgent applications have been granted a fee waiver since the policy was suspended pending revision.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 29 November 2021]: Home Office Migration Statistics do not currently capture the number of applications for overseas fee waivers received or placed on hold since the previous policy was suspended and the new route has not been officially launched.

■ Immigration: Afghanistan

John McNally:

[79404]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure the equity of her Department's decisions to grant indefinite leave to remain to Afghans and spouses of British citizens.

Kevin Foster:

All decisions to grant indefinite leave to those evacuated from Afghanistan, including the spouses of British citizens, are taken on an individual basis and with consideration to the specific circumstances of the case.

These cohorts are treated more generously than other family members of British citizens because of the unique circumstances of the evacuation, alongside the need to quickly move people to safety without being able to assess their ability to meet the normal Immigration Rules.

Valerie Vaz:

[81940]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan citizens have been granted leave to remain since 1 September 2021.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office publishes quarterly data on grants and refusals of leave to remain (visa extensions) in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release' on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>

The latest published statistics show that 464 people with Afghan Nationality were granted leave to remain in the third quarter (July to September) 2021. Of this, 385 grants were via a Family route.

■ Immigration: West Midlands

Valerie Vaz: [\[81943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the staffing level is of the West Midlands account manager office dealing with immigration cases.

Kevin Foster:

The MP Account Management team (MPAM) is a national team that handle all enquiries received from MPs on both general immigration matters and case specific enquiries.

The MPAM team has 119 staff in several different locations across the UK, one of which is in Solihull. Resources are used flexibly in accordance with enquiry intake levels and staff from each of the regional hubs may respond to enquiries from any MP and not just those exclusive to their region.

There are currently 11 MPAM staff based in Solihull.

■ Members: Correspondence

John Spellar: [\[81867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter dated 11 August 2021 from the Rt hon. Member for Warley, regarding Mrs Nzussu.

Kevin Foster:

I apologise for the delay. The Home Office responded on 26 November 2021.

John Spellar: [\[81868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 9 September 2021 from the hon. Member for Warley, regarding Mr Yeung.

Kevin Foster:

I apologise for the delay. The Home Office responded on 26 November 2021.

■ Parking Offences

Kerry McCarthy: [\[81898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many times police forces outside of London have responded to instances of dangerously parked vehicles since 22 November 2020.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not collect data on the number of times police forces have responded to instances of dangerously parked vehicles.

■ Police: Cameras**Mr Clive Betts:****[80906]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many permanent speed cameras there are in each Police Authority Area; and how many speed cameras there are per each mile of adopted road in each Police Authority Area.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not collect data on the number or location of speed cameras.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan**John Healey:****[79275]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the policy guidance on covid-19 vaccination and isolation in relation to the housing of Afghan refugees in bridging hotels.

Victoria Atkins:

Covid-19 vaccination and isolation policy guidance is the responsibility of the Department for Health and Social Care.

The Home Office ensures that the accommodation of those evacuated from Afghanistan in bridging hotels is compliant with these policies.

Valerie Vaz:**[81941]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate she has made of the number of Afghan citizens in bridging hotels who are waiting to be allocated housing.

Victoria Atkins:

We are working at pace with local authorities to source appropriate accommodation for Afghan families who were evacuated to the UK. Data on relocation will be published as part of our quarterly release which can be found at this link: [Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/research-data-and-analysis/publications/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets).

Over 4000 individuals have either moved into a settled home, are in the process of doing so or are being matched.

Valerie Vaz:**[81942]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which local authorities in England have accepted Afghan refugees; and how many refugees each of those local authorities have accepted.

Victoria Atkins:

We've seen over 300 local authorities come forward with commitments to take in displaced Afghans as part of our resettlement plans. We thank those local authorities who are taking their fair share and would encourage others who haven't yet stepped forward to work with us.

Data on relocation will be published as part of our quarterly release which can be found at this link: [Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets).

■ Skilled Workers: Avian Influenza

Geraint Davies: [\[81864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her visa and immigration policies of the shortage in the UK of specific skills needed to tackle the ongoing avian influenza outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

Our Points Based System already caters for a wide variety of skilled roles across many sectors, including in relation to poultry keeping and veterinary roles, which the independent Migration Advisory Committee has said strikes a reasonable balance between controlling migration and providing firms with the ability to attract the people they need.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[79330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what progress her Department has made in securing UK membership of the CPTPP.

Penny Mordaunt:

On 28th September, the UK took the next step on the pathway to membership of this important and growing trading group, commencing talks with officials from all members of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

We have an ambitious timeline for UK accession to CPTPP and hope we will be able to have concluded negotiations by the end of 2022.

■ Department for International Trade: Staff

Robert Largan: [\[78524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, 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.

Penny Mordaunt:

Civil Servants employed by Department for International Trade (DIT) based in 12 NUTS1 UK regions in March, June and September 2021:

UK REGION	MAR-21	JUN-21	SEP-21
London	2316	2144	2361

UK REGION	MAR-21	JUN-21	SEP-21
West Midlands (England)	18	21	24
North West (England)	15	19	22
Scotland	11	16	21
Yorkshire and the Humber	17	16	16
South East (England)	120*	9	11
South West (England)	7	8	10
East of England	7	7	7
North East (England)	10	7	11
East Midlands (England)	8	7	9
Wales	4	5	12
Grand Total	2533	2259	2504

*Changes to figures in the South East of England from March 2021 are based upon the creation of the Trade Remedies Authority who now report people information separately to DIT.

These figures are represented as Headcount (e.g., count of individuals). These figures provide information on domestic payroll staff only. These figures do not include those on Loan from Other Government Departments (OGDs) who remain on their home departments payroll, Contractors, Military staff, Individuals on secondment from other organisations, those who are on loan or secondment out of DIT, on unpaid special leave or career break. UK Export Finance are not included in the above figures.

■ Environment Protection: Foreign Investment in UK

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[79334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department has taken to increase foreign investment in the UK's green industries.

Mike Freer:

On 19th October Her Majesty the Queen and the Prime Minister hosted the UK's Global Investment Summit which was held in London and attended by over 170 global investors and decision makers.

The event was used to showcase that the UK is open for business and the country's green and clean growth capabilities aligned to the Prime Minister's 10-Point Plan. During the event, the Prime Minister also announced over £9billion of foreign investment across the UK in multiple clean and green sectors.

The Department for International Trade also launched the new Investment Atlas – an online platform designed to help international investors identify investment opportunities across the whole of the UK. The Atlas was launched with 53 initial strategic investment opportunities, each with a strong sustainability element aligned with the key themes set out in the Prime Minister's 10-point plan. The number of opportunities will continue to grow over the coming months.

The Department, together with Office for Investment, are now working with No.10 colleagues to ensure that HM Government can capitalise on the momentum and legacy of this historic event.

■ Overseas Trade: Trade Barriers

Emily Thornberry:

[\[81902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the announcement on 22 September 2021 of an end to the ban on the export of UK lamb to the United States, when she plans to update her Department's list of market access barriers to that effect.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

We are pleased that US Department of Agriculture is looking to remove the import restrictions for 'sheepmeat'. This will be a major milestone in the process of restoring access to the American market. It will be followed by further steps, including agreeing specific SPS and certifications conditions and requirements with Food Safety Inspection Service in the US; and domestic preparations, such as audits of British production establishments. We look forward to supporting the resumption of exports once this is finalised.

■ Teesside Freeport: Switzerland

Emily Thornberry:

[\[81903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2021 to Question 78372, Teesside Freeport: Switzerland, which products that were previously subject to duty drawback prohibitions under the UK-Switzerland FTA are now not subject to those terms.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[81904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2021 to Question 78372, on Teesside Freeport: Switzerland, when and through which forums were changes to the rules of origin provisions in the UK-Switzerland FTA agreed.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom-Switzerland Joint Trade Committee updated the Rules of Origin protocol through a Joint Committee Decision on 16th July 2021. The changes have been provisionally applied since 1st September 2021, whilst the United Kingdom and Switzerland undergo parliamentary procedures to bring the amendment into force.

The changes reflect the revision of the rules between Switzerland and the EU as part of the updates to the Regional Convention on Pan-Euro-Mediterranean (PEM) Preferential Rules of Origin that Switzerland are subject to. They provide modernised rules of origin provisions, including removing the duty drawback prohibition on all products other than textiles, as is the case in the revised PEM rules of origin.

Trade Agreements**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[79331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what progress her Department has made in securing free trade agreements.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

We have made great progress in securing trade deals around the world; to date, we have agreed deals with 70 countries, plus the EU, covering trade worth £766 billion last year.

This year, we signed a new deal with the European Economic Area (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) and we have reached Agreement-in-Principle with both Australia and New Zealand.

We have begun the accession process for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP); are preparing for negotiations with India, Canada and Mexico; and have also launched a public consultation on a trade deal with the Gulf Cooperation Council. We are due to begin work next year on an enhanced and improved FTA with Israel too.

UK Trade with EU: Trade Barriers**Emily Thornberry:**[\[81900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many of the market access barriers resolved by her Department in (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22 up to 1 November 2021 have related to access to markets within the European Union.

Emily Thornberry:[\[81901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many of the market access barriers logged on the Government's Digital Market Access Service system as of 1 November 2021 relate to access to markets within the European Union.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

My department publishes statistics about trade barriers in its annual reports and has recently released further statistics showing that we resolved 217 trade barriers across 74 countries in 2020-21, up 20% from 2019-20. Statistics for April 2021 onwards will be released in the 2021-22 Annual Report.

These barriers include regulatory, legislative and administrative measures imposed by other countries that restrict the flow of goods and services. In addition, we set up a new helpline and online service in October – the Export Support Service – where businesses can access advice and support when exporting to Europe.

■ World Trade Organization

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[79337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to reform and improve the World Trade Organisation.

Penny Mordaunt:

The UK champions the rules-based multilateral system and is actively supporting efforts to reform and improve the key functions of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The Department for International Trade (DIT) regularly engages with partners at the WTO and other fora, including at the G7, G20, Ottawa Group and Commonwealth. In particular, the UK's G7 Presidency highlighted WTO reform as a priority, and the UK has co-sponsored a proposal in the General Council to enhance WTO transparency and improve compliance with notification requirements.

At the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference the UK will continue to encourage all WTO members to commit to action-oriented work to reform the WTO.

JUSTICE

■ Alternatives to Prison

Mr David Lammy:

[\[80201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to page 87 of the Justice Select Committee's report on Prison Population 2022, published in March 2019, whether his Department has made an assessment of the savings that could be achieved by moving from prison to community support; and if he will place a copy of that assessment in the Library.

Victoria Atkins:

The Ministry of Justice has not made a detailed assessment of possible savings of moving from prison to community support illustrated by the case study on page 87 of the Justice Select Committee's report. However, the Female Offender Strategy, published in June 2018, noted that Government had estimated that female offenders cost the public purse approximately £1.7bn in 2015/16, including estimated police costs of c.£1bn. This excluded wider social costs, such as the cost of intergenerational offending. The Government recognises that community sentences offer the opportunity to support women to effectively address the underlying causes of offending behaviour and to secure and maintain stable accommodation. We have several initiatives underway that are looking to encourage use of robust community

sentences as an alternative to custody for women, including Problem Solving Courts, Community Sentence Treatment Requirements, Electronic Monitoring and a Pre-Sentence Report pilot, as well as our plans to open a first Residential Women's Centre in Wales.

■ Coroners: Voluntary Work

Peter Gibson: [\[79486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the role of the volunteers service in the coroner's court system; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of allocating funding to that service to help ensure uniformity of access.

Peter Gibson: [\[79487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the data collected by coroner's courts; and whether he plans to take steps to gather that data centrally.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government recognises the good work done by volunteers who support bereaved families and others who attend coroners' courts. However, extending support services - such as the Coroners Courts Support Service - to cover all 85 coroner areas remains subject to affordability.

The Ministry of Justice collects annual data on coroners' inquests which is then used to inform policy making. An annual statistical bulletin is published on the GOV.UK website at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coroners-statistics-2020>. Coroner statistics for 2021 will be published on 12 May 2022.

■ Driving: Disqualification

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[79342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people were convicted for driving whilst disqualified in (a) London and (b) England in each of the last three years.

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[79343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people in (a) England and (b) London have been (i) charged with and (ii) convicted of causing serious injury while dangerous driving in the each of last three years following the introduction of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012.

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[79517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) prosecutions and (b) convictions there were for causing death by driving when disqualified, unlicensed or uninsured in (i) London and (ii) England in each of the last three years.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions and convictions for the driving offences listed in the questions, up to December 2020, in the 'Principle offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code' data tool, available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987731/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2020.xlsx

79342

Select '80701' in the offence code filter of the pivot table.

In the Police Force Area (PFA) filter:

- For London alone, select 'City of London' and 'Metropolitan Police'
- For England alone, select all PFAs except for Dyfed-Powys, Gwent, North Wales and South Wales

The number of convictions will populate row 33.

79343

Select '00412' in the offence code filter of the pivot table.

In the Police Force Area (PFA) filter:

- For London alone, select 'City of London' and 'Metropolitan Police'
- For England alone, select all PFAs except for Dyfed-Powys, Gwent, North Wales and South Wales

The number of convictions will populate row 33.

The Home Office are responsible for collecting data on charges relating to crimes recorded by the Police. These can be found in the Home Office outcomes open data tables, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

79517

Select offence codes '00417' and '00409' in the offence code filter

In the Police Force Area (PFA) filter:

- For London alone, select 'City of London' and 'Metropolitan Police'
- For England alone, select all PFAs except for Dyfed-Powys, Gwent, North Wales and South Wales

The number of prosecutions and convictions will populate rows 32 and 33 respectively.

■ Prison Accommodation

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[79309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what need was identified for the 2,000 additional temporary prison places announced in the Budget and Spending Review 2021; where those additional temporary places will be located; and what plans her Department has to set a future timeframe for their decommissioning.

Victoria Atkins:

The National statistics overview: Prison population projections: 2021 to 2026 are used to plan changes across the prison estate to respond to changes to the demand for prison places. Detailed plans, including the locations and future decommissioning, of the 2000 prison places funded through Spending Review 2021 are currently being drawn up. Work underway includes site feasibility studies, this will influence the location of these places.

■ Prison Sentences: Females

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[79310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many women entered prison between June 2020 and June 2021 to serve a sentence of (a) less than one month, (b) 2 to 3 months, (c) 4 to 6 months, (d) 7 to 12 months, (e) 13 to 24 months and (f) over 24 months.

Victoria Atkins:

The information requested is provided in the attached table.

Sentencing is a matter for the independent judiciary. The Female Offender Strategy set out the Government's vision of fewer women offending and reoffending; fewer women in custody, especially on short-term sentences, with a greater proportion of women managed in the community successfully; and where prison is necessary, better conditions for those in custody.

Attachments:

1. Table [2021-11-30 PQ 79310 table.xlsx]

■ Prisons: Education

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[81870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report entitled Unlocking Potential, A review of education in prison, published in May 2016, what progress has been made in implementing the recommendations contained in that review.

Victoria Atkins:

Following Dame Sally Coates' 2016 review, the budget for prison education was moved from the Department for Education (DfE) to the Ministry of Justice. This was in response to the core recommendation to give prison governors more flexibility and control over the curriculum so that they could better meet the learning needs of their prisoners. To address further recommendations, we introduced assessment on entry for English, maths and learning difficulties and disabilities, and boosted the capability

of prisons to engage with employers through the creation of the New Futures Network (NFN). We expect to further improve the infrastructure for learning through the Government's commitment to invest £200 million a year by 2024-25 to tackle reoffending and meet the manifesto commitment of delivering a new Prisoner Education Service. We have already started to trial innovation such as specialist education roles, as well as invest in digital tools to support prisoners with additional learning needs, such as trialling the use of reader pens.

■ Women's Prisons

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[79311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the announcement of 23 January 2021 on Extra funding for organisations that steer women away from crime, how many of the 500 new prison places in women's prisons have been built to date; and which prisons they have been built in.

Victoria Atkins:

The expansion of the women's prison estate to deliver new trauma-informed and gender specific facilities is still at a relatively early feasibility planning stage. The initial site list under consideration is: HMP Drake Hall, HMP Eastwood Park, HMP Foston Hall, HMP Send and HMP Styal. All proposed sites are existing women's prisons. The exact numbers and mix of new open and closed facilities are being finalised. This is a huge opportunity to shift the landscape of the estate by creating more open places which are needed.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Affordable Housing: South East

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[81960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of the number of affordable homes (a) supplied and (b) required to meet demand in the South West.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to investing over £12 billion into the supply of affordable housing, the largest investment in a decade. This includes the new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme, which will provide up to 180,000 new homes across the country, should economic conditions allow. In the recent competitive process where affordable housing providers bid to the programme, £1 billion to deliver 17,447 new affordable homes was allocated to the South West.

■ Building Safety Fund

Lucy Powell:

[\[80313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to announce details of the remainder of the £5 billion Building Safety Fund, including how to apply for grants.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: Buildings that may have missed the original registration deadline for the Building Safety Fund will have a further opportunity to register. Details on how to do this will be provided in due course.

■ Democracy: International Cooperation

Patrick Grady:

[\[81040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will carry out an assessment of how the (a) Elections Bill and (b) the Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Bill align with the themes and goals of the Summit for Democracy being hosted by the President of the United States on 9-10 December 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Elections Bill delivers against the Government's manifesto commitment to protect our democracy and ensure that it remains secure, fair, modern, and transparent.

The Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Bill seeks to return to tried-and-tested constitutional arrangements, which affirm the central role of the electorate. By repealing the Fixed-term Parliaments Act we will increase legal, constitutional and political certainty around the process for the dissolution of Parliament and the calling of a new Parliament, and reinforce public confidence in our democratic system.

The measures in these Bills, alongside wider work across government, support the core Summit for Democracy themes of strengthening democracy and defending against authoritarianism; fighting corruption; and promoting respect for human rights.

■ Holocaust Memorial Day

Ruth Jones:

[\[79478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans he has to mark Holocaust Memorial Day 2022.

Kemi Badenoch:

Holocaust Memorial Day provides an opportunity for the whole nation to remember the six million Jewish men, women and children murdered by the Nazis, along with all other victims of Nazi persecution and victims of subsequent genocides. The Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) supports the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust who will be promoting a great many local events as well as a national commemoration which will take place as an on-line event on 27 January.

DLUHC will itself be organising an event to enable staff to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day.

■ Islam: Religious Hatred

Ruth Jones: [\[79477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department took to mark Islamophobia Awareness Month 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

Islamophobia awareness is vitally important. Our commitment to tackling the discrimination and intolerance in Muslim communities is consistent throughout the year, as every community should be able to practice their faith in freedom and security.

We already have some of the strongest legislation in the world to tackle hate crime and, where groups incite racial hatred or are engaged in racially or religiously motivated criminal activity, we would expect them to be prosecuted. We have continued to show our commitment to this by supporting Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) with over £4 million between 2017 and 2022 to monitor anti-Muslim hate crimes and support victims, as well as providing almost £5 million to protect and secure mosques and other places of worship through the Places of Worship Security Grant.

■ Owner Occupation: Repairs and Maintenance

Catherine West: [\[80424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has plans to introduce national schemes or grants for home-owners on a low income to undertake essential repairs or home improvements.

Eddie Hughes:

My Department has put in place a range of schemes to support low income homeowners. This includes the means-tested Disabled Facilities Grant that helps meet the cost of home adaptations for disabled people of all ages and tenures to live safely and independently at home. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy also runs a number of programmes to support homeowners to improve the energy performance of their homes, including the Home Upgrade Grant and Energy Company Obligation schemes.

■ Private Rented Housing: North East

Mr Nicholas Brown: [\[81869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate his Department has made of changes in the number of short-term private rented lettings in the North East over the last five years.

Eddie Hughes:

This data is not collected by the Department and therefore it is not possible to make an assessment of the changes in the number of short-term private rented lettings in the North East.

Refugees: Afghanistan**Thangam Debbonaire:**[\[79408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what provisions are in place for British nationals who are in the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy or will be in the UK under the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme and who wish to be resettled in a specific place as a result of the availability of existing support systems.

Victoria Atkins:

All British nationals and their families who were evacuated are being provided with the same bridging accommodation and wrap-around support as everyone else. For example, we have provided all British Nationals with cash cards to give them subsistence support whilst their Universal Credit claim is processed. British Nationals and their families are provided with bridging accommodation for as long as is needed.

We continue to work at pace to agree the right long term support offer for British Nationals and great care is being taken in the matching process to meet the needs of the families as far as possible.

NORTHERN IRELAND**Members: Correspondence****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[81871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he plans to respond to Question 59717 on UK Shared Prosperity Fund tabled by the hon. Member for East Londonderry on 20 October 2021.

Conor Burns:

This question was answered on 26 October 2021.

Northern Ireland Office: Senior Civil Servants**Robert Largan:**[\[80509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 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.

Conor Burns:

The number of Senior Civil Servants working in the Northern Ireland Office based in each of the NUTS1 UK regions on (a) 1 March 2019, (b) 1 March 2020, (c) 1 March 2021 and (d) 1 September 2021 are shown below:

	1 MARCH 2019	1 MARCH 2020	1 MARCH 2021	1 SEPTEMBER 2021
Northern Ireland	6	4	5	5
England (London 8 UK1)		13	12	12
Scotland	0	0	0	0
Wales	0	0	0	0

■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland

Louise Haigh:

[\[79421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many meetings he has held with political party leaders as part of the Multiparty Talks on Legacy.

Conor Burns:

As part of the joint engagement process announced by the UK and Irish Governments following the British and Irish Intergovernmental Conference in June, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, together with the Irish Government's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence, held a roundtable with the leaders of the Northern Ireland parties on 16 July.

Since then, the UK Government has facilitated numerous engagements with a range of stakeholders to discuss legacy issues with the two governments and representatives from the Northern Ireland parties, while the UK Government has conducted its own bilateral engagements, including with the Northern Ireland parties.

Louise Haigh:

[\[79422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many meeting he has held with victims groups as part of the Multiparty Talks on Legacy.

Conor Burns:

Since the Government published the Command Paper, we have engaged with stakeholders across Northern Ireland, Great Britain and Ireland on our proposals, including representatives from the victims sector and victims and survivors directly. This engagement has taken place both with the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland parties and bilaterally.

Louise Haigh:

[\[79423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he has attended a working group as part of the MultiParty Talks on Legacy.

Conor Burns:

The UK and Irish Governments announced a joint engagement process to make progress on legacy issues following the British and Irish Intergovernmental

Conference in June. As part of this process, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, together with the Irish Government's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence, held a roundtable with the leaders of the Northern Ireland parties on 16 July.

Since then, the UK Government has facilitated numerous engagements with a range of stakeholders to discuss legacy issues with the two governments and representatives from the Northern Ireland parties. This process has been led by senior officials, who ensure that the Secretary of State is kept apprised of the issues raised and views expressed in these meetings, which were not attended by UK or Irish ministers. There has been no ministerial attendance by the UK or Irish Governments during these engagements. The Government has of course also been conducting its own bilateral engagement regarding legacy issues, and we have spoken to an extensive range of stakeholders.

SCOTLAND

■ Scotland Office: Meetings

Owen Thompson:

[80400]

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, 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.

Mr Alister Jack:

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. 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](#).

■ Scotland Office: Senior Civil Servants

Robert Largan:

[80511]

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, 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.

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, due to the small number involved (less than 5) specific information on SCS headcount relating to the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland can only be provided as follows:

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND	NUTS – REGION SCOTLAND/EASTERN SCOTLAND/CITY OF EDINBURGH	NUTS -REGION ENGLAND/INNER LONDON WEST WESTMINSTER
31 March 2019	Less than 5	5
31 March 2020	Less than 5	5
31 March 2021	Less than 5	5
30 September 2021	Less than 5	6

■ Scotland Office: UN Climate Conference 2021

Ruth Jones:

[\[80475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, 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.

Mr Alister Jack:

No Ministers from the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland travelled to COP26 by airplane.

TRANSPORT

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Ruth Jones:

[\[81129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of people in Newport West constituency who have yet to receive refunds for flights cancelled during the pandemic.

Robert Courts:

The data requested for the number of individuals due to receive refunds for flights is not centrally recorded by the Department for Transport.

The UK Civil Aviation Authority reviewed airline compliance on refunds and worked collaboratively to improve performance on consumer obligations, over the summer of 2020. The majority of airlines now pay refunds within seven days. During the pandemic Government made clear, including through the publication of the

Passenger COVID-19 Charter, that everyone should be as flexible as possible during whilst travelling during the pandemic, and the industry has responded with flexibility.

■ Buses: Driving

Gill Furniss:

[\[82039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of (a) employment, (b) recruitment and (c) retention of bus drivers.

Trudy Harrison:

My Department is working closely with ADEPT and CPT to gather information to gain an understanding of, and assess, the current staffing levels and recruitment pipeline in the bus sector. This will inform the Department about the extent of the shortages across the country, so that this can be monitored as the situation develops and ensure that Government's response is appropriate and effective. The Government is committed to maintaining high service levels for bus users to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 and has announced £226.5 million in Bus Recovery Funding to support this.

■ Buses: EU Countries

Sarah Champion:

[\[81009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with EU counterparts on (a) the Interbus Agreement, (b) the 90 day rule and (c) UK coach tour drivers travel in Europe.

Trudy Harrison:

The Interbus Agreement was a central part of discussions between the UK and EU during the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) negotiations for international coach and bus services.

The UK acceded to the Interbus Agreement as an independent member on 1 January 2021, which allows occasional passenger transport services (e.g. coach tours) to continue between the UK and other members of the Interbus Agreement, including the EU. In addition, the 'transport of passengers' title in the TCA ensures that authorised regular (scheduled) and special regular services to and from EU countries can continue.

This was a temporary measure that ceases apply to the UK in April 2022 as the Interbus Agreement has now been extended via a Protocol to include regular and special regular services. The EU is aware that the UK will sign the Protocol and have legislation in place in time for when this change comes into force.

On the 90 day rule and UK coach drivers, visa and work permit arrangements for the purpose of undertaking paid work is a matter for individual EU Member States. Since these rules are set by individual Member States, it is not a matter that the Department has discussed recently with EU officials.

■ Buses: Exhaust Emissions

John McNally:

[\[79403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of whether the target of 4,000 new UK-made zero emission buses will be met.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government remains committed to support the introduction of 4,000 zero emission buses.

As set out in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 £355 million of new funding has been made available for zero emission buses. £150 million of this funding has been made available for 2021-22 with the remaining funding available over the Spending Review period.

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

The Government has also committed to reforming the Bus Service Operators Grant, increasing it for zero emission buses from April 2022, and to setting an end date for the sale of new diesel buses, further incentivising the adoption of zero emission buses.

■ Courier Services and Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: EU Countries

Justin Madders:

[\[80346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the experience following the UK's departure from the EU of light haulage and express couriers who operate across the EU.

Trudy Harrison:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) allows EU hauliers to continue to operate to, from, through and within the UK without the need for permits. The TCA ensures that the vast majority of journeys will continue as they did before the end of the transition period.

The implementation of changes contained in the TCA, which will be introduced during 2022, will include some changes for the light haulage sector in the scope of shared rules for international transport related to operator licensing. This has been discussed cross-departmentally.

■ Driving Licences

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[79346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average waiting time is for a person to (a) receive and (b) renew their driving licence.

Trudy Harrison:

The quickest and easiest way to apply for a driving licence is to use the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)'s online services. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their licence within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application. The DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day. Currently, paper driving licence applications are likely to take six to ten weeks to process. The latest information on turnaround times for paper driving licence applications can be found [here](#).

Specific information about the average waiting time for a person to receive their driving licence is not held but it takes an average of three days for mail issued by the DVLA to be received by the customer. The average time taken to process paper driving licence renewal applications between April and October 2021 was 32 working days for routine applications for entitlement to drive cars and motorcycles and 21 working days for routine applications for vocational licences. Applications where the driver has a medical condition that must be investigated before a licence can be issued will take longer.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: North West**Sir Graham Brady:****[80917]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department made of the potential merits of removing the Golborne Link section of the Phase 2b portion of HS2 as part of the Integrated Rail Plan.

Sir Graham Brady:**[80918]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department made of business case for the Golborne Link section of the Phase 2b portion of HS2 as part of the Integrated Rail Plan.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Integrated Rail Plan noted that there is a strong case for a connection to the West Coast Mainline (WCML) north of Crewe and that the Union Connectivity Review (UCR) was considering this further. The UCR, undertaken by Sir Peter Hendy, has considered whether any alternatives to the Golborne Link could further improve connectivity to Scotland. Evidence from the Review suggests that alternative connections to the WCML could slightly reduce journey times further compared to the 'Golborne Link'. However, Sir Peter states that it is clear that further work is required to better understand the case for and against any such options; and has recommended the Government review options for alternative connections north of Crewe between HS2 and the WCML. The government will respond to Sir Peter's recommendations in due course.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Training

Karin Smyth:

[\[81976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many available HGV vocational tests were unused in each of the last four weeks.

Trudy Harrison:

The table below shows the numbers of available slots for vocational testing (Large Goods Vehicle (LGV) & Passenger Carrying Vehicle (PCV)). The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency is not able to report LGV and PCV separately.

	AVAILABLE SLOTS	BOOKED SLOTS	% AVAILABLE
w/c 25.10.21	546	2,328	19%
w/c 01.11.21	394	2,461	14%
w/c 08.11.21	321	2,617	11%
w/c 15.11.21	299	2,621	10%

■ London Underground: Recruitment

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[79328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with representatives of TfL on the application and selection process for drivers on the London Underground.

Trudy Harrison:

Transport in London is devolved and is the responsibility of the Mayor of London and Transport for London (TfL). While the Department works closely with TfL on a range of issues, operational procedures such as recruitment are matters entirely for them.

■ Overseas Workers: EU Countries

Justin Madders:

[\[80345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with EU officials on the potential impact of the 90 in 180 day rule on UK citizens working in the EU.

Trudy Harrison:

Visa and work permit arrangements for the purpose of undertaking paid work is a matter for individual EU Member States. Since these rules are set by individual Member States, it is not a matter that the Department has discussed recently with EU officials.

■ Parking: Pedestrian Areas

Caroline Lucas:

[\[79326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 29 June 2021 to Question 19562 on Parking: Pedestrian Areas and with reference to his Department's consultation on managing pavement parking which closed on 22 November 2020, whether his Department has concluded its consideration of the consultation findings; whether that consideration remains a priority for his Department; when his Department plans to publish its response to the consultation; whether he plans to bring forward proposals to amend existing pavement parking legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Trudy Harrison:

In the light of the consultation findings Ministers are actively considering the options for addressing pavement parking. This remains a priority for us and we will publish the consultation response and announce next steps as soon as possible.

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[81895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Government plans to publish its response to the consultation on Managing pavement parking, which closed on 22 November 2021.

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[81896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with local authorities outside of London on pavement parking since 22 November 2020.

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[81897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with (a) Guide Dogs and (b) other disability organisations on pavement parking since 22 November 2020.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department's consultation on pavement parking ended on 22 November 2020. We received over 15,000 responses from a mixture of local authorities, disability organisations, businesses and other organisations. Since then each of these has been read and carefully considered. In the light of the consultation findings, Ministers are now actively considering the options for addressing pavement parking. This is a priority and we will publish the formal consultation response and announce next steps for policy as soon as possible.

■ Railways

Rachael Maskell:

[\[81046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Intergrated Rail Plan considers its interconnectivity with other modes of public transport.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Terms of Reference for the Integrated Rail Plan make that the focus of the IRP was to look at how best to integrate work on HS2 Phase 2b, Northern Powerhouse Rail and other major Network Rail schemes. The IRP proposals seek to improve connectivity. There are four strategic objectives set out in the report: improving capacity and connectivity, supportive the government's levelling up agenda; reducing the environmental impact of the railway; and, providing value for money for taxpayers.

The ToR can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-speed-north-an-integrated-rail-plan-for-the-north-and-midlands-terms-of-reference/terms-of-reference-for-an-integrated-rail-plan-for-the-north-and-midlands>

Stuart Anderson:**[81134]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to encourage train operators to operate more affordable and flexible services.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail, published May 2021, contains a number of passenger-focused reforms that will bring in improved services and encourage the use of rail. The Spending Review 2021 confirmed £5.7bn of funding over three years to support essential rail services, and will see Government investing £360m in modernising ticketing and retailing systems, delivering a major overhaul to the way in which rail travel is bought and paid for.

There are a number of railcards available that offer discounts against most rail fares. We have saved a generation of passengers at least a third off their fares through the 16-17 and 26-30 railcards and went even further in November 2020 by extending these savings to former servicemen and women through a new Veterans Railcard.

We have introduced flexible season tickets across England this year; tickets launched on the 21 June and became available for use on the 28 June. This is a national product, priced to provide better value and convenience for commuters travelling two to three days a week.

■ Railways: North West**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[81112]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Integrated Rail Plan, what specific upgrades are planned for the line connecting Liverpool and Warrington; and when his Department plans to deliver them by.

Andrew Stephenson:

Options for upgrading the line between Liverpool and Warrington have been developed by Network Rail as part of its work on Northern Powerhouse Rail undertaken for my Department and Transport for the North. The scope of these will now be refined in the next stage of development work.

■ South West Railway Line: Timetables

Marsha De Cordova: [\[80451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the timeframe for the (a) publication of the results of the South Western Railway and Network Rail stakeholder consultation and (b) implementation of proposed December 2022 timetable changes on South Western Railway.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[80452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish (a) a detailed breakdown of the stakeholder responses to the South Western Railway and Network Rail stakeholder consultation and (b) the full responses to that consultation.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[80453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the estimated cost savings as a result of the proposed timetable changes on South Western Railway.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[80454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the correspondence between his Department and senior representatives of South Western Railway since the launch of the South Western Railway and Network Rail stakeholder consultation in July 2021.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[80455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish any assessments his Department has undertaken on the carbon impact of reducing South Western Railway services from the level they were at prior to the covid-19 outbreak.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[80456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will provide details of any proposed reductions in headcount at South Western Railway as a result of the proposed December 2022 timetable changes.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

South Western Railway (SWR), Network Rail (NR) and the Department are currently analysing the feedback from the consultation with the aim of NR and SWR publishing a report together with details on next steps by the end of the calendar year.

I recently spoke about the estimated cost savings as a result of the proposed timetable changes on SWR at an adjournment debate and followed this with a letter which is available in the Libraires of the House.

The Department has already published correspondence between the Department and senior SWR representatives which is available online at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/dft-foi-disclosure-log-2021.

The Department has not carried out any assessments into the carbon impact of SWR running a reduced timetable compared to pre-pandemic service levels, and there are

no proposed reductions in headcount as a result of the December 2022 timetable proposals.

■ **Transport for London: Finance**

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[79345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to provide a further funding to Transport for London; and if he will make a statement.

Trudy Harrison:

Since the start of the pandemic, the Government has provided Transport for London (TfL) with more than £4 billion in emergency funding support. This is in addition to an annual settlement agreed at the Spending Review worth approximately £1 billion per year up to 2024/25. This will be delivered through the GLA via Business Rates Retention and is in line with previous settlements. The Government will continue to discuss any further funding requirements with TfL, but it would not be appropriate to comment on future funding arrangements at this time.

■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

Damien Moore: [\[80443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department has taken to broaden the UK's recognition of covid-19 vaccination status with respect to vaccines administered overseas beyond the existing list of countries.

Robert Courts:

As of 22 November, people vaccinated with vaccines listed on the WHO Emergency Use Listing, in addition to those already recognised, can travel to the UK without having to quarantine. In practice, this means that Sinovac, Sinopharm Beijing and Covaxin are now accepted at the border as well as Oxford/AstraZeneca, Pfizer BioNTech, Moderna and Janssen.

The Government will continue to work with international partners to expand the policy to more countries and territories where it is safe to do so.

TREASURY

■ **Credit Cards: Debts**

Chi Onwurah: [\[81955\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the amount of credit card debt small businesses have accumulated since the outbreak of covid-19 in (a) England and (b) North East England; and what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of that debt that will be repaid.

John Glen:

Many SME owners use personal credit cards to fund their business activities. The latest SME Finance Monitor (Q2 2021) sets out that use of credit cards among SMEs

fell by half from 18% in 2019 to 9% in 2021. Additionally, Bank of England credit card data shows that quarterly household credit card lending fell nearly 20% from £1.36 billion in Q4 2019 to £1.09bn in Q4 2020 – although this data is not disaggregated by region, or into personal and business use.

There is no readily available estimate of SMEs' ability to repay existing credit card debt. Any SME worried about their ability to do so should talk to their lender in the first instance, which will be best placed to talk them through their options.

■ Energy: Conservation

Sarah Jones:

[\[79450\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent steps the Government has taken on spending £9.2 billion on energy efficiency measures over the course of the 2019 Parliament.

Helen Whately:

We have so far invested over £2.5bn to support both low-income households and public sector organisations to install energy efficiency measures, while also expanding the Energy Company Obligation to £1bn per year. This is significantly above the £1.28bn originally included in the 2019 manifesto covering the first two years of this Parliament.

The recent spending review committed further funding to improve the energy efficiency of buildings. This included £950 million for the Home Upgrade Grant, £800 million for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund £1.4 billion to help decarbonise the public sector estate.

We are also introducing important non-spending policies to support the uptake of energy efficiency, as set out in the Heat and Building Strategy.

■ National Insurance: Newport West

Ruth Jones:

[\[79473\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the rise in Employer National Insurance Contributions from April 2022 on (a) employment rates and (b) wages in Newport West constituency.

Lucy Frazer:

The Office for Budget Responsibility set out their assessment of the economic effects of the Health and Social Care Levy on the UK economy, including the impact on labour supply and wages, in their latest Economic and Fiscal Outlook. This can be found here: <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-october-2021/>

■ Revenue and Customs: Staff

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[79350\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what data is (a) collected and (b) analysed by HM Revenue and Customs on staff working locations, patterns of working in person and

remotely, and times at which staff are (i) working and (ii) physically present in HM Revenue and Customs buildings to underpin the adoption, management and assessment of smart working practices in that department.

Lucy Frazer:

To ensure HMRC's estate is optimised to support smarter working, HMRC collects data on when and where staff log-in. This is done via a unique identifier and does not involve any personal information. Any data collected is then further anonymized and aggregated to provide information at organisation and location level.

In terms of the assessment of smarter working practices, the standard code for smarter working maturity across Government departments is PAS3000. Maturity continues to be assessed by the Government Property Agency, on behalf of Cabinet Office, against four areas: Culture & People, Leadership, Workspace and Technology. The assessment programme was paused due to the pandemic and relaunched earlier this year.

■ **Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services**

Bridget Phillipson: [81933]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls made to the HMRC employers helpline were (a) answered and (b) not answered, within five minutes, in each of the last 36 months.

Bridget Phillipson: [81934]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls made to the HMRC national insurance helpline were (a) answered and (b) not answered, within five minutes, in each of the last 36 months.

Bridget Phillipson: [81935]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls made to the HMRC Tax Credits helpline were (a) answered and (b) not answered, within five minutes, in each of the last 36 months.

Bridget Phillipson: [81936]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls made to the HMRC employers helpline were (a) answered and (ii) not answered within ten minutes, in each of the last 36 months.

Bridget Phillipson: [81937]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls made to the HMRC national insurance helpline were (a) answered, (b) not answered within 10 minutes in each of the last 36 months.

Lucy Frazer:

Information on HMRC performance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-quarterly-performance->

[updateshttps://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-monthly-performance-reports](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-monthly-performance-reports)

■ Self-employed

Mary Glendon:

[79369]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the potential effect of the phasing out of Government covid-19 support on the number of the self-employed; and whether he has commissioned research on the impact of that matter on the employment rate.

Lucy Frazer:

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) provided unprecedented support to self-employed people who met the eligibility criteria. As of 4 November 2021, the scheme had supported 2.9 million people through 10.4 million grants worth £28.1 billion.

As set out in the Plan for Jobs Progress Update, published on 13 September 2021, the economy is now in a stronger position than it was last autumn, and the labour market is in a stronger position too. As the economy has reopened the jobs market has recovered, vacancies are at record highs, and the success of the Government's vaccine programme has allowed us to lift almost all restrictions.

That is why it is right that the Government has wound down its temporary pandemic support, while continuing to support businesses to invest in the recovery and supporting people into new jobs. At the start of this crisis, unemployment was expected to reach 12 per cent or more. It is now expected to peak at less than half of that level, at 5.2 per cent. That means more than two million fewer people are expected to be out of work than previously feared. As we move to a new phase of the Plan for Jobs, the Government will continue to maximise employment across the country, create high quality, productive jobs, and deliver the skills that people, businesses and the economy need to thrive as we build back better.

HMRC and HM Treasury will also carry out an evaluation of the SEISS to help inform future policymaking and delivery. The self-employment data necessary to carry out a full SEISS evaluation will not be available until 2023, upon HMRC's receipt of Self-Assessment returns.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Owen Thompson:

[82019]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Court of Appeal decision in *R. (on the application of Motherhood Plan) v HM Treasury* [2021] EWHC 309 (Admin), published on 24 November 2021, if he will review Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grants given to self-employed women who have recently given birth.

Lucy Frazer:

The Court of Appeal has confirmed that the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) did not unlawfully discriminate against self-employed women who

had taken time away from work related to pregnancy or caring for a new baby. The Government welcomes this judgment.

Under SEISS, the Government has been able to support millions of self-employed people, at scale and pace, making it one of the most generous self-employment income COVID support schemes in the world. The SEISS grant was based on data HMRC already held and could quickly and easily calculate at scale. Without this mechanism, the schemes might have run into unacceptable delay, created unmanageable manual demand, or risked exposing our support to unacceptably high levels of error and fraud.

■ Taxation: Self-assessment

Bridget Phillipson: [\[79359\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has set targets for the length of time callers to HMRC's helpline for queries on self-assessment tax returns should wait before their call is answered.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC does not have a target for the length of time callers should wait before their calls are answered. Instead, HMRC measures the percentage of callers who wish to speak to an advisor who are able to do so. They call this Advisor Attempts Handled.

Information on HMRC's current performance is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-monthly-performance-reports>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-quarterly-performance-updates>

■ Treasury: Staff

Bridget Phillipson: [\[79349\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what data is (a) collected and (b) analysed by his Department on staff working locations, patterns of working in person and remotely, and times at which staff are (i) working, and (ii) physically present in HM Treasury buildings to underpin the adoption, management and assessment of smart working practices in his Department.

Helen Whately:

The department does not use data collected on staff working locations, patterns of working in person or remotely, or times at which staff are working and physically present in HMT Treasury buildings as the sole indicators analysed to underpin the adoption, management, and assessment of smart working practices.

HMT started work to adopt smarter working practices pre-pandemic and underwent an initial assessment by the Government Property Agency (GPA) in February 2020 in which it was assessed as a 'new' adopter of smarter working practices. A further smarter working assessment by the GPA to measure progress is planned to take place in February 2022.

■ Treasury: Taskforce On Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform

Theresa Villiers:

[\[80236\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent progress he has made on implementing the recommendations of the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform relevant to his Department.

John Glen:

HM Treasury welcomes the independent report from the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform (TIGRR) and strongly supports its objective to ensure that the UK's regulatory framework effectively facilitates innovation and growth. On 16 September 2021 Lord Frost set out the government's response to the TIGRR report in a statement to the House of Lords, which was accompanied by a letter to Sir Iain Duncan Smith MP.

HM Treasury is progressing work relevant to a number of these recommendations. For example, new rules will come into effect on 1 December 2021 on disclosure of detailed costs and charges for professional clients and eligible counterparties.

More broadly, the Chancellor set out an ambitious vision for the financial services sector at his Mansion House speech in July. The government is clear that the UK has a unique opportunity to assess whether it wants to do things differently, to ensure the financial services sector has the right rules and regulations for UK markets, and to build a system that continues to be one the rest of the world looks towards.

WALES

■ National Farmers Union of Wales

Ruth Jones:

[\[79470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, when he last met with representatives of NFU Cymru.

Simon Hart:

I regularly meet with various representatives from across the farming sector in Wales.

I will be meeting with the President of NFU England and Wales this week and will also be holding an engagement session with all farming unions and interests in the New Year. Furthermore, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has met with representatives and spoken to NFU Cymru many times in recent months and is meeting them again today (30 November) along with other farming unions.

Moreover, the NFU are part of the UK Governments Strategic Trade Advisory Group and Trade Advisory Group, where stakeholders represent a cross-section of interests from all parts of the UK on trade policy matters, including on agriculture.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities****Chi Onwurah:****[80989]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the Answer of 14 June 2021 on Racial Discrimination: Technology, when a response to the The Independent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities Report will be published; and what assessment she has made since the previous Answer of the feasibility of defining fairness mathematically as proposed in the Commission's Report.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is carefully considering the findings of the independent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report and will publish its response in due course.

In line with the Commission's findings, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) published a [consultation](#) in September 2021 examining the role of sensitive personal data in bias detection and mitigation in AI systems, and the use of the term 'fairness' in a data protection context. The consultation is now closed and DCMS is analysing the responses.

The National AI Strategy published in September 2021 also sets out further government action to address concerns around fairness and algorithmic bias. The strategy can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-ai-strategy/national-ai-strategy-html-version>.

■ Government Equalities Office: York**Rachael Maskell:****[82007]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has plans to move civil servant jobs in (a) her Department and (b) non-departmental public bodies and government agencies associated with her Department to York.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Cabinet Office has committed to increasing its presence from c. 400 to c. 600 in York. This will be a mix of Senior Civil Service and delegated grades covering a range of professions such as HR, Commercial, Policy, Security, Finance, Project Delivery and Operational Delivery. As part of this, the Equality Hub has commenced recruiting roles into York.

Currently there are no plans for non-departmental public bodies and government agencies associated with the Cabinet Office to move jobs to York.

■ LGBT People**Martin Docherty-Hughes:****[81022]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, when the Government plans to publish its action plan coordinating a year of domestic action on LGBT issues, in the run up to the

global conference, Safe to be me: Global Equality Conference to be hosted in London in June 2022.

Mike Freer:

The UK government is committed to promoting equality for LGBT people at home and abroad and we continue to be recognised as one of the top 10 most progressive countries in Europe for LGBT rights.

Earlier this year, the Minister for Women and Equalities set out her top priorities, which we are making good progress towards delivering. We have launched a public consultation on our plans to ban conversion therapy; we are digitising the Gender Recognition Certificate application process, having already reduced the fee, and are improving healthcare for trans people; and the Department for Education recently announced over £1 million in funding to support schools and colleges to tackle all forms of bullying, including anti-LGBT bullying.

We have also appointed Iain Anderson as LGBT Business Champion, and the Prime Minister has appointed Lord Herbert as Special Envoy on LGBT rights, with both an international and domestic focus.

We look forward to hosting *Safe To Be Me: A Global Equality Conference* next year, which will bring together government representatives, businesses, civil society and international parliamentarians to address the safety of LGBT people at home and abroad.

■ **Special Envoy on LGBT Rights**

Martin Docherty-Hughes: [\[81020\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, when the Prime Minister last met his Special Envoy for LGBT Rights.

Martin Docherty-Hughes: [\[81021\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, when she last met the Prime Minister's Special Envoy on LGBT+ Rights.

Mike Freer:

Ministers routinely have internal meetings to discuss a range of issues. As Special Envoy on LGBT rights, the Rt Hon Lord Herbert CBE is leading efforts across Government to champion LGBT equality at home and abroad.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ **Autism and Hyperactivity: Females**

Alex Sobel: [\[79458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to help ensure that women with autism and/or ADHD are consulted in order that their

lived experience informs review processes for (a) personal independence payment, (b) universal credit, (c) employment support allowance and (d) severe disability premium.

Chloe Smith:

Throughout the consultation period of '*Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper*' we held events with disabled people, people with health conditions, and their representatives. Prior to the formal launch of the consultation, Members from both sides of the House hosted organisations and individuals from their own constituencies. The Department is currently reviewing responses to the Green Paper, which consider the full range of health and disability benefits, and we remain committed to responding with a White Paper next year.

In addition to this, both Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Assessment Providers have Health Condition Insight Reports that cover Autism specifically. These are completed by representative groups providing insights from real life examples to describe common issues faced by the people they support. One Provider has developed a podcast on ADHD available to all their Health Providers and both Providers are keen to continue their engagement with stakeholders on autism and ADHD.

We will continue to engage stakeholders regularly, particularly on future disability benefit reform.

■ **Children: Maintenance**

Karin Smyth:

[\[76730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many times the Child Maintenance Service has taken formal action against an employer that has failed to meet the requirements of a deduction of earnings order in each of the last three years.

Guy Opperman:

Child Maintenance Group policy allows for its Financial Investigation Unit to attempt to try and establish compliance in all cases before looking to see if the case may be prosecutable.

If the employer does not comply immediately a warning of Interview Under Caution and possible prosecution is sent. It is only after this notice expires that a notice that we intend to carry out an Interview Under Caution is sent, which would signal prosecution even if the employer then complies.

■ **Cold Weather Payments**

Rachel Reeves:

[\[81929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many households were eligible for the Cold Weather Payment and lived in a postcode area where Cold Weather Payments were made in that year (a) overall and (b) by whether eligibility derived from (i) receipt of pension credit or (ii) universal credit or other legacy benefits for each of the last 10 financial years.

Guy Opperman:

Column titled 'Total households receiving at least one payment' comprises households that were eligible for Cold Weather Payments and lived in a postcode area where Cold Weather Payments were made in that year.

YEAR	COLD WEATHER TRIGGERS	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS ELIGIBLE	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS ELIGIBLE, IN RECEIPT OF PENSION CREDIT (AS A SUBSET OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS)	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING AT LEAST ONE PAYMENT	HOUSEHOLDS IN RECEIPT OF PENSION CREDIT RECEIVING AT LEAST ONE PAYMENT (AS A SUBSET OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS)
20/21	140	4,045,000	1,431,000	3,323,000	1,173,000
19/20	7	3,646,000	1,490,000	4,000	3,000
18/19	43	3,830,000	1,580,000	884,000	353,000
17/18	140	3,888,000	1,669,000	3,768,000	1,615,000
16/17	13	4,055,000	1,813,000	127,000	61,000
15/16	26	4,107,000	1,913,000	133,000	64,000
14/15	40	3,807,000	2,110,000	359,000	199,000
13/14	1	3,920,000	<i>data unpublished</i>	1,000	1,000
12/13	173	4,044,000	2,364,000	3,291,000	1,919,000
11/12	105	4,240,000	<i>data unavailable</i>	3,169,000	<i>data unavailable</i>

Note:

- A household is classed as eligible for Cold Weather Payments if it satisfies eligibility criteria, such as receipt of a qualifying benefit.
- A household will receive at least one Cold Weather Payment if it satisfies eligibility criteria and a cold weather trigger occurs in their postcode area, hence in years with fewer cold weather triggers, fewer households were in receipt of at least one payment.

- For years prior to 2018/19, the numbers of households receiving at least one payment were included in published data. For the years 2018/19 to 2020/21, these numbers have been calculated using data in the published reports.
- For some weather station areas, where the number of eligible recipients was estimated to be less than 100, this has been rounded to 100. Similarly, where the number of eligible recipients was estimated to be less than 500, this has been rounded to 500.
- Totals have been rounded to the nearest 1,000.
- For the year 2011/12, the estimates of the number of pension-age recipients of CWP is unavailable.
- For the year 2013/14, the estimated number of pension-age recipients is unavailable.

Rachel Reeves:

[81930]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many households received one or more Cold Weather Payments (a) overall and (b) by whether eligibility derived from (i) receipt of pension credit or (ii) universal credit or other legacy benefits in each of the last 10 financial years.

Guy Opperman:

The number of households receiving at least one Cold Weather Payment is included below.

YEAR	COLD WEATHER TRIGGERS	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING AT LEAST ONE PAYMENT	HOUSEHOLDS IN RECEIPT OF PENSION CREDIT RECEIVING AT LEAST ONE PAYMENT (AS A SUBSET OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS)
20/21	140	3,323,000	1,173,000
19/20	7	4,000	3,000
18/19	43	884,000	353,000
17/18	140	3,768,000	1,615,000
16/17	13	127,000	61,000
15/16	26	133,000	64,000
14/15	40	359,000	199,000
13/14	1	1,000	1,000
12/13	173	3,291,000	1,919,000

YEAR	COLD WEATHER TRIGGERS	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING AT LEAST ONE PAYMENT	HOUSEHOLDS IN RECEIPT OF PENSION CREDIT RECEIVING AT LEAST ONE PAYMENT (AS A SUBSET OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS)
11/12	105	3,169,000	<i>data unavailable</i>

Note:

- A household is classed as eligible for Cold Weather Payments if it satisfies eligibility criteria, such as receipt of a qualifying benefit.
- A household will receive at least one Cold Weather Payment if it satisfies eligibility criteria and a cold weather trigger occurs in their postcode area, hence in years with fewer cold weather triggers, fewer households were in receipt of at least one payment.
- For years prior to 2018/19, the numbers of households receiving at least one payment were included in published data. For the years 2018/19 to 2020/21, these numbers have been calculated using data in the published reports.
- For some weather station areas, where the number of eligible recipients was estimated to be less than 100, this has been rounded to 100. Similarly, where the number of eligible recipients was estimated to be less than 500, this has been rounded to 500.
- Totals have been rounded to the nearest 1,000.
- For the year 2011/12, the estimate of the number of pension-age recipients of CWP is unavailable.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Coronavirus**

Chris Stephens:

[\[81977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Jobcentres have reported multiple covid-19 cases in each of the last six months.

Chris Stephens:

[\[81978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which offices in her Department have been (a) closed or (b) partially closed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak in each of the last six months.

Chris Stephens:

[\[81980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many offices in her Department have been (a) closed or (b) partially closed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak in each of the last six months.

Mims Davies:

The Department has consistently taken a proactive approach to reporting and reviewing all reported cases of Covid-19 infections. This has ensured that wherever possible sites remain open or partially open.

During the 6-month period May to October 2021, 11 offices have been closed for a circuit breaks, 6 of these were closed due to multiple positive cases on the site. Circuit breaks are tight restrictions and/or closures designed to stop and bring the number of cases down.

The following offices were closed or partially closed due to circuit breaks:

- Blackburn Service Centre
- Wigan Jobcentre
- Caxton House (Corporate Centre/Hub)
- Manchester St Peters SQ (Corporate Centre/Hub)
- Dudley Pedmore House Service Centre
- Guisely Jobcentre
- Weymouth Jobcentre
- Newcastle Tyne View Park (Corporate Centre/Hub)
- Caerphilly Jobcentre
- Kirkby Jobcentre
- Montrose Jobcentre

The offices listed above are sites that were closed for a Circuit Break due to the potential of workplace transmission and therefore do not include sites where they were temporarily closed to allow for deep clean to take place.

■ Employment Schemes

Chris Stephens: [\[81979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many face-to-face appointments have taken place in Jobcentres in each of the last six months.

Chris Stephens: [\[81983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether work coaches are being instructed not to block their diaries for the purposes of (a) annual leave, (b) sick leave or (c) training.

Chris Stephens: [\[81984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether there is a maximum number of face-to-face appointments a full-time work coach is expected to deliver in one day.

Chris Stephens:[\[81986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether work coaches are given a set amount of time in a working day to carry out duties other than face-to-face appointments with claimants.

Mims Davies:

Throughout the pandemic, Jobcentres remained open for claimants who required face-to-face support. From April, Jobcentres in England, Scotland and Wales returned to their pre-lockdown opening hours and restarted face-to-face appointments, in accordance with government guidelines.

Work Coaches manage their diaries to ensure that they are supporting their claimants back into work, whilst also allowing time for admin and other duties. The amount of time allocated to carry out duties other than face-to-face appointments will vary, depending on the needs of individual claimants.

There is no maximum number of face-to-face appointments a full-time Work Coach is expected to deliver in one day. The number each day is determined by the circumstances of each claimant and the type of appointment being conducted. If a Work Coach is not available due to annual leave, sick leave, training, or any other reason, the Work Coach Team Leader will manage the situation to ensure that claimants continue to receive the appropriate level of support.

For each of the last six months, the total number of claimants attending a face-to-face appointment in a Jobcentre is as follows:

MAY	292,185
June	1,010,005
July	1,213,603
August	1,265,330
September	1,533,495
October	1,625,474

Please note that the data supplied is derived from unpublished management information which was collected for internal Departmental use only and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. The data should therefore be treated with caution.

■ Employment Schemes: Disability

Wera Hobhouse:[\[78481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the £156 million committed in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 to provide job finding

support for disabled people, what services that funding will support, in addition to the work coaches referenced in part 4.99 of that document.

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[78482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to (a) the disability employment gap remaining at 28.7 percentage points and (b) the Leonard Cheshire research finding that 69 per cent of disabled people have had their work impacted by covid-19, whether he has made a recent assessment of the need for additional funding to support disabled people entering and remaining in work.

Chloe Smith:

The Government is committed to seeing one million more disabled people in work between 2017 and 2027 and reducing the disability employment gap. The disability employment gap

has closed by around 5 percentage points since 2013 (the earliest comparable date, when the current way of measuring disability began) and in the last four years, the number of disabled people in employment has increased by 850,000. This is good progress, however, we know we need to go further to help more disabled people and people with health conditions start, stay and succeed in work, where it is right for them.

We have committed in both the recent Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper and the National Disability Strategy, to continue to improve employment support for disabled people and people with health conditions to help support more people to move towards and into work. We are reviewing Green Paper responses now and will come forward with a White Paper next year.

The Spending Review committed £339 million per year for the continued funding of existing disability employment programmes such as the Access to Work scheme and the Work and Health programme.

In addition to this, £156 million has been agreed over the Spending Review 2021 period to provide job finding support for disabled people, with a focus on additional work coaches. We are continuing to develop detailed plans for a range of disability employment support to best support disabled people towards and into work across the Spending Review period.

■ Jobcentres

Chris Stephens:

[\[81982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants have been required to attend more than one appointment at a Jobcentre within a two week period in each of the last six months; and whether work coaches have autonomy to determine the most suitable length of appointment for each claimant that they interview.

Chris Stephens:

[\[81985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the length of time given to claimants for Jobcentre appointments is recorded.

Mims Davies:

The requested information is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Maintaining an effective Work Coach diary is a joint responsibility between a team leader and the Work Coach, and is reached collaboratively through regular discussion and agreement.

The duration of each appointment is determined by the appointment type, and the length of time the appointment is expected to take is recorded by our diary management tool. We do not hold information on the actual duration of an appointment, for example, whether the appointment was longer or shorter than the allocated time.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Caroline Lucas:

[\[80950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact of the Kickstart scheme in the (a) arts, (b) digital, (c) creative and (d) cultural sectors; if she will make it her policy to extend the scheme beyond the planned end date; and if she will make a statement.

Mims Davies:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer given for PQ [71418](#) for a recent breakdown of jobs made available and started by sector.

We have worked across sectors to deliver a series of sector-specific webinars to encourage and support employer applications to Kickstart. This has included a creative and media industries webinar and a digital webinar, delivered in partnership with the sector itself, inviting more than 200 employers from the tech and digital sector. We continue to support these sectors for the remainder of the Kickstart Scheme, whilst recognising that Kickstart jobs must be additional, not displacing existing opportunities within the wider labour market.

On Monday 4 October 2021 the Chancellor announced that Kickstart would run-on to the end of March 2022, extending the window for young people to take part in the Scheme beyond the original closing date of 31 December 2021. The deadline for employers and gateways to submit their application is 17 December 2021. There are no current plans to extend the Scheme further.

■ Local Housing Allowance

Ms Karen Buck:

[\[79261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answers of 16 November 2021 to Questions 70219, 70220 and 70221 on Local Housing Allowance, what estimate she has made of the number of tenants who will experience a (a) new and

(b) increased shortfall between their rent and entitlement as a result of the decision not to position those rates at the thirtieth percentile of local market rents.

David Rutley:

No estimate has been made.

■ **Offshore Industry: Continental Shelf**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[80980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with the Health and Safety Executive's Energy Division on the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on backlogs of safety critical maintenance work on oil and gas installations on the UK Continental Shelf; and if she will list any recent actions that the HSE has taken against duty holders in this area.

Chloe Smith:

No recent discussions have taken place between the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Energy Division on this specific issue. Recognising the potential impact of the pandemic in 2020, HSE wrote to production installation duty holders with a detailed question set on maintenance and inspection backlogs, in order to evaluate and quantify the specific impact of pandemic-related down-manning on backlog. HSE's analysis of the data provided in response to its question set indicated an increase in backlogs. This was because duty holders had postponed maintenance shutdowns because their approach to managing the risk of COVID infection required reduced manning levels that were insufficient to undertake the shutdowns.

HSE took the following steps:

- (i) Identified at the outset of the pandemic that maintenance would be affected and carried out inspections using the existing ' *Maintenance management*' Inspection Guide, which HSE developed in 2014 specifically to address backlogs.
- (ii) Worked with duty holders to look at alternative ways of carrying out the work, such as mini shutdowns and the use of "flotels" and walk-to-work vessels etc.
- (iii) Set up a working group with Oil & Gas UK and its members to specifically look at addressing the backlog issue.
- (iv) Took enforcement action where backlogs were not being managed safely.
- (v) Set up a program of Process Safety Leadership inspections starting in Q1 2022, of which asset integrity and maintenance backlog will form a key component.
- (vi) Worked with senior industry integrity personnel in the Asset Integrity Task Group to highlight and address the issue.
- (vii) Repeating the data gathering exercise in Q1 2022 to check that duty holders are managing their backlogs as they stated and to take enforcement action if they are not.

■ Social Security Benefits

Kate Osamor: [\[78472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what criteria that are used by the Risk Review Team to prompt an investigation into a benefit claim.

Kate Osamor: [\[78473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will place in the Library a copy of guidance to the Risk Review Team on the investigation of benefit claims.

Kate Osamor: [\[78476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, on what date the risk review team was established, how many staff work on that team; and what the objectives are of that team.

David Rutley:

The Risk Review Team (RRT) was created in May 2020 as a direct response to threats identified by the Department's Integrated Risk and Intelligence Service (IRIS).

IRIS brings together the Department's Risk and Intelligence Service, our Cyber Resilience Team and our co-ordination of our response to Serious and Organised Crime activity.

Last year, IRIS coordinated the detection of, and response to, fraud risks from organised crime groups seeking to exploit COVID-19, which meant that systematic attacks on the benefit system were detected and shut down. In this way cyber colleagues prevented an attack by organised criminals which would have seen £1.9 billion in benefits being paid to people trying to scam the system.

The role of the RRT is to review and take action on cases identified by IRIS as being a high fraud risk.

The numbers engaged in RRT activity have fluctuated dependant on the numbers of claims identified. However, 165 full time equivalent staff are currently engaged on the RRT.

The methods used to identify cases that are reviewed by the RRT are sensitive and, as such, we are not able to provide the mechanics of how they are identified. By putting such methods – or the guidance to the team – in the public domain, we would risk undermining the ability of DWP to detect and counter fraudulent threats.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Marsha De Cordova: [\[79459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many responses her Department received to its Health and Disability Green Paper consultation; and how many people with lived experience of the disability benefits system responded to that consultation.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[79460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many individuals or organisations indicated support for the proposal for a single assessment for all health and disability benefits in the engagement work her Department conducted in preparation for the publication of the Health and Disability Green Paper.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[79461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many of the 4,500 responses to the consultation on the health and disability Green Paper were from (a) individuals and (b) organisations.

Chloe Smith:

We received over 4,500 responses to the public consultation *Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper*.

This includes thousands of responses from individuals, many reflecting their lived experience of the disability benefits system or on behalf of people with this experience. Charities and organisations representing disabled people and people with health conditions also responded.

As almost half of the responses came via email rather than the digital platform that we used, we are unable to provide a breakdown. This is because people did not routinely provide information on whether they were responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation in their email responses.

Throughout the consultation period itself, we held more than 40 events with disabled people, people with health conditions and their representatives. These included both virtual and face-to-face events across the UK.

In the 18 months prior to the formal launch of the consultation, we ran a significant stakeholder engagement programme to ensure that the views of disabled people and their representatives shaped the content of the consultation. This saw MPs from across the political spectrum host organisations and individuals from their own constituencies.

We are very grateful to everyone who contributed to the consultation. While the formal consultation period has now ended, we will continue to engage with disabled people and people with health conditions regularly.

We are currently reviewing responses from individuals, charities and other organisations who took part in the consultation, and will respond with a White Paper next year. It would be premature to quantify support for a particular reform option.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification

Kate Osamor: [\[78474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many benefit claims were suspended as a consequence of the Risk Review Team investigating those claims, by claimant nationality, in each month from January 2015 to November 2021.

Kate Osamor: [\[78475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what information the Risk Review Team must provide to benefit claimants when it takes the decision to suspend their claim pending an investigation.

Kate Osamor: [\[78477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average length of a benefit claim suspension pending an investigation by the Risk Review Team was in each month from January 2015 to present.

Kate Osamor: [\[78478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of benefit claims suspended pending an investigation by the Risk Review Team, were then reinstated, in each month since January 2015.

David Rutley:

The Risk Review Team (RRT) was created in May 2020 as a direct response to threats identified by the Department's Integrated Risk and Intelligence Service (IRIS).

IRIS brings together the Department's Risk and Intelligence Service, our Cyber Resilience Team and our co-ordination of our response to Serious and Organised Crime activity.

Last year, IRIS coordinated the detection of, and response to, fraud risks from organised crime groups seeking to exploit COVID-19, which meant that systematic attacks on the benefit system were detected and shut down. In this way cyber colleagues prevented an attack by organised criminals in which would have seen £1.9 billion in benefits being paid to people trying to scam the system.

The role of the Risk Review Team is to review and take action on cases identified by IRIS as being a high fraud risk.

A monthly breakdown of cases where benefit was re-instated following suspension is not available, however approximately 3% of cases reviewed under the Risk Review Process have been reinstated. All other cases will remain suspended pending investigation or closure.

The average length of claim suspension because of the Risk Review Team activity is not available. However, the length of time that a claim is suspended is largely dependent on the engagement of the claimant and the timely provision of any information requested.

Where a customer does contact us and provides the information requested, we have processes in place to ensure people's payments are put back into payment as soon as possible.

The Risk Review Team does not capture demographic data on any claims they suspend and, as such, no information can be provided on nationality.

Any Universal Credit claim that is suspended as a consequence of the Risk Review Team activity is notified by journal and text messages, along with a means by which a claimant can contact the Department and speak to the agent responsible for that case.

■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[78456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she has taken to ensure that disabled people have been able to co-produce the Health Transformation Programme.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[78458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take to ensure that disabled people participate in decisions on the award of contracts under the Health Transformation Programme.

Chloe Smith:

A key objective of the Health Transformation Programme is to improve trust and transparency in the assessment process and we are continuing to work closely with external stakeholders to ensure their insights and experiences are incorporated into the development and design of the new health assessment service. We have undertaken significant engagement with disabled people and disabled people's stakeholder groups and continue to engage through regular workshops and in-depth discussions. We are also undertaking a programme of user research to capture qualitative feedback from the claimants using the service.

While the views and experiences of disabled people are integral to the design of our service, it is essential that the process of procuring external contracts remains independent, to guarantee a fair and open competition.

This year (2021), the Cabinet Office will create a Disability Commissioning Taskforce of disabled people's user-led organisations to improve disability organisations' access to government contracts.

Cabinet Office will also appoint a Disability Crown Representative to help unlock the innovation and economic benefits of disability inclusion through the government's commercial activities by March 2022.

By December 2021, the Disability Unit will review the way the UK government engages with disabled people, in discussion with disabled people, disabled people's organisations and charities.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[78457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish the results of the Health Transformation Programme pilot, including information provided by disabled people on whether that system has improved their experience.

Chloe Smith:

The Health Transformation Programme has begun developing a new Health Assessment Service in a small area known as the Health Transformation Area (HTA). The HTA is not a pilot, but a controlled safe environment where we can develop the new service at small scale, exploring ideas from claimants, stakeholders and DWP staff. Our first site opened in April 2021 and have begun expanding the HTA gradually from this starting point. Early qualitative research continues to be undertaken in the HTA to explore initial outcomes, but it would be premature to consider publication.

■ Universal Credit**Sir George Howarth:**[\[70230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the (a) impact and (b) financial impact on claimants of (i) the three month waiting period for the limited capability for work-related activity element of universal credit for people with severe health issues and (ii) the decision not to backdate payments for the three month waiting period.

Chloe Smith:

Where the claimant is determined to have limited capability for work and work-related activity (LCWRA), an additional amount of Universal Credit (UC) may be awarded. However, before the additional amount is payable, a UC claimant must serve the 'relevant' period to establish that they have a long-term health condition. This approach replicates the 13-week assessment period which is applied in Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claims.

There are no plans to assess the impact of the relevant period or current backdating rules. Where an additional amount of UC is payable, this is backdated to the start of the assessment period following the assessment period in which the relevant period ends.

Throughout the period before the award of the LCWRA addition, claimants will receive the applicable standard allowance plus any additions, reflecting the claimants' personal circumstances, for example for children, housing costs, childcare costs. They may also be eligible for support through PIP.

There are exceptions to serving the relevant period in UC, including where someone accesses benefits via the Special Rules for Terminal Illness. Where a claimant deemed to have LCWRA in ESA moves to UC, and those claims are continuous, the relevant period does not apply. An exception also applies in relation to claimants whose award ended in the previous six months as a result of their earnings exceeding their entitlement. Where that claimant's previous award included the LCWRA addition, they do not, on reclaiming, have to serve the relevant period again.

■ Welfare State**Chi Onwurah:****[76677]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to tackle stigmatisation of welfare claimants.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: Universal Credit(UC) encompasses several legacy benefits in one and can be claimed in many different circumstances by those who are entitled. UC is not only for those unemployed and can be claimed by people in various circumstances – such as those with a health condition or terminal illness, balancing parenthood or caring. It can also help to support low income or self-employed earnings.

The Department works hard to dispel any stigmatisation by regularly communicating with the public about benefits through paid advertising, stakeholder and employer engagement and no cost campaigns to help people understand their entitlement and the support we can provide as a safety net and in times of need. During the pandemic this has been particularly important as many people needed to claim benefits for the first time. Meanwhile, we always keenly help people to progress, train and move forward where possible and help the most vulnerable in society to have all the support they are rightly entitled too even in later life right through to pension age and beyond.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Covid-19 Update

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

[\[HCWS433\]](#)

The UK's COVID-19 vaccine programme continues to protect the nation against the virus. We continue to make the vaccine accessible to all those eligible and urge everyone to take up the vaccine and booster offer without delay. Over 17 million people have now received their COVID-19 booster vaccine or third dose, ensuring the protection they've secured from their first two doses is maintained over the winter months.

On 29 November, in response to a request from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care for urgent advice in light of the Omicron variant, the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has published advice on the COVID-19 vaccination programme. Additional data regarding the Omicron variant will take some time to accrue and the JCVI have advised that waiting for such data before acting risks a suboptimal delayed response. Therefore, the JCVI has advised the following:

1. Booster vaccination eligibility should be expanded to include all adults aged 18 years to 39 years.
2. Booster vaccination should now be offered in order of descending age groups, with priority given to the vaccination of older adults and those in a COVID-19 at-risk group. Booster vaccination should not be given within three months of completion of the primary course. This interval replaces the previous advice which was for a six-month interval.
3. Severely immunosuppressed individuals who have completed their primary course (three doses) should be offered a booster dose with a minimum of three months between the third primary and booster dose.
4. All children and young people aged 12 to 15 years should be offered a second dose (30-micrograms) of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine.

Her Majesty's Government (HMG) has accepted this advice and all four parts of the UK intend to follow the JCVI's advice ([JCVI advice on the UK vaccine response to the Omicron variant - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)).

The overall intention of the measures advised is to accelerate the deployment of COVID-19 vaccines to provide additional protection in the event it is needed as we come to better understand the risks posed by the Omicron variant. There are currently no data to indicate that Omicron infection is associated with a change in the pattern of susceptibility to serious COVID-19 (hospitalisation and death). Persons of older age, or who are in COVID-19 at-risk groups are likely to remain at higher risk from serious COVID-19; therefore, vaccination should be prioritised accordingly. The JCVI will continue to review

the programme and options for maximising health benefits alongside the rapidly evolving data on the Omicron variant of concern.

With deployment of the extended booster vaccination offer and additional doses to children and young people imminent, I am now updating the House on the liabilities HMG has taken on in relation to further vaccine supply via this statement and the Departmental Minute containing a description of the liability undertaken. The agreement to provide indemnity with deployment of further booster doses to the population increases the statutory contingent liability of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Given the urgency with which we required JCVI advice and now deployment, we regret that it has not been possible to provide 14 sitting days' notice to consider these issues in advance of announcing the planned extension to the booster programme in the UK.

Deployment of effective vaccines to eligible groups has been and remains a key part of the Government's strategy to manage COVID-19. Willingness to accept the need for appropriate indemnities to be given to vaccine suppliers has helped to secure access to vaccines, with the expected benefits to public health and the economy alike, much sooner than may have been the case otherwise

Given the exceptional circumstances we are in, and the terms on which developers have been willing to supply a COVID-19 vaccine, we along with other nations have taken a broad approach to indemnification proportionate to the situation we are in.

Even though the COVID-19 vaccines have been developed at pace, at no point and at no stage of development has safety been bypassed. The MHRA approval for use of the currently deployed vaccines clearly demonstrates that these vaccines have satisfied, in full, all the necessary requirements for safety, effectiveness, and quality. We are providing indemnities in the very unexpected event of any adverse reactions that could not have been foreseen through the robust checks and procedures that have been put in place

I will update the House in a similar manner as and when other COVID-19 vaccines or additional doses of vaccines already in use in the UK are deployed.

HM Treasury has approved the proposal.

TREASURY

■ Tax Administration and Maintenance

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Lucy Frazer):

[\[HCWS432\]](#)

Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 announced that the government would bring forward a further set of plans for tax administration and maintenance later in the autumn, which follows a similar set of announcements published in *Tax policies and consultations: Spring 2021* [CP 404] after the Spring Budget. I am pleased to confirm that the government has set these out in *Tax Administration and Maintenance: Autumn 2021* [CP 577], laid today. This outlines further steps the government is taking to progress tax

simplification, tackle non-compliance and ensure our tax system is fit for the modern world.

Copies of the report are available in the Vote Office and at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tax-administration-and-maintenance-autumn-2021>