



Daily Report

Wednesday, 1 December 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 1 December 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:38 P.M., 01 December 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

■ Agriculture: Methane

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[80186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the future role of small-scale biogas plants in mitigating farm methane emissions.

Greg Hands:

The Department has not formally assessed the future role of small-scale biogas plants in mitigating farm methane emissions. The Green Gas Support Scheme, due to launch on 30 November 2021, will provide support for anaerobic digestion plants injecting biomethane into the grid, following the closure of the Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive in March 2021. The Government will continue to evaluate biogas and biomethane's future role in reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

■ Animal Experiments

Caroline Lucas:

[\[80272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Government's plans to invest £20 billion in Research and Development by 2024-25, what proportion of that funding will be allocated to research that uses and seeks to further develop (a) the use of advanced cultures of human cells and tissues, (b) artificial intelligence, (c) organ-on-a-chip technology human tissue models and (d) other techniques that do not use animals relevant to disease modelling and drug testing for humans; and if he will make a statement.

George Freeman:

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

The Government actively supports and funds the development and dissemination of techniques that replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in research (the 3Rs). This is achieved primarily through funding for the National Centre for the 3Rs. Since the NC3Rs was launched it has committed £100 million through its research, innovation, and early career awards to provide new 3Rs approaches for scientists in academia and industry to use.

■ Bulb Energy: Insolvency

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[81850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the cost of the public purse in the next (a) 3, (b) 6 and (c) 9 months of his Department's implementation of a special administration regime on Bulb Energy Ltd.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 30 November 2021]: The Government has made a £1.7 billion loan facility available to the energy administrators for Bulb Energy, to provide working capital for a six-month period. As my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State set out in the House of Commons last week, we intend for the SAR process to be temporary and has instructed officials, industry and Ofgem to work to that end.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Small Businesses**Chi Onwurah:**[\[81951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many small businesses (a) applied and (b) were awarded loans from the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme in (i) England and (ii) North East England.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 30 November 2021]: Across the UK, 251,342 applications for a CBIL were made; 109,877 were successful. As of our final evaluation of July 2021, 87,809 Coronavirus Business Interruption loans (CBIL) have been offered in England, to the value of £23.03bn. 919 loans were offered to the companies in the North East of England to the value of £694,592,700.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Meetings**Owen Thompson:**[\[80385\]](#)

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

George Freeman:

Ministers holding meetings or phone calls on government business are routinely accompanied by a private secretary or other official, in line with the expectations of paragraph 8.14 of the Ministerial Code.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Staff**Robert Langan:**[\[80495\]](#)

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

George Freeman:

The Number of Civil Servants employed by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) on the 31 March 2019, 31 March 2020, 01 March 2021, 01 June 2021 & 01 September 2021 by NUTS1 UK regions are presented below:

REGION	31/03/2019	31/03/2020	01/03/2021	01/06/2021	01/09/2021
East Midlands	10	10	11	11	11
East of England	10	10	12	13	13
London	3740	4030	4834	5030	5122
North East England	10	20	30	31	35
North West England	20	20	16	36	84
Northern Ireland	0	0	1	1	1
Other	0	0	2	1	1
Scotland	90	90	96	100	105
South East England	0	0	2	2	2
South West England	20	20	19	19	17
Yorkshire and the Humber	20	10	0	0	0
Wales	50	70	76	76	79
West Midlands	110	140	155	166	181
Total	4080	4420	5254	5486	5651

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Written Questions**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[81873]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to respond to Question 60360 on Electric Vehicles: Charging Points tabled by the hon. Member for East Londonderry on 21 October 2021.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 30 November 2021]: The Hon. Member received a response on 27th October.

■ Energy Supply: Regulation**Julian Sturdy:****[81944]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of (a) regulation of the consumer energy market and (b) performance of Ofgem in the context of recent energy supplier failures.

Greg Hands:

There are unprecedented conditions in global energy markets. As a consequence, some suppliers have exited the market. The Government and Ofgem work to ensure that exits are orderly, customers are protected and they have uninterrupted supply. The Government is considering the necessary reforms to retail market regulation to support the UK's transition to net zero.

■ Energy: Newport West**Ruth Jones:****[79472]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help support energy efficiency measures at homes in Newport West constituency.

Greg Hands:

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) requires larger suppliers to deliver energy efficiency and heating measures to achieve bill savings for low income and vulnerable household. In summer 2021 the Government consulted on a successor ECO which will run until 2026, with the value boosted from £640 million to £1 billion a year.

In addition, as outlined in the Government's Heat and Buildings Strategy, the Boiler Upgrade Scheme will launch in England and Wales from Spring 2022, and will provide capital grants to support the installation of low carbon heat technologies. Grants of £5,000 will be offered for air source heat pumps and biomass boilers, and £6,000 for ground source heat pumps. Homeowners, small businesses, and private landlords will be eligible for the Boiler Upgrade Scheme.

■ Future Fund: North East**Chi Onwurah:****[81956]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November 2021 to Question 68262 on Future Fund, what assessment he has made of the difference in the level of conversions in the North East compared to London and the South East.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 30 November 2021]: Analysis is underway, and no reliable conclusions can be drawn from the analysis so far.

■ Green Gas Support Scheme: Agriculture

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[80185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason on-farm solutions, such as biomethane, are not included in the Green Gas Support Scheme.

Greg Hands:

The primary objectives of the GGSS are to reduce emissions of the gas grid and ensure value for money for the billpayer. Paying tariffs to biogas plants on farms that do not inject the biomethane they produce into the gas grid carries the risk of overcompensation and therefore poor value for money to the billpayer. Billpayers would be paying for renewable gas from which they, or the gas suppliers, would never actually benefit.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[80190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason farm biogas plants are not included in the Green Gas Support Scheme.

Greg Hands:

The primary objectives of the GGSS are to reduce emissions of the gas grid and ensure value for money for the billpayer. Paying tariffs to biogas plants on farms that do not inject the biomethane they produce into the gas grid carries the risk of overcompensation and therefore poor value for money to the billpayer. Billpayers would be paying for renewable gas, from which neither they, nor the gas suppliers, would ever benefit.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[80191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will develop an alternative scheme to support small off-grid biomethane supply on farms following their exclusion from the Green Gas Support Scheme.

Greg Hands:

The primary objectives of the Green Gas Support Scheme are to reduce emissions in the gas grid and ensure value for money for the billpayer. The Department does not currently have plans to develop an alternative scheme specifically to support small, off-grid biomethane supply on farms.

In late October, the Department published two consultations that set out proposals to phase out the installation of high carbon fossil fuel heating systems in homes, businesses, and office buildings off the gas grid during the 2020s, as committed to in the 2017 Clean Growth Strategy, and replace them with low carbon alternatives, in particular the use of heat pumps, where appropriate. Both consultations will close in January 2022.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Dr Alan Whitehead: [81854]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Green Homes Grant scheme, how many homeowner requests for an extension to their voucher beyond the original expiry date have been rejected.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 30 November 2021]: Under the Green Homes Grant Scheme vouchers are issued with a 90 day validity period.

The validity period of many vouchers have been extended on request. However, data is not collected on how many voucher extension requests have been accepted or rejected.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Landlords

Dr Alan Whitehead: [81855]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many green homes grants have been issued to landlords in each region of England.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 30 November 2021]: The Green Homes Grant Voucher (GHGV) scheme launched in September 2020, to help householders and landlords with the cost of installing energy efficient improvements in their home.

Official statistics (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/green-home-grant-statistics>) published on 18 November for the Green Homes Grant Voucher scheme describe the status of applications prior to 05 November. At present the release does not include further application details including how many were landlords, however it does show applications in each region of England.

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

■ Heat Batteries: Finance

Dr Alan Whitehead: [81851]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to Answer of 17 November 2021 to Question 76544, whether he will list the funding available for heat batteries.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 30 November 2021]: Schemes like the Energy Company Obligation allow energy suppliers to deliver part of their obligation by installing innovative measures in eligible households. In addition, research and development funding is available for developing new alternative heating technologies, such as heat batteries, through programmes like the BEIS Energy Entrepreneurs Fund (EEF) and Clean Growth Fund (CGF).

■ Home Upgrade Grant: Low Incomes and Vulnerable Adults

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[81856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many off grid low income and vulnerable households have been helped by the Government's Home Upgrade Grant in each month since that grant was announced.

Greg Hands:

The Government has so far allocated a total of £1.1 billion to the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG), with delivery taking place from early 2022 to March 2025. Funding for HUG Phase 1, worth £152m, is expected to be delivered from early 2022 to March 2023.

■ Hospitality Industry: Loans

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[79448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the average loan-to-value ratio of hospitality businesses in (a) Birmingham, (b) the West Midlands and (c) the UK.

Paul Scully:

The Government has provided an unprecedented £400bn package of support for UK businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, which included government backed loans, business support grants, business rates relief, CJRS and VAT cuts for food and beverage. The Government's Covid-19 loan schemes provided a lifeline to millions of businesses, including those in the hospitality sector, across the UK – helping them survive the pandemic and protecting millions of jobs.

As of 31 May 2021, over £79 billion has been lent through the schemes. The schemes closed for new applications on 31 March 2021. Analysis from the British Business Bank in January 2021 shows that the proportion of overall Coronavirus loans in each of the nine English regions and three Devolved Nations matches closely their respective share of the UK business population.

■ Parental Leave

Luke Hall:

[\[80351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will include provisions in the forthcoming Employment Bill to ensure that neonatal leave and pay is accessible to all parents with a baby in neonatal care, including those parents who are under 25 years old.

Paul Scully:

On 1 March 2020, we published the Government's Response to the 2019 consultation on Neonatal Leave and Pay which committed to introducing a new entitlement to Neonatal Leave and Pay.

The entitlement will apply to all parents of babies who are admitted into hospital up to the age of 28 days, and who have a continuous stay in hospital of seven days or

more. The period of leave and pay available to parents will be capped at 12 weeks. Neonatal Leave will be a 'day one' right, available to an employee from the first day of employment in their job.

We will bring forward legislation to introduce Neonatal Leave and Pay when parliamentary time allows.

■ Rainforests: Brazil

Ruth Jones: [\[79462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the deforestation situation in Brazil's Amazon rainforest.

Greg Hands:

The Government welcome the Brazilian government's recent commitments made at COP26 to reduce emissions by 50% by 2030, formalising the 2050 net-zero pledge and importantly, to eliminate illegal deforestation by 2028. The Government is also pleased to see Brazil's commitment, as part of the Glasgow Leaders Declaration at COP26, to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030. Therefore, the Government is developing a strong cross-government integrated plan that builds on the established partnership HMG has developed with federal and subnational governments in Brazil.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Aviation

Ruth Jones: [\[80466\]](#)

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

George Freeman:

None.

■ Utilities: Insolvency

Mike Amesbury: [\[81119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that customers of energy providers that enter administration will automatically be placed on an identical or similar contract with another provider.

Greg Hands:

When a supplier exits the market Ofgem runs the Supplier of Last Resort process with the aim of getting the best deal for customers.

If an energy supplier enters special administration, the pricing strategy is a matter for the Energy Administrator. Administrators have a statutory obligation to continue energy supply to the company's customers at the lowest practicable cost.

The Energy Price Cap will continue to protect customers, ensuring they pay a fair price for their energy.

Emma Hardy:

[82058]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November 2021 to Question 69684, on Ofgem: Standards, whether he has plans to request an account of the insolvencies in the energy supply market to be made by Ofgem to Parliament.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 30 November 2021]: Ministers have regular conversations with Ofgem. As an independent regulator Ofgem is available upon request to give an account of the recent insolvencies in the energy supply market directly to Parliament.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme

Rachel Reeves:

[81931]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many households (a) overall and (b) broken down by (i) core and (ii) broader group were eligible for the Warm Homes Discount in each of the last ten financial years.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 30 November 2021]: For the 2020/21 scheme year of the Warm Home Discount, around 1 million of the approximately 1.2 million Pension Credit Guarantee Credit (PCGC) recipients received the rebate automatically as a result of data matching between the Department for Work and Pensions and participating energy suppliers. A further 50,000 claimed a rebate through calling the helpline, having been sent a letter from Government requesting that they provide further information. There may be a number of reasons why the remainder did not receive a rebate, and some would not have been eligible, for instance if they were not with a participating energy supplier. The Government do not currently have the data for previous scheme years available.

Under the Broader Group, it is up to each energy supplier to set the eligibility criteria they use to decide which customers receive rebates. The Government sets mandatory Broader Group eligibility criteria, of which the potential eligible pool for 2020/21 is estimated to be around 3.1 million households. However, most energy suppliers expand their eligibility criteria, subject to approval from the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets, the scheme administrator. This means that the actual eligible pool was larger, and the eligibility criteria tend to vary between energy suppliers and scheme years. The Government therefore do not have data on the total number of households who would have been eligible for Broader Group rebates in each scheme year.

Rachel Reeves:

[81932]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many households (a) overall and (b) broken down by (i) core and (ii) broader group received the Warm Homes Discount in each of the last ten financial years.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 30 November 2021]: Since its introduction in 2011, the Warm Home Discount has provided over £3 billion in rebates worth £140 to households, in addition to other forms of support. Around 2.2 million households receive a rebate under the current scheme.

The Warm Home Discount is a key policy in the Government's strategy to tackle fuel poverty and reduce the energy costs of low-income and vulnerable households, which is why the Government committed to extend the scheme until 2026 in the Energy White Paper last December.

The Government is currently consulting on expanding and reforming the scheme from 2022. Under the plans, households would receive £150 and the total spending will increase to £475 million a year, up from £354 million currently.

SCHEME YEAR	CORE GROUP	BROADER GROUP	TOTAL
2019/20	1,067,568	1,156,768	2,224,336
2018/19	1,116,226	1,103,968	2,220,194
2017/18	1,214,571	969,757	2,184,328
2016/17	1,271,861	896,633	2,168,494
2015/16	1,350,403	836,201	2,186,604
2014/15	1,445,100	758,132	2,203,232
2013/14	1,236,770	605,472	1,842,242
2012/13	1,157,879	489,494	1,647,373
2011/12	701,746	234,297	936,043

CABINET OFFICE

■ Business Interests

Angela Rayner:

[82326]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2021 to Question 79397 on Business Interests, whether he plans to complete work on improving the (a) scope and clarity of the Business

Appointment Rules, (b) consistency and proportionality of the implementation of the Rules across Government and (c) enforcement of the Rules by the end of 2021.

Angela Rayner:

[\[82329\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether it is his policy that public criticism from The Advisory Committee on Business Appointments is sufficient sanction for breaching the Business Appointment Rules.

Michael Ellis:

The Cabinet Office is leading the programme of work to improve the Business Appointment Rules in collaboration with the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments. The Prime Minister explained to the Liaison Committee on Wednesday 17 November that we are currently refining the rules and considering how to strengthen the process; an update will be provided before the Christmas parliamentary recess.

The Business Appointment Rules apply to all Ministers and civil servants, including special advisers, and it is incumbent upon everyone to abide by the decisions of the Committee, or the relevant Permanent Secretary in the cases of departmental-level applications. A number of sanctions already exist for breaches depending on the nature of the breach and consideration of further methods of enforcement of the Rules will be considered as part of the wider Business Appointment Rules improvement work. The Government will consider the particular circumstances of any breach reported to it by the Committee.

■ **Cabinet Office: Summit Resorts & Developments**

Justin Madders:

[\[80342\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish all details of meetings between Ministers and officials from his Department and representatives of Summit Resorts and Developments Limited, or its predecessor David Lloyd Developments Limited, since January 2019.

Michael Ellis:

Details of ministerial meetings are published quarterly and can be found on GOV.UK.

■ **Cabinet Office: Un Climate Conference 2021**

Ruth Jones:

[\[80468\]](#)

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

Michael Ellis:

Ministers took the train to COP26 in Glasgow, unless there were exceptional circumstances that meant travelling by train was not an option.

Travel disruption due to adverse weather on 31 October resulted in train cancellations, meaning some Ministers had to pursue alternative means of transport.

Any unavoidable carbon emissions from COP26 will be offset, including those associated with travel.

■ Drownings

Rachael Maskell: [\[81992\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people have taken their own lives through drowning in each of the last five years.

Michael Ellis:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have, therefore, asked the Authority to respond.

Attachments:

1. Response [UKSA Response to PQ81992.pdf]

■ Government Departments: Contracts

Ruth Jones: [\[82093\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to help increase opportunities for businesses in Newport West bidding for contracts on major infrastructure projects.

Ruth Jones: [\[82099\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with representatives of business organisations on supporting small businesses in Newport West bidding for Government contracts.

Ruth Jones: [\[82100\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on how to ensure small businesses in Newport West constituency are supported in bidding for Government contracts.

Michael Ellis:

Small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of the UK economy. That is why we are making sure the power of Government spending supports this vital sector, both as part of our economic recovery from COVID-19 and our levelling up agenda. We are increasing opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in a variety of ways - from transparently publishing contract pipelines to simplifying bidding processes.

Business support organisations play an important role in supporting SMEs in industry and can offer advice on business growth including ways of accessing government procurements and signposting opportunities. We have strong links with industry associations and they are supportive of the government's aims to continue engagement with SMEs.

■ House of Lords: Reform

Rachael Maskell:

[\[82009\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to reduce the number of peers in the House of Lords.

Michael Ellis:

Whilst the Government supports the approach of encouraging further retirements, it remains the case that some new members are essential to keep the expertise and outlook of the Lords fresh. This will ensure the Lords continues to fulfil its role in scrutinising and revising legislation, whilst respecting the primacy of the Commons and the associated conventions between the two Houses.

The Government's 2019 manifesto committed to looking at the role of the Lords, but any reform needs to be considered carefully and any changes should not be brought forward piecemeal.

■ Infectious Diseases: Children

Emma Hardy:

[\[82050\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish data on the number of deaths of children from (a) flu, not flu and pneumonia, (b) measles, (c) varicella, (d) mumps, (e) rubella and (f) whooping cough in 2016.

Emma Hardy:

[\[82051\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish data on the number of deaths in 2017 from childhood illnesses including (a) flu (directly from flu not flu and pneumonia), (b) measles, (c) chickenpox, (d) mumps, (e) rubella and (f) whooping cough.

Emma Hardy:

[\[82052\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish data on the number of deaths of children from (a) flu, not flu and pneumonia, (b) measles, (c) varicella, (d) mumps, (e) rubella and (f) whooping cough in 2018.

Emma Hardy:

[\[82053\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish data on the number of deaths of children from (a) flu, not flu and pneumonia, (b) measles, (c) varicella, (d) mumps, (e) rubella and (f) whooping cough in 2019.

Emma Hardy:

[\[82054\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish data on the number of deaths of children from (a) flu, not flu and pneumonia, (b) measles, (c) varicella, (d) mumps, (e) rubella and (f) whooping cough in 2020.

Michael Ellis:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have, therefore, asked the Authority to respond.

Attachments:

1. Response letter [UKSA Response to 82050_ 82051_ 82052_ 82053_ 82054.pdf]

Ports: Infrastructure**Emily Thornberry:**[\[82278\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the impact of the construction of additional border infrastructure on the functioning of UK ports in the weeks leading up to Christmas 2021.

Michael Ellis:

Through the Port Infrastructure Fund, the Government has provided £200 million in grants to ports to build the infrastructure needed for both customs and biosecurity checks in 2022. We are confident that these projects are sufficiently advanced and operational to ensure the continued flow of trade in the run up to Christmas and beyond.

Prime Minister: Meetings**Owen Thompson:**[\[76743\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his Department's process is for (a) recording and (b) keeping minutes of all meetings relating to Government business.

Owen Thompson:[\[76745\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his Department's process is for (a) recording and (b) keeping minutes of all meetings relating to Government business.

Michael Ellis:

Civil servants will make a judgment on what formal, structured meetings should be minuted, and what meetings should be recorded as having taken place, in light of the Civil Service Code, more specific best practice such as 'Guidance on the management of Private Office Papers', and the Cabinet Office guidance on Ministerial quarterly returns.

I note that there has been Parliamentary scrutiny of this issue in relation to the debate in this House on 'Randox Covid Contracts' of 17 November 2021. Following that debate, the Government has committed to publishing before Parliament a range of background papers relating to the Randox procurement.

Public Sector: Procurement**Angela Rayner:**[\[82325\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Oral Answer of the Paymaster General to the Honourable Member for Dulwich and West Norwood of 25 November 2021, Official Report volume 704, column 444, how many contracts have been awarded under regulation 32 emergency

procurement powers during the covid-19 outbreak in each month of the last year for which information is available.

Michael Ellis:

Details of Government contracts above £10,000 and £25,000 in the wider public sector are published on Contracts Finder:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Search>.

■ Trade Barriers: UK Trade with EU

Emily Thornberry:

[82277]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment she has made of the effect of increased non-tariff barriers facing UK imports from the EU on (a) supply chains for UK manufacturers, and (b) the availability of imported goods in the weeks leading up to Christmas 2021.

Michael Ellis:

The government is continuing to monitor global supply chain issues. The most recent ONS monthly UK trade in goods statistics can be found [here](#). The ONS is clear that there are a number of factors beyond EU exit that are influencing global trading patterns, including the COVID-19 pandemic and global supply chain disruption. It remains too early to disaggregate the effects that EU exit has had on trade from these other factors.

COP26

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Gavin Newlands:

[904498]

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to deliver COP26 outcomes during the remainder of the UK's COP presidency.

Alok Sharma:

Delivery of COP26 was a cross-government effort and we will continue collectively, in our Presidency year, to ensure commitments by countries are turned into action.

The UK is acknowledged around the world as a domestic leader on climate action and this work will continue across government.

Margaret Ferrier:

[904501]

What assessment he has made of the potential effect of agreements made at COP26 on the aviation sector.

Trudy Harrison:

COP26 saw 24 states, representing around half of global aviation emissions, commit to negotiating for a 1.5°C-consistent climate goal for aviation next year.

DEFENCE■ **Army: Recruitment**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[81876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which regiments have recruitment shortages in the British Army.

Leo Docherty:

The British Army has met 100% of its recruiting targets for the past two years. I am sure you will understand that in the interest of protecting operational capability we will not release the current workforce strength of each regiment.

■ **Canada: Army**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[81874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the purpose that the British Army Training Unit Suffield will serve in the future.

James Heappey:

Canada is one of the UK's closest allies and the British Army Training Unit Suffield (BATUS) continues to be a vital training base for the British Army. The British Army and the Canadian Armed Forces continue to engage in joint military activities in Suffield, including UK Armoured Infantry exercises in 2022. We continue to work closely with the Canadian Armed Forces and the Canadian Government to review activities at the base.

Mr Mark Francois: [\[81891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has plans to close the British Army Training Unit Suffield in Canada.

James Heappey:

There are no plans to close the British Army Training Unit Suffield (BATUS). Canada is one of the UK's closest allies and the British Army and Canadian Armed Forces continue to engage in joint military activities in Suffield, including UK Armoured Infantry exercises in 2022. We continue to work closely with the Canadian Armed Forces and the Canadian Government to review activities at the base.

■ **HMS Somerset**

Sarah Atherton: [\[80514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of when HMS Somerset will (a) commence sea trials and (b) be programmed for re-entry into service.

Jeremy Quin:

The Type 23 frigate class is continually being updated and upgraded to meet new threats or to replace obsolete technology, this is achieved via a Through Life Management Plan.

On current plans, HMS SOMERSET is expected to commence sea trials in early 2022 and is currently anticipated to be ready to generate training and operations later in the year.

■ HMS Triumph

Sarah Atherton:

[\[80513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when HMS Triumph will start her re-fit program; and what the anticipated date is that she will re-enter service.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government does not disclose operational information about Royal Navy submarines, as to do so could prejudice the capability, effectiveness, or security of the Armed Forces.

■ Iran: International Military Services

Lisa Nandy:

[\[82314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to lawfully discharge the outstanding debt owed to Iran by International Military Service Ltd incurred on purchases of UK manufactured military equipment in the 1970s.

Mr Ben Wallace:

Her Majesty's Government acknowledges International Military Services' debt and remains committed to exploring all options for a practicable and legally-viable means of discharging it and intensive efforts are underway to that end.

■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft: Accidents

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[81883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what stores were being carried by the F-35B aircraft that was recently ditched in the Mediterranean Sea.

James Heappey:

As this was a routine training sortie no stores were being carried.

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[81884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the pilot who recently ejected from the F-35B aircraft in the Mediterranean Sea was from the Royal Air Force or the Fleet Air Arm.

James Heappey:

The pilot concerned was a British pilot from the Royal Air Force's 617 Squadron; we will not be offering any further details.

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[81887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the F-35B aircraft recently ditched in the Mediterranean Sea was insured.

Jeremy Quin:

The F-35B aircraft was not insured as the Ministry of Defence, in common with other central Government organisations, does not normally purchase commercial insurance to protect against risk. Since the Government can pool and spread its own risks, there is little need to pay the private sector to provide this service. In general, it represents best value for money for the Ministry of Defence to cover its own risks.

■ **Merlin Helicopters: Aircraft Carriers**

Mr Mark Francois: [81889]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how often the Crowsnest AEW system was flown during the recent CGS21 deployment.

James Heappey:

In the period between 1 May - 22 November 2021, the CROWSNEST Airborne Surveillance and Control (ASaC) system was flown in 179 sorties, for approximately 362 hours.

■ **Merlin Helicopters: Early Warning Systems**

Mr Mark Francois: [81888]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the performance of the Crowsnest AEW system during the recent CG21 deployment.

James Heappey:

The performance of the CROWSNEST Airborne Surveillance and Control (ASaC) system has been continuously monitored throughout the Carrier Strike Group 21's deployment to inform the ongoing development of the capability. A full assessment of its performance will take place once the operational deployment of CSG21 concludes.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Staff**

Robert Largan: [80507]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, 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.

Leo Docherty:

The Headcount of Senior Civil Servants employed by the Ministry of Defence in each of the NUTS1 regions is detailed in the below table, please note that overall figures are published on the following link:

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

The data for the dates is taken from internal sources using the same methodology and dates as the published data where possible.

	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE
Government office Region	31/03/2019	31/03/2020	31/03/2021	01/09/2021
EAST MIDLANDS	~	~	~	~
EASTERN	14	15	19	20
LONDON	119	156	167	171
NORTH WEST	~	~	~	~
SOUTH EAST	34	39	47	48
SOUTH WEST	31	34	42	46
WEST MIDLANDS	11	13	8	7
YORKS and HUMBER	~	~	~	~
WALES	-	-	~	~
SCOTLAND	~	~	6	6
N. IRELAND	~	-	-	-
Grand Total	222	270	297	307

Caveats: Where data is 5 or less this has been replaced with ~ where there is zero this has been replaced with -

■ NATO: Unmanned Air Vehicles

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[82370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether (a) image analysts, (b) mission planning staff, (c) UAV pilots, (d) maintenance personnel and (e) other RAF personnel have been deployed to (i) Sigonella, Sicily, and (ii) other overseas bases in connection with flights of the NATO Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) System in each of the last two years.

James Heappey:

No image analysts, mission planning staff, UAV pilots or maintenance personnel have been deployed to Sigonella, Sicily or other overseas bases. One individual in the remaining category, other RAF personnel, deployed to Sigonella, Sicily in August 2021 on an enduring basis as part of UK routine support to NATO.

A small number of personnel have also deployed to conduct training for a short time only.

No personnel have been deployed to other overseas bases.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Data Protection: Recruitment

Feryal Clark:

[81145]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent steps his Department has taken to (a) help improve recruitment to and (b) tackle a skills shortage in cybersecurity.

Julia Lopez:

The Government has funded the creation of the new professional body for cyber, the UK Cyber Security Council, to establish coherent standards and pathways that will inform employer recruitment and an individual's career development. We are ensuring that every stage of the cyber skills supply chain is developed to meet the demands evidenced in the annual DCMS [labour market survey](#). DCMS has delivered a range of youth programmes to develop future talent, including Cyber Discovery, reaching 115,000 interested young people from across the UK. For people already in the workforce, cyber skills bootcamps are offered through the National Skills Fund, and DCMS has also sought to highlight cyber career opportunities through the Cyber Launchpad programme.

The Government will publish planned activities to further tackle the skills shortage through the National Cyber Strategy shortly.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Meetings

Owen Thompson:

[80386]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 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.

Julia Lopez:

All Ministers holding meetings or phone calls on government business are routinely accompanied by a private secretary, in line with the expectations of paragraph 8.14 of the Ministerial Code. If a private secretary is not available, another official will accompany this Minister. All meetings to discuss official government business are arranged through the department to ensure an official can be present. If any discussion of government business takes place unexpectedly without an official present e.g. at a social event, the content of the discussion is fed back to the department promptly and recorded.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: York

Rachael Maskell:

[82004]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 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.

Julia Lopez:

(a) DCMS currently has no plans to move civil servant jobs in the department to York.

(b) DCMS currently has no plans to move further jobs in its non-departmental public bodies and government agencies to York. However, Historic England currently has 80 employees working out of its office in York and under its current recruitment policy it can consider any of its regional offices for most roles when it recruits. Historic England therefore expects its number of employees in York to increase by 2025.

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.

■ Football Governance Fan-led Review

Ruth Jones:

[82097]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has discussed the recommendations contained in the Report of the Independent Fan Led Review of Football Governance with the Welsh Government.

Nigel Huddleston:

My officials are in regular contact with their counterparts in the Welsh Government.

The Government welcomes the work of the Fan Led Review and will now consider its detailed recommendations ahead of providing a full Government response in Spring 2022. This will include discussion with the Devolved Administrations.

■ Football: Gambling

Carolyn Harris:

[80381]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps in the forthcoming gambling White Paper to end football club sponsorship by gambling companies which do not have an operational website and which offer gambling via cryptocurrency.

Carolyn Harris:[\[80382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps in the forthcoming gambling White Paper to end front of shirt sponsorship by gambling companies which do not have an operational website and offer gambling via cryptocurrency.

Chris Philp:

All gambling companies providing gambling facilities to consumers in Great Britain, wherever they are based, must be licensed by the Gambling Commission and comply with the conditions and codes of practice of their operating licences. Operators who provide services marketed under a different brand as part of a 'white label' agreement are held accountable by the Commission for the actions of their commercial partners, and are expected to carry out all necessary due diligence to ensure the agreement will not compromise their own regulatory compliance.

Licensed gambling operators and their white label partners are entitled to enter into commercial arrangements with sporting bodies, as long as any sponsorship activities are carried out in a socially responsible way. The Commission expects licensees to ensure that all parties are aware of, and compliant with, the relevant advertising and sponsorship rules and regulations.

Operators are also required to declare the arrangements through which they accept payment from customers to the Commission. This includes changes to the payment methods (including cryptoassets) or payment processors made available to customers to pay for gambling services. To date, no licensed operators have notified the Gambling Commission that they are accepting digital currencies or cryptoassets directly as payments but several have reported indirectly accepting funds derived from cryptoassets via a third party payment provider. In these cases, funds accepted by the licensee for gambling have been converted to fiat currency (£).

The Government is looking closely at the evidence regarding sports sponsorship by gambling operators and 'white label' arrangements as part of the wide-ranging Review of the Gambling Act. We will publish a White Paper setting out our conclusions and next steps in the coming months.

■ Local Press: Archives

Robert Halfon:[\[80964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to support communities to access local newspaper archives; and whether funding is available for that.

Nigel Huddleston:

Local newspapers provide insight on the events, large and small, which shape our communities, and improving and maintaining access to these resources for individuals and communities is vital.

The British Library has a statutory duty to collect physical newspapers and online news sites; it also aims to make newspapers as accessible as possible. This work includes working in partnership with Findmypast to produce the British Newspaper Archive (BNA). The BNA is an online subscription resource enabling online access to historic digitised newspapers. The BNA is free to access in British Library Reading Rooms and a number of local authorities, including Essex County Council, subscribe enabling free access to public library users and through records offices. Many local authority archives and local study services may also retain their own collections of local newspapers.

The British Library has also undertaken local newspaper digitisation projects with public and community libraries on a cost recovery only basis, using the British Library's skills and expertise to support local libraries.

■ Migrant Workers: Arts

Helen Hayes:

[81085]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure the UK attracts talented workers in the creative industries at all stages of their career in response to the lack of eligible prize holders that have applied to her Department's fast-track Global Talent visa.

Julia Lopez:

The [Global Talent Visa](#) enables the UK to attract the best and brightest in a number of creative and cultural sectors, including through its fast-tracked route for award-winning leaders in these fields.

The Government works closely with the endorsing bodies for the route, including Arts Council England, to develop the route to ensure it continues to meet sectors' needs. We ensure that the route makes it as easy as possible for those top creatives coming to the UK, which is why we introduced the Prestigious Prizes pathway for those at the pinnacle of their career. Where individuals do not hold one of these prizes they continue to be able to use the wider Global Talent Visa route. The number of visas granted on this route has continued to grow from 422 between its launch in February 2020 to September 2020, to 1,709 applicants for the year ending September 2021.

DCMS continues to work with the Home Office, across government and with the creative sectors to look at what more can be done to further attract talented creative professionals to live and work in the UK.

■ National Lottery

Simon Fell:

[82101]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2021 to Question 71465, on National Lottery, if he will provide a breakdown by region of the 222 National Lottery retailers that only sell National Lottery scratchcards and do not sell tickets for draw based games.

Chris Philp:

The Gambling Commission have provided the following information showing retailers across different regions that only sell National Lottery scratchcards and do not sell tickets for draw based games. These retailers are spread throughout the different regions of the UK.

Following on from the previously mentioned PQ, Question 71465 answered on 15 November 2021, the number of retailers selling only National Lottery scratchcards has decreased by one as one of the stores is no longer active, meaning the total number in the table below is 221.

REGION	ACTIVE STORES
East Coast of Scotland & Northeast England	8
West Coast of Scotland & Northern Ireland	11
Lake District, North Lancashire, West Yorkshire	25
East Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, East Midlands	30
M62 Corridor, Yorkshire to Liverpool (including Manchester	18
West Midlands & North Wales	18
East Anglia	12
Home Counties (Northamptonshire, Hertfordshire, Berkshire)	15
M4 Corridor (Bristol to London)	21
London	18
South Coast	22
South West, South Wales	23
	Total of 221

■ **Qassem Soleimani****Theresa Villiers:**[\[80237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has taken steps in response to the Islamic Centre of England's holding of a vigil in memory of General Qassem Soleimani in June 2020 contravening regulatory advice and guidance set out by the Charity Commission.

Nigel Huddleston:

Any evidence that a registered charity is engaged in misconduct or mismanagement should be referred to the Charity Commission, as the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales.

In June 2020, the Charity Commission exercised its power under section 75A of the Charities Act 2011 to issue an Official Warning to the Islamic Centre of England as it found the trustees had failed to discharge their legal duties towards the charity, which resulted in misconduct and/or mismanagement. The Charity Commission has an open and ongoing regulatory case into the charity to follow up on compliance with the requirements of the Official Warning.

■ Sports: Autism**Carla Lockhart:**[\[80517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to encourage and promote participation in sport by children and young people with autism.

Nigel Huddleston:

As set out in the government's recent autism strategy ("The National Strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults: 2021 to 2026"), the government is working to enable more people, including autistic children and young people, to be physically active.

Sport England, the government arm's length body for community sport, launched its new strategy, "Uniting the Movement", in January 2021. In line with this, they are working to tackle the inequalities and barriers that exist within sport and physical activity, and to unlock the benefits of being active for everyone, regardless of background or ability. As part of this effort, Sport England will be working with key partners to engage autistic people at all levels and in all forms of sport and physical activity, including across volunteering and coaching.

The Department for Education also recently announced funding for "Inclusion 2024", being led by the Youth Sport Trust, which will improve physical education and school sport for young people with special educational needs and disabilities in thousands of schools across England.

EDUCATION**■ Academies: Finance****Peter Kyle:**[\[82030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his Department's estimate was of the level of cash reserves held by multi-academy trusts as of 25 November 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

It is prudent financial planning for academy trusts to build reserves. Even trusts with strong balance sheets and adequate reserves can find themselves in a vulnerable position if they have insufficient cash assets. Academy trusts are accountable for, and transparent about, their reserves. As part of their short and long term financial planning, they must have a policy for holding reserves set out alongside financial data in their published annual accounts. These are clear requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academy-trust-handbook>.

The department publishes the Sector Annual Report and Accounts (SARA), which consolidates all academy accounts into one document. The last published report includes data on surpluses by academy trust size (page 25, figure 11b), available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/968362/SARA_Academies_Sector_Annual_Report_and_Accounts_201819_-_accessible.pdf.

The report for the 2019/20 academic year will be published in December 2021 and will include updated data on surpluses.

The National Audit Office's recently published report on the financial sustainability of schools in England contains information about surpluses in all academy trusts (both single and multi-academy trusts), available here: <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Financial-sustainability-of-schools-in-England.pdf>. This reports that the net position across all academy trusts in the 2019/20 academic year was a cumulative surplus of £3.1 billion.

Data for the 2019/20 academic year on the financial position of individual academy trusts, including their surplus position, is available in academy trusts individual accounts and the schools financial benchmarking website, available here: <https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk/>.

■ **Department for Education: York**

Rachael Maskell:**[82003]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, 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.

Michelle Donelan:

There are currently no plans for the department to fill roles in York.

The department's arm's length bodies, LocatED and Ofsted, have a presence in York:

- LocatED have 1 full time equivalent based in York, and as part of their headcount forecast for 2025 and 2030 this remains the same.

- Ofsted have approximately 10 employees attached to their York office and are not planning significant growth there.

There are no plans at present for any of our other non-departmental public bodies and government agencies associated with the Department for Education to move jobs to York.

■ Free Schools

Peter Kyle:

[81077]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many new schools have opened since July 2019; and how many of those have been free schools.

Mr Robin Walker:

The government's free schools programme has delivered hundreds of new schools and provided thousands of high-quality new school places across the country.

Since July 2019, a total of 392 new state-funded schools have opened (including sponsored and converted academies), of which 169 are new free schools. These include mainstream, special and alternative provision, and 16-19 free schools. These schools will create more than 86,000 places at capacity.

Information about all schools in England is publicly available at: <https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk>.

■ Recruitment and Retention: Teachers

Conor McGinn:

[82337]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with education leaders in (a) St Helens North constituency and (b) the North West region on improving the (i) recruitment and (ii) retention of newly-qualified teachers.

Mr Robin Walker:

Ensuring that every child has a great teacher in front of them is why we published our Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy in 2019.

There are now more than 461,000 full time equivalent teachers working in schools across the country to inspire the next generation of young people. Over 41,000 new trainee teachers were recruited to start training in academic year 2020/21, which is 23% higher than the previous year, showing that teaching continues to be an attractive profession.

In the 2019/20 North West cohort, there were 4,382 total trainees. Provisional figures for the 2020/21 cohort show an increase to 6,750 total trainees.

The department recognises there is more to do to ensure this success is not short-lived and that we continue to attract and retain talented individuals in our classrooms. From September 2021, we are delivering the national rollout of the Early Career Framework reforms. New teachers will benefit from a 2-year, fully funded, comprehensive programme of training and support, including access to a trained

mentor and a 5% reduction in contact time in their second year. This will build on initial teacher training to provide a solid foundation for a successful career in teaching, backed by over £130 million a year in funding when fully rolled out.

■ School Meals

Peter Kyle: [82028]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average cost of (a) one school meal and (b) a year's worth of school meals was in each of the last ten years.

Will Quince:

The department does not set a price for school meals whether paid for or free.

School governing boards are responsible for the provision of both free and paid for meals and it is for them to decide on the price depending on local circumstances. The department knows that many factors influence the costs of school meals including, for example, catering arrangements, food prices and existing numbers of pupils taking up school meals.

Through the schools national funding formula, the department allocates £460 of funding to local authorities for each of the pupils in their area eligible for free school meals. Local authorities then distribute this money to schools through their local funding formula, which must include additional funding for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as those eligible for free school meals. This allocation will increase to £470 per eligible pupil as part of the overall increase to the core schools budget for the 2022-23 financial year.

It is then for schools to decide how to use their budget, including how much to allocate to pay for benefits-based free school meals.

■ Schools: Repairs and Maintenance

Peter Kyle: [81079]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools involved in Phase 1 of the School Rebuilding Programme have had construction work formally begin.

Mr Robin Walker:

The first 100 schools were announced earlier this year on gov.uk, along with the methodology for selection. This can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme-first-50-schools> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme-second-set-of-50-schools>.

The projects are all progressing through either the feasibility stage or the procurement, design and planning stage. Construction has started at 7 schools.

■ Schools: Wandsworth

Marsha De Cordova:

[82066]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the rates of staff turnover are in schools across Wandsworth in the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr Robin Walker:

Information on the numbers and rates of qualified teachers entering and leaving state-funded schools in England is published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>. In state-funded schools in England, between November 2019 and November 2020 (the latest two years of data available), the full time equivalent of one in ten teachers (9.7%) were new entrants to teaching, while under one in ten teachers (7.8%) left the profession.

Between November 2019 and November 2020 in Wandsworth schools specifically, the full time equivalent of one in ten teachers (11.7%) were new entrants to teaching, while one in ten teachers (11.1%) left the profession. Please note that these figures have been compiled by breaking down national entrant and leaver figures sub-nationally, although this level of breakdown is not published, and the methodology is not exact.

Staff, including teachers, turnover figures for individual schools are not centrally calculated and would incur disproportionate cost to compile. Similarly, entrant and leaver figures of support staff are not routinely calculated and would also incur disproportionate cost to compile.

■ Special Educational Needs

Justin Madders:

[80350]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the average amount of time it takes to prepare, draft and implement an education, health and care plan in England.

Will Quince:

The department does not hold data on the time it takes to prepare, draft and implement an education, health and care plan in England. The department does collect data on how many plans are issued within the statutory 20 week time limit. For 2020, this was 58.0%. The data for 2020 and previous years is published here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/ce41e6bd-60a7-40b9-938e-8ae46c5e32b4>.

■ Students: Finance

Fleur Anderson:

[82388]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when alternative finance to student loans will be made available to students.

Michelle Donelan:

I refer the hon. Member for Putney to the answer I gave on 18 October 2021 to Question [53884](#).

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Nick Fletcher:

[\[904502\]](#)

To ask Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government plans to take to reduce the use of plastics during the remainder of the UK's COP presidency.

Jo Churchill:

Tackling plastic pollution was a priority before our COP presidency, and will continue to be after it concludes. The single-use carrier bag charge has led to a 95% reduction in the consumption of these bags in the main supermarkets- and earlier this year we extended it to all retailers. We are consulting right now on plans to go further, and extend restrictions on single-use plastics to plates, cutlery and expanded and extruded polystyrene food and drinks containers. In April 2022, we will introduce the plastic packaging tax – significantly incentivising plastic recycling. The world-leading Environment Act will allow us to do more still – with Extended Producer Responsibility schemes to ensure polluters pay, Deposit Return schemes to cut littering and boost plastic bottle recycling, and Consistent Collections to make recycling plastic, and other materials, easier for householders. Taken together, this is an exciting and comprehensive package of measures to make a real and lasting difference.

■ Agriculture and Food: Waste

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[80188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential for farm conversion of agri-food bio-wastes into bioenergy in the UK.

Jo Churchill:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only. We are interpreting this question as a request for information on the Government's assessment of the role that anaerobic digestion (AD) can play in both treating food wastes and generating bioenergy.

I recognise the valuable contribution that wastes, including food derived wastes, can make towards our carbon targets when used in AD to produce biogas and biomethane.

The recently closed non-domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (NDRHI) provided financial support for AD plants, including on farms. As of December 2020, the NDRHI has supported 95 biomethane to grid plants and in 2019 supported the production of

~3.6TWh of biomethane injected into the gas grid. In 2018, the NDRHI changed to include a waste feedstock minimum threshold of 50%, to incentivise the use of wastes in the production of biomethane. The Green Gas Support Scheme, due to launch on 30 November 2021, is a successor to the biomethane element of the NDRHI and will maintain this minimum threshold.

Evidence indicates that the existing stock of AD plants, including on farms, may have the capacity to treat more food waste. As such, we are assessing the potential to increase waste that goes to AD.

■ Agriculture: Soil

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[80193]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help improve soil health on UK farms.

Victoria Prentis:

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

The Sustainable Farming Incentive is one of three new schemes that reward farmers and land managers for producing public goods. The other, future, schemes are Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery, both of which we will begin piloting next year. These schemes will operate together and pay for sustainable farming practices, improve animal health and welfare, improve environmental outcomes, and reduce carbon emissions. They will create habitats for nature recovery and make landscape-scale changes, such as establishing new woodland and other ecosystem services, providing key means to deliver against our 25 Year Environment Plan goals and carbon net zero targets.

Our approach to environmental land management is the cornerstone of our new agricultural policy and will be realised through a combination of schemes, using public money to reward farmers and land managers for delivering environmentally sustainable actions. The schemes are intended to provide a powerful vehicle for achieving the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan and commitment to net zero emissions by 2050, while supporting our rural economy.

We agree that healthy soils should be a priority outcome for our new environmental land management schemes in England, and to help achieve our commitment to sustainably managed soils by 2030, we are already taking action to support land managers and farmers to achieve sustainable soil management. Firstly, we are focusing on soil in two of the first standards to be rolled out under the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme next year – the Improved Grassland Soils and Arable and Horticultural Soils standards. Recently published details on the Sustainable Farming Incentive set out for which sustainable farming actions to improve soil health farmers will be rewarded, such as the introduction of herbal leys and the use of grass-legume mixtures and cover crops.

It makes sense to start the early roll out of the Sustainable Farming Incentive with these soils standards because healthy soils are the foundation of sustainable farming and underpin a range of environmental benefits, as well as production. The soil standards will be widely applicable and will therefore provide opportunity for many farmers to be rewarded for sustainable soil management. The standards and the overall scheme are designed to support a range of farmers; including those who are beginning to adopt sustainable practices as well as those who are already experienced in these, who will be rewarded for increasing the ambition of their land management. We will test these standards in the Sustainable Farming Incentive pilot and release further information on our plans for the Sustainable Farming Incentive on gov.uk in December 2021.

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

Justin Madders:

[\[80336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish a (a) list of the companies his Department has engaged in the delivery and operation of inland border control posts and (b) a timetable for any contracts awarded for that purpose.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra has engaged Mott MacDonald under contract to provide Design Assurance services to support the delivery of the Sevington Border Control Post (BCP) and the Dover Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) BCP. Their contract in support of Sevington BCP currently runs until 31 January 2022 and their work in relation to Dover SPS BCP until 4 February 2022. The Department is also in the process of engaging other companies to support the delivery and operation of its three inland border control posts.

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

Owen Thompson:

[\[80388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 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.

Victoria Prentis:

Ministers holding meetings or phone calls on Government business are routinely accompanied by a private secretary or other official, in line with the expectations of paragraph 8.14 of the Ministerial Code.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Senior Civil Servants**

Robert Largan:

[\[80498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 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.

Victoria Prentis:

The number of SCS staff employed by the department by NUTS1 region is shown below:

31 MAR 2019	31 MAR 2020	31 MAR 2021	30 SEPT 2021	
London	124	120	128	140
South East	8	8	8	7
East of England	1	1	1	1
East Midlands	0	0	0	0
West Midlands	6	6	8	9
Yorkshire & Humber	5	5	6	5
North East	5	5	4	5
North West	3	3	5	8
South West	10	17	15	14
Wales	0	0	0	0
Scotland	0	0	0	0
Home	3	3	5	6
Grand Total	165	168	180	195

This data aligns with the data published under the Annual Civil Service Employment Survey (ACSES) which all government departments provide. This annual data is as at 31 March each year and provides the official headline National Statistics on the size, shape and structure of the Civil Service. The data for 30 September also aligns to ACSES.

We have also shown in the above table the number of home-based SCS staff.

ACSES data is available from Gov.UK and the links for each year are shown below:

2019 – <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2019>

2020 – <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2020>

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

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform**

Theresa Villiers:

[\[80234\]](#)

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

Jo Churchill:

Defra is the lead department for a number of recommendations in the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform (TIGRR) report, concerning agri-environmental innovation, including biodiversity offsetting and greater use of agri-tech vital for sustainability, biodiversity, food security and investment.

Four measures responding to these recommendations were included in Lord Frost's package of proposed individual regulatory reforms to laws in September: Reform of the regulation of gene-edited organisms, Biodiversity Net Gain, Digitisation of Export Health Certificates and rationalising the existing Environmental Permitting and Licensing regimes.

I am pleased to say strong progress continues to be made with each of these measures:

- The Government response to the Gene Editing consultation was published in September, setting out how we plan to pave the way to enable use of gene editing technologies on plants, where genetic changes could have occurred naturally or could have been a result of traditional breeding methods.
- The Environment Act, which is the legislative vehicle for Biodiversity Net Gain, has now received Royal Assent. A consultation on Biodiversity Net gain is expected to be published shortly.
- Trials of some e-certification systems for Digitisation of Export Health certificates are currently underway, with solutions expected to be delivered in 2022.
- Defra is continuing to develop proposals for reform of environmental licensing and permitting, with a view to ensuring that our regimes are streamlined, proportionate and deliver effective environmental protection.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: UN Climate Conference 2021**

Ruth Jones:

[\[80467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 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.

Victoria Prentis:

No Defra Minister travelled to COP26 by aeroplane.

■ Genetically Modified Organisms

Caroline Lucas:

[\[80271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Government's proposals to deregulate gene editing, announced on 29 September 2021, what criteria he plans to use to determine whether an organism produced by gene editing or another technology could have been produced by traditional breeding or not.

Jo Churchill:

The Government plans to take a science-based proportionate approach to the regulation of genetic technologies including gene editing. We are seeking advice from our Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE) on the criteria used to determine whether an organism produced by gene editing or another technology could have been produced by traditional breeding. We are also looking at the criteria used by other countries, gathering information from stakeholder engagement and views provided in the responses to our consultation on the regulation of genetic technologies.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper:

[\[80256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 22 September 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, reference ZA57747.

Jo Churchill:

A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 25 November 2021.

■ Sewage: Seas and Oceans

Luke Pollard:

[\[82067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of the recent finding by Surfers Against Sewage that there has been an increase of 87.6 per cent in sewage discharge notifications over the last 12 months.

Olivia Blake:

[\[82122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of Surfers Against Sewage's recent finding that there has been an increase of 87.6 per cent in sewage discharge notifications over the last 12 months.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA) does not have access to the Surfers Against Sewage notification dataset and therefore cannot comment on the accuracy of spill notifications made by Water and Sewerage Companies (WaSCs) to third party organisations. We expect that, as this data is provided in near real time to Surfers

Against Sewage, there will have been limited opportunity for WaSCs to quality assure the raw data to confirm that all the alerts have resulted in spills.

The number of Event Duration Monitors has increased substantially over the last few years to cover over 80% of overflows, and will provide complete coverage by 2023. For that reason, the number of spill notifications has gone up. However, the Government has been clear that the number of spills is unacceptable and has made tackling this a priority. We are therefore the first Government to take concerted action to tackle this historic infrastructure issue, including through the Environment Act.

■ Soil and Water: Rural Areas

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[80194]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to encourage local action by farmer groups to improve soil and water resource management in rural areas.

Victoria Prentis:

Supporting sustainable farming is a fundamental part of our Agricultural Transition Plan published last year. As part of that, we are introducing three schemes that reward the delivery of environmental benefits: the Sustainable Farming Incentive, the Local Nature Recovery scheme and the Landscape Recovery scheme. Together, they will be an important vehicle in delivering our 25 Year Environment Plan ambitions and our carbon net zero goals. The schemes will reward farmers for, for example, sustainable farming practices, improving animal health, welfare, and creating, managing, and preserving habitats including freshwater habitats and habitats that store water.

We have already confirmed that the Sustainable Farming Incentive will pay farmers for management practices that improve soil health by improving soil structure, soil organic matter, and soil biology. More detail on the Local Nature and Landscape Recovery schemes will be published shortly.

Through our new Farming Transformation Fund, Water Management Theme, we are offering support for farmers to secure their water supplies through the construction of on-farm reservoirs. We will also help improve the more efficient use of water through irrigation, by offering support for best-practice application equipment, such as boom or trickle irrigators.

We are exploring the approaches to how best to support collaboration, learning from examples such as the Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE■ **Abdalla Hamdok****Chi Onwurah:**[\[82318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential circumstances of duress under which Abdalla Hamdok's negotiated his reinstatement as President of Sudan prior to his release from house arrest.

Vicky Ford:

I am pleased that Dr Hamdok has been released and reinstated as Prime Minister following the Political Agreement between the military and civilians on 21 November. The Troika (UK, Norway, US), along with Canada, the EU, and Switzerland, have recognised the Agreement as an important first step towards restoring the democratic transition, although we understand that progress will be difficult. With partners we continue to call for the transition to be restored fully, for all civilians to be released and for Sudanese people be able to protest without fear of violence. We will monitor progress and maintain pressure on the military to deliver their commitments and, through their actions, rebuild trust with civilians, the Sudanese public and international community.

■ **Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention****Stephen Doughty:**[\[82321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what date she last had discussions with representatives of the African Union Centres for Disease Control.

Stephen Doughty:[\[82322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions her Department has had with representatives of the African Union on preparation of contingency plans to ensure the functioning of the Union's Centre for Disease Control HQ in the event of conflict reaching Addis Ababa; and if she will make statement.

Vicky Ford:

I spoke with Dr John Nkengasong, Head of Africa Centres for Disease Control, on 7 October to update him on the UK's vaccines policy and the UK's significant support to his organisation. The African Union (AU)'s mediation efforts in the Ethiopia conflict have our full support. I spoke with AU Special Envoy Obasanjo on 4 November, and with AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Bankole on 8 November.

Ethiopia: Armed Conflict**Stephen Doughty:** [\[81962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has requested support from the Ministry of Defence for (a) security purposes and (b) evacuation assistance in relation to the deteriorating situation in Ethiopia.

Vicky Ford:

We are extremely concerned by the security situation in Ethiopia. I issued a statement on 24 November about the deteriorating situation and urged British nationals to now leave while commercial flights are available as options could be severely limited in the coming days. We routinely undertake contingency and scenario planning alongside the Ministry of Defence in order to ensure the safety of UK citizens and personnel around the world. Media reports that orders have been issued for UK personnel to deploy to support evacuation operations in Ethiopia are not true.

Stephen Doughty: [\[81963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when she last spoke to her Ethiopian counterpart on the situation in that country.

Vicky Ford:

I spoke with Ethiopian State Minister Redwan on 18 November about the deteriorating situation and raised our concerns about ethnic profiling and detentions, stressing the need for all parties to the conflict to engage in meaningful talks and avoid further bloodshed.

The Foreign Secretary also spoke to Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen on 5 November, where she also made clear there is no military solution and that negotiations are needed to avoid bloodshed and deliver lasting peace. We have made these points repeatedly to the Ethiopian Government and the Tigrayan authorities. Alongside the US we are fully supportive of the African Union's mediation efforts. I spoke with AU Special Envoy Obasanjo on 4 November, and with AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Bankole on 8 November.

Ruth Jones: [\[82086\]](#)

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

Vicky Ford:

We are extremely concerned by the security situation in Ethiopia. I issued a statement on 24 November about the deteriorating situation and urged British nationals to leave while commercial flights are available. We have consistently called on all parties to end hostilities and seek a political dialogue and a peaceful solution.

The Foreign Secretary spoke to Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen on 5 November, where she made clear there is no military solution and that negotiations are needed to avoid bloodshed and deliver lasting peace. I spoke with

the Ethiopian State Minister Redwan on 18 November and made similar points. We are fully supportive of the African Union (AU)'s mediation efforts. I spoke with AU Special Envoy Obasanjo on 4 November, and with AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Bankole on 8 November.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: York**

Rachael Maskell:

[82000]

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

Amanda Milling:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) currently has no plans to move civil servants jobs (including those in its associated non-departmental public bodies) to York. The focus of FCDO's efforts under the Government's Places for Growth agenda is to increase staffing levels in its second headquarters in East Kilbride to 1500 by the end of 2025.

■ **Iran: Debts**

Lisa Nandy:

[82315]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of the UK Government repaying the outstanding historical debt owed to Iran.

James Cleverly:

We continue to explore options to resolve this 40-year old case and will not comment further as discussions are ongoing.

■ **Iran: Travel Information**

Sarah Champion:

[81011]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what travel advice her Department offers to UK-Iranian nationals with respect to travel to Iran; and what the Department's rationale is for that advice and any variance by region.

Amanda Milling:

As stated on the relevant webpage <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/iran>, the FCDO advise British-Iranian dual nationals against all travel to Iran.

FCDO travel advice states that there is 'a significantly higher risk that British-Iranian dual nationals could be arbitrarily detained or arrested in Iran' and that 'Iran does not recognise dual nationality'. All FCDO travel advice pages remain under constant review to ensure they reflect the latest threat assessment.

■ Land Mines

Harriett Baldwin:

[\[80296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much her Department (a) has spent in the last ten years and (b) plans to spend in each of the next three years on demining in (i) Iraq, (ii) Lebanon, (iii) Myanmar, (iv) Vietnam, (v) Angola, (vi) Cambodia and (vii) Zimbabwe.

James Cleverly:

The UK spent over £164 million on mine action between 2014-21. We have committed a further £17 million for financial year 2021-22. Both GMAP and GMAP2 supported mine action across the globe including in Iraq, Lebanon, Myanmar, Vietnam, Angola, Cambodia and Zimbabwe. The programmes involved clearing land; risk education to help affected communities keep safe; and capacity development for national authorities to help them manage their contamination.

The Global Mine Action Programme 3 (GMAP3) is due to begin in 2022; we are working towards finalising funding and country allocations and hope to share our plans for the programme in due course.

■ Libya: Refugees

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[80482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to further assist refugees situated and indefinitely detained in overcrowded centres in Libya.

James Cleverly:

The UK is appalled by abuses of migrants and refugees in Libya and the inhumane conditions in detention centres. We continue to urge the interim Government of National Unity to take steps to end the exploitation and abuse of migrants and to implement a better functioning system that respects human rights. We support the UN's call for detention centres across Libya to be closed, and call on all parties to engage with the UN and the humanitarian community so that all migrants and refugees can be evacuated safely in accordance with international human rights law.

■ Mauritius and Southern Africa: Coronavirus

Stephen Doughty:

[\[82320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many covid-19 vaccines the Government has provided via Covax or bilaterally to (a) South Africa, (b) Botswana, (c) Namibia, (d) Lesotho, (e) Eswatini, (f) Zimbabwe, (g) Zambia, (h) Malawi, (i) Mozambique, (j) Mauritius in the last year; and how much covid-19 related Official Development Aid the Government has provided to each of those countries in the last year.

Vicky Ford:

To date, the UK has delivered 16.1 million doses to recipients, either bilaterally or through COVAX. A further 5.8 million vaccine doses are with COVAX and in the process of being allocated and delivered and a further 9 million will be delivered to COVAX in the coming weeks

In 2020, the UK provided over £300 million in bilateral overseas development assistance to countries across Southern Africa. Of this, the countries referred to have received approximately £49 million in covid-19 related support. The UK has also provided significant additional support to multilateral efforts to alleviate the covid-19 crisis across Africa.

■ South Sudan: Land Mines**Harriett Baldwin:**[\[80295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much her Department (a) has spent on demining activity in South Sudan in the last ten years and (b) plans to spend on demining in South Sudan in each of the next three years.

James Cleverly:

UK has funded mine action in South Sudan through the Global Mine Action Programme 2 since 2018. To date we have spent over £3 million and have further committed just under £500,000 in financial year 2021/22. The Global Mine Action Programme 3 (GMAP3) is due to begin in 2022; we are working towards finalising funding and country allocations and hope to share our plans for the programme in due course.

■ Southern Africa: British Nationals Abroad**Stephen Doughty:**[\[82323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) UK citizens, (b) dual nationals or (c) people with leave to remain in the UK are estimated to be present in (i) South Africa, (ii) Eswatini, (iii) Lesotho, (iv) Botswana and (v) Zimbabwe as of 26 November 2021.

Vicky Ford:

The FCDO does not maintain data on numbers of British nationals overseas and we do 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. We do however, encourage British nationals to follow FCDO Travel Advice and to consult gov.uk for the latest information and advice on returning to the UK from a red list country.

■ Southern Africa: Coronavirus**Stephen Doughty:**[\[82324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the Government is offering to countries in the Southern African Development Community region to expand genomic sequencing and surveillance of covid-19 variants.

Vicky Ford:

The UK New Variant Assessment Platform (NVAP) is providing genomic sequencing assistance to countries in the African region. This support includes supply of reagents and other consumables, technical assistance, training and secondments of experts. In response to the Omicron variant, NVAP have offered to provide rapid support to countries in the Southern African Development Community region at request from countries. Support will include sequencing samples in the UK, training, procurement of reagents, and technical, analytical and public health advice. Countries will receive a package of support tailored to their needs. NVAP has received a request to provide UK sequencing support to Zimbabwe and is mobilising this support as soon as possible.

■ Sudan: Politics and Government**Chi Onwurah:**[\[81958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) discussions she had and (b) other steps she took to assess the views of the (i) Forces of Freedom and Change, (ii) Sudanese Professionals Association and (iii) Resistance Committees before endorsing the Hamdok-Burhan deal through the Troika Statement.

Vicky Ford:

We have been clear that the coup in Sudan on 25 October puts the gains of the last two years at risk. I made the UK's concern clear to the House of Commons on the day of the coup, condemning the military's actions in the strongest terms. Through our statements, bilateral engagement, and work with partners my call from that day remains: for the transition to be restored fully, for civilians to be released and for Sudanese people be able to protest without fear of violence.

The Troika has not endorsed nor is it a party to the 21 November Political Agreement. Along with Canada, the EU, and Switzerland, the Troika recognised the Political Agreement as an important first step, although we understand that progress will be difficult. We will monitor progress and maintain pressure on the military to deliver their commitments and, through their actions, rebuild trust with civilians, the Sudanese public and international community. Since the coup we have engaged with all parties to encourage progress and demonstrate our support for the civilian-led democratic transition. We will continue to do so.

■ West Bank: Palestinians

Stephen Timms:

[\[82267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the Israeli High Court's decision on 1 September 2021 relating to the West Bank that Palestinian homes can be entered without a warrant but that settlers' homes cannot.

James Cleverly:

We are aware of the Israel's High Court's decision on a petition seeking to limit the Israeli military's power to enter and search Palestinian homes in the West Bank. The UK continues to engage with the Israeli government on human rights issues in the context of the occupation. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the treatment of Palestinians. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Atrial Fibrillation: Surgery

Jim Shannon:

[\[80998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of treating arterial fibrillation with an electric balloon.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England and NHS Improvement advise that this is a new technology which offers an alternative for balloon-based catheter ablation for atrial fibrillation. At present, further research on a wider cohort of patients is required to provide more data and evidence for its use.

■ Autism: Children

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[64635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the average waiting time for an autism assessment for children in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England; and what steps his Department is taking to reduce average waiting times for autism assessments in those areas.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 1 November 2021]: It is not possible to reliably estimate the average waiting time for children to complete an assessment for autism in Coventry, the West Midlands and England from the data currently collected by NHS Digital. Children and young people are largely out of scope of the current data collection. Available data shows that during Quarter 4 of 2020/21, there were a total of 9,055 new referrals for suspected autism among under 18 year olds recorded in England. Of these,

approximately 12% or 1,060 received a first appointment in 13 weeks or less and 4% or 360 received a first appointment between 13 and 26 weeks.

To reduce diagnosis waiting times for children and young people across England, we are investing an additional £10.5 million in 2021/22 as part of the COVID-19 Mental Health and Wellbeing Recovery Action Plan and the NHS Long Term Plan. Local systems are using this funding to improve different diagnostic pathways. In addition, through our new autism strategy, we are funding an early identification pilot in which healthcare and education staff working together to assess children who may be autistic more quickly within schools.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Helen Hayes:

[\[82031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, how much and what proportion of the additional funding for training NHS staff will be directed towards the cancer workforce.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 30 November 2021]: Following the outcome of the Spending Review 2021, plans for individual budgets for 2022/23 to 2024/25, including funding for training the cancer workforce, will be subject to a detailed financial planning exercise and finalised in due course.

■ Carers: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[81105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of support services available to unpaid carers during covid-19 lockdowns.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[81106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what risks to the mental and physical wellbeing of unpaid carers his Department has identified as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

While no formal assessment has been made, local authorities have a duty under the Care Act 2014 to provide carers an assessment of and support for their needs, where eligible. This includes a duty to promote an individual's wellbeing and consider the impact of the role as a carer. We continue to work with carers' organisations to assess and understand carers' needs and how best to support them.

During the pandemic, we have provided carers with guidance on their health and wellbeing; funding to Carers UK to extend their support phonenumber; funding to the Carers Trust for grants to provide support to unpaid carers experiencing loneliness during the pandemic; and we have worked with the Social Care Institute for

Excellence to publish guidance on reopening day services, providing respite to unpaid carers.

In addition, we have published our Mental Health Recovery Action Plan, supported by an additional £500 million in 2021/22, to ensure we have the right support in place, including for unpaid carers. We are working with key stakeholders, including unpaid carers, to develop our plans and will publish further detail in our white paper on social care reform shortly.

■ Children and Young People: Mental Health Services

Fiona Bruce:

[\[64575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department takes to help ensure that Government funding allocated to local authorities for children's and young people's mental health services is used effectively to meet their needs; and what oversight there is for the effective use of those funds.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 1 November 2021]: Local authority commissioned public health services in England are funded through a ring-fenced Public Health Grant, which has been maintained in the Chancellor's Financial Statement.

Local authorities are best placed to make individual funding decisions based on local need. We will continue to work with the Local Government Association and professional bodies to share evidence and guidance that allows councils to make the best decisions to meet local need.

Each local authority must submit a return to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, setting out how the Grant has been spent at the end of each financial year.

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Research

Hywel Williams:

[\[82269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to fund research into mitochondria cells and the effect upon them in relation to sufferers of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including myalgic encephalomyelitis and chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS). However, it is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality. We will continue to work with stakeholders to consider how best to support continued research into ME/CFS.

■ Dementia: Research

Navendu Mishra: [\[76849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to set out a timetable for the delivery of dementia moonshot funding.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: There is currently no planned date for publication of a strategy to deliver the dementia moonshot.

However, we have committed to invest £375 million in neurodegenerative disease research over the next five years to fund projects into a range of diseases, including dementia. A new dementia strategy, which will set out our plans in England for future years, including on research, will be published in 2022.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: UN Climate Conference 2021

Ruth Jones: [\[80470\]](#)

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

Edward Argar:

One Departmental Minister travelled to COP26 by airplane on the outward leg of the journey and train for the return leg. Any unavoidable carbon emissions from COP26 will be offset, including those associated with travel.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

Dan Carden: [\[80436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 60499 tabled by hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton on 21 October 2021.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: I refer the hon. Member to the answer of 30 November to Question 60499.

■ Hospital Beds: Greater London

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[61132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much was spent on purchasing bed capacity in private sector hospitals for each hospital Trust in London in each of the last 18 months.

Edward Argar:

National contracts were used to secure all appropriate inpatient capacity across England, which came to an end on 31 March 2021. However, these contracts related to hospital capacity, not bed capacity. Total spend on hospital capacity and health services from private sector providers from March 2020 to March 2021 is not

currently available as these contracts are undergoing a reconciliation exercise. It is expected that this will be completed by the end of 2021/22. However, information is being collated at independent provider level, rather than by specific area or region. From 1 April 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement returned to local commissioning arrangements and as such this information is not held centrally.

■ Hospitals: Greater London

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[61131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the extent to which private sector hospital capacity in London is being used to create extra capacity in the NHS.

Edward Argar:

No recent assessment has been made. While national contracts were used to secure appropriate inpatient capacity and other resource in England, on 31 March 2021 these contracts came to an end. From 1 April 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement returned to local commissioning arrangements and as such this information is not held centrally.

We have announced £2 billion this year through the Elective Recovery Fund and £8 billion in the following three years to tackle the elective backlog. This will enable National Health Service commissioners and trusts to secure the capacity required locally.

■ Injuries

Caroline Lucas:

[\[80275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2021 to Question 76637, on Ambulance Services: Standards, whether additional fall prevention work is being undertaken to reduce the number of ambulances required following preventable falls; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement developed the RightCare Falls and Fragility Fractures Pathway in collaboration with National Health Service professionals, Public Health England, National Osteoporosis Society to provide commissioners with resources to prevent falls, detect and manage osteoporosis and support patients following fragility fractures. NHS England and NHS Improvement plan to refresh this programme in partnership with the Best Musculoskeletal Pathway Improvement Programme within the next 12 months.

■ Integrated Care Boards: Conflict of Interests

Clive Lewis:

[\[80411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to (a) identify and (b) publish any conflicts of interests on Integrated Care Boards.

Edward Argar:

The Health and Care Bill transfers clinical commissioning groups' current requirements to manage conflicts of interest to integrated care boards. This includes maintaining and publishing a register of members' interests and arrangements for the management of conflicts or potential conflicts of interest.

Clive Lewis:[\[80412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the risk of conflicts of interest arising on Integrated Care Boards.

Edward Argar:

The Health and Care Bill transfers clinical commissioning groups' current requirements to manage conflicts of interest to integrated care boards (ICBs), which includes maintaining and publishing a register of members' interests and arrangements for the management of conflicts or potential conflicts of interest.

The ICB chair can also veto members of the board if they are unsuitable and NHS England can issue guidance to ICBs in relation to appointments. In order to manage conflicts of interest of board membership, we have also brought forward an amendment to the Bill to prevent individuals from the membership of boards where there are significant interests or views that could undermine its independence.

Kidney Diseases: Dialysis Machines**Elliot Colburn:**[\[80489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2021 to Question 62570, on Kidney Diseases: Dialysis Machines, when his Department expects all renal centres to meet the recommendation outlined in the GiRFT report to achieve a 20 per cent minimum home dialysis rate; and what steps his Department plans to take to encourage those centres that have achieved a 20 per cent minimum home dialysis rate to increase that rate.

Elliot Colburn:[\[80490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2021 to Question 62570, on Kidney Diseases: Dialysis Machines, whether his Department plans to set a deadline for each of the renal clinical networks to implement a workforce plan to ensure the delivery of the dialysis programme as set out in the GiRFT report.

Edward Argar:

The Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) speciality report on renal medicine, published September 2021, recommended that all renal centres provide a minimum of 20% of patients with dialysis services at home within 12 months.

NHS England and NHS Improvement's Renal Services Transformation Plan (RSTP) has established 11 regional clinical networks to meet this recommendation. Of 51 renal centres, 16 units have met or exceeded this minimum level, with several centres achieving more than 30% of patients receiving dialysis at home. NHS

England and NHS Improvement have asked renal networks to ensure units continue to develop home therapies and increase levels of dialysis at home. Providers, integrated care systems and regional commissioners will monitor progress via the UK Renal Registry and NHS England Renal datasets.

The GIRFT report set a deadline for all centres to establish the required staffing model by September 2022. NHS England and NHS Improvement are encouraging clinicians and centres to consider the GIRFT recommendations in their work and the individual sites will evaluate how best to implement them.

■ Kidney Diseases: Health Services

Elliot Colburn:

[\[80488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the cost to the NHS of the treatment of strokes and heart attacks in people with chronic kidney disease.

Maria Caulfield:

We have not made a specific assessment. Information on such costs is not collected in the format requested.

■ Mechanical Thrombectomy

Rachael Maskell:

[\[81048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his workforce plan is for rolling out thrombectomy procedures; and whether that plan includes radiologists in other fields, other than neuro-radiologists and cardiologists.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[81050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the NHS Long Term Plan for stroke care, what steps he plans to take to achieve 10 per cent of stroke patients receiving thrombectomy treatment by 2022.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[81064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to reduce (a) mortality and (b) long term disability from stroke.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 29 November 2021]: The NHS Long Term Plan committed to reduce mortality and long term disability from stroke, including enhanced diagnostic support in the community, better personalised planning and increasing access to rehabilitation. This will help prevent up to 150,000 heart attacks, strokes and dementia cases by 2029.

Due to training requirements, thrombectomies are restricted to Interventional Neuroradiologists in England. The General Medical Council (GMC) is working with the Royal College of Radiologists to develop a medical credential in interventional neuroradiology, or acute stroke, which addresses mechanical thrombectomy. The

GMC and the Royal College are ensuring the credential has the right scope to meet the needs of health services across the United Kingdom.

The National Health Service is committed to increasing the delivery of mechanical thrombectomy from 1% to 10%. The latest data shows that 2.3% of patients are now receiving a thrombectomy following a stroke. In early 2022, the NHS will undertake a quality review with each of the seven regions to increase this rate.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Rosie Cooper: [61128]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 19 August 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, reference ZA57378 regarding surgery wait times.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 30 November 2021.

Rosie Cooper: [69030]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to respond to the letter of 20 August 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire on Lymphedema treatment, ref ZA57271.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 22 November.

■ **Social Services: South East**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [59932]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps is he taking to help ensure vacancies in the care sector are filled in (a) Slough and (b) the South East.

Gillian Keegan:

On 3 November 2021, we published the Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund on GOV.UK, which includes £349,004 for Slough and £22,676,944 for South East across 19 local authorities, to help bolster adult social care workforce capacity over winter, including filling vacancies.

Local authority grant allocations can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/workforce-capacity-fund-for-adult-social-care/annex-c-grant-allocations>

HOME OFFICE■ **Animal Experiments****Margaret Ferrier:**[\[80331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of animal deaths that occurred at licensed scientific testing facilities in 2020.

Damian Hinds:

No such estimate can be made.

■ **Animal Experiments: Scotland****Margaret Ferrier:**[\[80330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish specific extracted data for Scotland from the Annual Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain 2020, published by her Department on 15 July 2021.

Damian Hinds:

The Home Office works with a presumption of openness and transparency and recognises that there is significant public interest in enabling access to information about the use of animals in science.

However, this information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost, so we are unable to provide the data requested.

■ **Asylum****Justin Madders:**[\[80338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on what date the oldest outstanding asylum application was submitted to her Department as at 23 November 2021.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office cannot provide an answer on **what date the oldest current outstanding asylum application was submitted to her Department because** this information is not held in a reportable format and to gather it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ **Asylum: Standards****Justin Madders:**[\[80337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of increasing the support available for asylum seekers since the removal of the six month service standards for the processing of asylum applications by her Department.

Kevin Foster:

If an asylum seeker would otherwise be destitute they are provided with free accommodation and a weekly cash allowance. The standard level of the allowance is currently set at £39.63 for each person in their household. This is reduced if the individual is accommodated in a full-board facility where food and other essential items accounted for are provided in kind.

The level of the standard allowance is reviewed annually to ensure it is sufficient to cover their essential living needs, the legal test provided for in the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

There are no plans to increase the level of support provided to asylum seekers.

Contact Tracing: Travel Requirements**Feryal Clark:**[\[80493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the ability of travellers without access to the internet to complete the passenger locator form when returning to the UK.

Kevin Foster:

All passengers must complete the Passenger Locator Form online, however, once completed they can print off their finished form to show carriers before departing to the UK.

Passengers may seek assistance, from family, friends or another third party, to complete on their behalf.

There are dedicated helplines for members of the public who are encountering issues with completing the PLF form. Whilst these helplines can provide advice, they cannot complete the form on behalf of the passenger.

The contact telephone number from within the UK is 0800 678 1767 and is open Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am to 5pm. These calls are free of charge.

The contact telephone number when outside the UK is 0044 207 113 0371 and is open Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am to 5pm. These calls are charged dependant on the network provider.

Crime Prevention: North Yorkshire**Rachael Maskell:**[\[80357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what funding her Department has allocated to partnership working with agencies to divert people from crime in North Yorkshire.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is committed to continued investment in policing. On the 4th February 2021, the Government published a total police funding settlement of up to £15.8 billion in 2021/22, an increase of up to £600 million compared to 2020/21.

Overall police funding available to Police and Crime Commissioners also increased by up to £668 million (5.1% in cash terms) this year. Specifically, for North Yorkshire, police funding will be up to £171.7m in 2021/22, an increase of up to £5.5m on the 2020/21 police funding settlement.

The Home Office has invested £200m over ten years in the Youth Endowment Fund for early intervention and prevention initiatives aimed at reducing violence across England & Wales. The Youth Endowment Fund funded one grantee in North Yorkshire – North Yorkshire Hospice Care. This was as part of the Covid-19 grant round which aimed to generate evidence on what works in relation to supporting young people during the pandemic.

Decisions about the allocation of police resources and deployment of officers are for Chief Constables and democratically accountable PCCs. They are ultimately responsible for ensuring the needs of the local community are met.

■ Diplomatic Service: Security

Ruth Jones:

[\[79479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the security needs of the diplomatic corp in the UK.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 30 November 2021]: It is our long-standing policy not to provide detailed information on matters of national security. To do so could compromise the integrity of those arrangements and affect the security of the individuals concerned.

■ Home Office: Senior Civil Servants

Robert Largan:

[\[80505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, 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.

Damian Hinds:

The below table provides the number of Senior Civils Servant working for the Home Office as at 31 March 2019, 31 March 2020, 31 March 2021 and 30 September 2021.

GOR NUTS1	MAR-19	MAR-20	MAR-21	SEP-21
East Midlands	0	0	0	0
East Of England	2	2	4	6
London	247	276	260	249
North East	0	0	0	1
North West	3	3	9	14

GOR NUTS1	MAR-19	MAR-20	MAR-21	SEP-21
Scotland	1	2	2	3
South East	1	1	3	3
South West	0	0	1	1
Wales	1	1	0	1
West Midlands	0	1	1	1
Yorkshire & The Humber	4	5	5	9
Northern Ireland	1	1	1	1
Unspecified*	0	0	2	5
Total	260	292	288	294

■ Immigration: Standards

Catherine West:

[80418]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to process the backlog of administrative review applications across immigration routes.

Catherine West:

[80419]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's service standards are for processing administrative review applications across immigration routes as of 23 November 2021.

Kevin Foster:

Following unprecedented levels of administrative review applications, we have recruited and are onboarding additional staff which will more than double the number of decision makers working on these applications.

Current timescales for processing administrative review applications are set out at [Ask for a visa administrative review: If you're in the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ask-for-a-visa-administrative-review-if-youre-in-the-uk), which states: "Currently, it can take 6 months or more to receive the result of the administrative review. If you haven't had a decision on your application within 3 months, the Home Office will contact you with an update."

Applicants' rights are not affected by the delay in consideration.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Caroline Lucas:

[80270]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Afghan Resettlement of 17 November 2021, to the Home Affairs Select Committee on Afghanistan: safe routes and resettlement, at Q101 HC 706, if she will publish the safety concerns referred to as they relate to Afghan nationals who were evacuated to the UK during Operation Pitting.

Victoria Atkins:

In developing the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, it is right that we ensure the plans we put in place are considered, robust and have the wellbeing of those we resettle, and the communities they are resettled into, at their heart. Officials are working urgently to stand up the remaining elements of the Scheme, amid the complex and changing picture. We are working closely with OGDs, NGOs, charities, local authorities, and civil society groups to ensure the right support is provided to people who are resettled through this route.

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

Rachael Maskell:

[80358]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan refugees were residing in bridging hotels as at 22 November 2021.

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/publications/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets).

Rachael Maskell:

[80359]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan refugees have been resettled in housing from bridging hotels between 1 August 2021 and 22 November 2021.

Victoria Atkins:

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

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](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets)

[resettlement datasets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk). Over 4,000 individuals have either moved into a settled home, or are being matched.

Rachael Maskell:

[80361]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Defence Secretary on repurposing his Department's housing to accommodate people under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

A significant cross Government effort is underway to ensure the thousands of Afghans who were evacuated to the UK receive the support they need to rebuild their lives, find work, pursue education, and integrate into local communities.

We continue to work closely with the Ministry of Defence and as well as other partners across government to source appropriate accommodation as quickly as possible.

■ **Refugees: Visas**

Fleur Anderson:

[82384]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to introduce a humanitarian visa scheme to create safe routes of passage for people seeking refuge in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

We already welcome vulnerable people in need of protection to the UK through our resettlement schemes. These schemes have provided safe and legal routes for tens of thousands of people to start new lives in the UK. Through these routes we have resettled more refugees than any EU country since 2015. They include the UK Resettlement Scheme, the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy, the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, and the Nationality and Borders Bill will establish in law safe and legal routes. The Hong Kong British National (Overseas) route has also provided a route to British Citizenship for over 76,000 people since it opened on 31 January.

■ **Saleh Ibrahim Mabrouk**

Catherine West:

[80423]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the High Court ruling of 16 November 2021 that Saleh Ibrahim Mabrouk was jointly liable for the killing of WPC Yvonne Fletcher on 17 April 1984, if she will make it her policy to provide all relevant evidence previously withheld on grounds of national security to facilitate a potential criminal charge in that matter.

Kit Malthouse:

I'm afraid that I cannot comment on the details of this case,

I am unable to confirm or deny the existence of national security material.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Immigration

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[80934]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of simplifying the process for undocumented migrants to regularise their immigration status.

Kevin Foster:

The Government remains committed to an immigration policy which welcomes people to the UK through safe and legal routes but deters illegal immigration.

There are several options available for those in the UK without lawful leave to regularise their immigration status. The Immigration Rules set out the requirements to be met to qualify for a right to remain which provides clarity for applicants and decision makers alike. There are also discretionary policies for leave to be granted outside the Immigration Rules in exceptional circumstances.

The Home Office has accepted the Law Commission's report on the simplification of the Immigration Rules and is in the process of revising and simplifying the immigration rules. We are currently in the process of simplifying routes such as private and family life which are open to undocumented migrants.

■ Violent and Sex Offender Register

Sarah Champion:

[80315]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State of 5 July 2021, Official report, column 606, when the Government plans to begin the time-limited review into sex offenders changing their names; and what the terms of reference of that review will be.

Rachel Maclean:

Protecting the public from sex offenders and dangerous criminals is a top priority for the Government. We are committed to ensuring that the system and the monitoring that underpins the management of these offenders is as robust as it can be, and that the relevant safeguards are in place.

The Government has already begun the internal review into this issue. The review will consider the scale and nature of offenders changing their name to facilitate further offending; fully understand all formal and informal methods by which someone can change their name and the opportunities to strengthen those to prevent abuse by nefarious criminals.

We will do this whilst balancing any policy change with the need to continue to ensure protection to victims of crime who may need to change their name for safeguarding reasons and the majority of people who change their names every year, for honest reasons.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION**■ Palace of Westminster: Waste Disposal****Rosie Cooper:**[\[82282\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, whether there has been an increase since October 2019 in the number of disposal bins in men's toilets across the Palace of Westminster that are suitable for the disposal of stoma and incontinence products.

Sir Charles Walker:

There has been no increase in the number of clinical waste disposal bins in men's toilets in the Palace of Westminster since October 2019. It is not standard practise to provide clinical waste bins in male toilets unless specifically requested.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Coronavirus: Vaccination****Tony Lloyd:**[\[79288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what proposal in respect of a time limited waiver on covid-19 vaccine manufacture the Government plans to support at the forthcoming WTO TRIPS meeting.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the Hon. Gentleman for Rochdale to the answer given to the Hon. Gentleman for Sefton Central on 23 November to Question UIN: 77440.

■ Department for International Trade: Meetings**Owen Thompson:**[\[80389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, 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.

Penny Mordaunt:

Ministers holding meetings or phone calls on government business are routinely accompanied by a private secretary or other official, in line with the expectations of paragraph 8.14 of the Ministerial Code.

■ Department for International Trade: Senior Civil Servants**Robert Largin:**[\[80499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, 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.

Penny Mordaunt:

Senior Civil Servants employed by Department for International Trade based in 12 NUTS1 UK regions in March 2019, March 2020, March 2021 and September 2021 are detailed in the attached.

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. UKEF figures are below:

	MAR-19	MAR-20	MAR-21	SEP-21
Scotland				
Wales				
Northern Ireland				
North East (England)				
North West				
Yorkshire and Humberside				
East Midlands				
West Midlands				
East of England				
London	17	21	26	28
South East				
South West				

Counts of less than five have been suppressed and totals for each month not shown in order to prevent individuals from being identified, as guided by the Office for National Statistics guidance.

Attachments:

1. SCS staff (Headcount) [SCS staff.docx]

■ Department for International Trade: UN Climate Conference 2021**Ruth Jones:** [\[80472\]](#)

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

Penny Mordaunt:

No Department for International Trade Ministers travelled to COP26 by airplane.

■ Shipping: Foreign Investment in UK**Ruth Jones:** [\[80479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps the Department will take to encourage global investment in the UK's maritime sector.

Mike Freer:

The Department is already taking steps to increase global investment into the UK's maritime sector to complement the Government's ambitions. The UK intends to establish 10 freeports across the country with at least one in every nation of the UK. Several of these will promote maritime clusters and will act as national hubs for global trade and investment across the UK. Additionally, the recent launch of DIT's Investment Atlas allows prospective investors to navigate the UK's investment environment. The tool identifies several maritime sub-sectors such as off-shore wind and green shipping as areas of potential.

JUSTICE**■ Human Rights****Owen Thompson:** [\[81067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps the Government is taking to support the prosecution of a non-UK citizen or resident in the UK for indirect involvement in human rights abuses.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for criminal law policy in England and Wales and the UK's human rights framework. Any human right abuse which is a criminal offence committed in the UK could be prosecuted the same way as any criminal offence and the nationality or residence status of the defendant is irrelevant. Support for such prosecutions is of course a matter primarily for the Crown Prosecution Service in England and Wales and the Ministry of Justice does not hold that information. If the abuses are criminal offences committed abroad the jurisdiction of our courts will depend on the nature of the offence and whether the relevant statute provides for it to have extraterritorial effect. Again, support for such prosecutions would be a matter for the Crown Prosecution service in England and Wales and its equivalent bodies elsewhere in the UK. Assistance via international police

cooperation or Mutual Legal Assistance in such cases is a matter for the Home Office. International matters generally and the International Criminal Court are the responsibility of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

■ Ministry of Justice: Meetings

Owen Thompson:

[\[80398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, 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.

James Cartlidge:

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.

■ Ministry of Justice: Senior Civil Servants

Robert Largan:

[\[80508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, 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.

James Cartlidge:

Data for the number of civils servants (headcount) employed by the Ministry of Justice by NUTS1 UK region as at 31st March 2019, 31st March 2020, 31st March 2021 and 30th September 2021 is provided in Table 1 below.

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

TABLE 1 - MINISTRY OF JUSTICE (INCLUDING EXECUTIVE AGENCY) SCS PAYROLL STAFF IN POST BY NUTS1 REGION

	31-Mar-19	31-Mar-20	31-Mar-21	30-Sep-21
North East	6	4	6	6
North West	10	13	13	12
Yorkshire and the Humber	11	12	12	8
East Midlands	10	10	14	11
West Midlands	13	14	16	17
East of England	5	5	9	12
London	217	238	222	221
South East	9	9	13	12

TABLE 1 - MINISTRY OF JUSTICE (INCLUDING EXECUTIVE AGENCY) SCS PAYROLL STAFF IN POST BY NUTS1 REGION

South West	8	9	9	6
Wales	4	7	13	14
Scotland	1	2	3	3
Northern Ireland	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	1	1
Total	294	323	331	323

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

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

This includes staff who are on TRA (Temporary Responsibility Allowance) to SCS.

■ Reoffenders: Females

Ms Lyn Brown: [80264]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Women need women who support them, published by Advance on 22 November 2021, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings of that report.

Ms Lyn Brown: [80265]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Women need women who support them, published by Advance on 22 November 2021, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) costs and (b) potential merits of holistic community support provided by women's centres.

Victoria Atkins:

The Female Offender Strategy recognises the importance of early intervention and initiatives that divert women away from the criminal justice system and into support services that address their vulnerabilities and the underlying causes of offending. It also acknowledges that women's services such as women's centres play a key role in providing holistic support to vulnerable and complex needs women in or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system.

The Ministry of Justice's Data Lab report "Women's Centres throughout England" (May 2015)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/427388/womens-centres-report.pdf found that women's centres can help to reduce reoffending by between 1 and 9 percentage points. Since publication of the

Strategy, the Ministry of Justice has invested £9.5 million in women's community sector organisations, including women's centres.

The cost of support can be difficult to calculate because the type and scope of provision provided by women centres varies widely.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[80266]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Women need women who support them, published by Advance on 22 November 2021, what recent estimate he has made of the (a) re-arrest and (b) proven reoffending rates for women given a (i) conditional caution followed by support from a women's centre and (ii) short prison sentence.

Victoria Atkins:

It is not possible to identify offenders who have been given a conditional caution followed by support from a women's centre based on the data we collect. As a result, we cannot provide the associated proven reoffending rates.

The Home Office and Ministry of Justice do not collect data on re-arrests. The Home Office collects and publishes data on the number of notifiable arrests made by police forces in England and Wales. These data are published as part of the 'Police Powers and Procedures' statistical collection, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-powers-and-procedures-england-and-wales> ,

The 12-month proven reoffending rates for women released from a short custodial sentence between October to December 2019 are provided in the table below. This is broken down by custodial sentence length.

CUSTODIAL SENTENCE LENGTH	PROPORTION OF ADULT WOMEN OFFENDERS WHO REOFFENDED ^{1, 2}
Less than 12 months	61.1%
Less than or equal to 6 months	64.1%
More than 6 months to less than 12 months	44.6%

1. A proven reoffence is defined as any offence committed in a 12-month follow-up period that resulted in a court conviction or caution in this timeframe or a further six-month waiting period (to allow time for cases to progress through the courts).
2. Offenders with prison sentence lengths of one day are excluded.

Taken from tables C1a and C2a accessible here

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1028660/proven-reoffending-oct19-dec19-3-monthly_-_Final.ods

Ms Lyn Brown:

[80267]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Women need women who support them report published by Advance on 22 November 2021, what steps he is taking to increase the use of (a) conditional cautions followed by support from a women's centre and (b) community resolutions followed by support from a women's centre relative to court-based disposals for women suspected of low-level offending.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government is legislating in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to reform the out of court disposal framework, which includes conditional cautions, to ensure that, in future, all out of court disposals have conditions aimed at rehabilitation, reparation or punishment. They will provide an opportunity for intervention and support to offenders at an earlier stage, diverting them into rehabilitative services to help reduce escalation of offending and address complex needs. Community services for women, including those provided by women's centres, can also be an important resource for the police as an alternative to prosecution.

■ Victim Support Schemes

Damien Moore:

[80446]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure that (a) victims of serious crimes and (b) their immediate families are provided with effective support following traumatic events.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government is committed to ensuring victims of serious crime, and their loved ones, receive the support they need to cope and, as far as possible, recover in the aftermath of traumatic events.

In 2021/22, the MoJ will be providing **£150.5m** for victim and witness support services, of which c£115m will be distributed via Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) who commission local, practical and therapeutic support services for victims of all crime types, including serious violence.

The MoJ currently provides up to £4.6m per annum in funding to Victim Support to deliver the Homicide Service which supports immediate family members residing in England and Wales, who are bereaved through homicide both at home and abroad. The service provides families with a dedicated caseworker and offers a full range of emotional, practical, advocacy and peer support, as well as onward referrals to other services such as therapy and counselling.

Victims of terrorism are supported by the Home Office Victims of Terrorism Unit (VTU), who commission support to assist families to cope with, and recover from, the impact and consequences of a terrorist attack, including providing bereavement and psychological support for victims.

■ Wayland Prison

Ms Lyn Brown:

[80262]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Wayland, published on 23 November 2021, whether he plans to undertake research on the effect on rehabilitation and reoffending of the virtual cessation of programmed courses, vocational and employment training and education for more than a year to date.

Victoria Atkins:

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on both prisons and society. As such, research into the impact of the cessation of courses, training and education has not been feasible, due to the various factors that will have impacted reducing reoffending and rehabilitation during the pandemic.

At the start of the pandemic, we took decisive action in custody to keep staff, prisoners, and the wider community safe. This included adjusting prison regimes to reduce contacts and limit the spread of COVID-19. Since then, we have eased restrictions to allow more activity wherever safe to do so, based on public health advice about the level of risk in each establishment.

Evaluations of previous rehabilitative programmes have been published during the pandemic *via* Justice Data Lab (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/justice-data-lab-statistics-january-2021>) and we are exploring the impact that using different delivery models has had on education and other programmes, including the delivery of unpaid work.

Statistics on reoffending and prisoner employment on-release will continue to be published quarterly and further data on education is planned for next year (following our Prison Education Statistics publication in August 2021 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-education-statistics-2019-2020>)

■ Wayland Prison: Staff

Ms Lyn Brown:

[80263]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Wayland, published on 23 November 2021, what steps he is taking to (a) eliminate the shortfall of 28 FTE Band 3 prison office staff at HMP Wayland and (b) increase staffing levels to a level that is compatible with rehabilitation and security.

Victoria Atkins:

A number of initiatives have been put in place to support an increase in staffing at HMP Wayland including a bespoke recruitment campaign for the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk (BCN) region, supported by a dedicated local recruitment taskforce to increase focus on candidate engagement, attendance at local outreach events , and provide information to help and encourage people to apply.

The campaign aims to attract sufficient applications to support all the prisons within the cluster and offers an incentive to candidates who apply to establishments which have previously had less applications.

In addition to the external recruitment activity, an internal level transfer campaign has been delivered and applications are being progressed. This is a great opportunity for HMP Wayland to welcome experienced officers to the establishment, and to allow for the cross-fertilisation of knowledge, skills and experience.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

■ Leader of the House of Commons: Meetings

Owen Thompson: [\[80402\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, 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 Jacob Rees-Mogg:

The Office of the Leader of the House of Commons is part of the Cabinet Office. I refer the hon. member to the response from the Cabinet Office (80384).

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Buildings: Fire Prevention

Sir Geoffrey Cox: [\[80241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of the costs being passed on to leaseholders for (a) remediation works for fire-safety defects and (b) waking-watch and fire alarm installation in buildings under 18 metres in height that have been independently assessed as being a fire risk.

Christopher Pincher:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN 81098 on 29 November 2021.

Sir Geoffrey Cox: [\[80242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) capping total costs relating to the remediation of fire safety defects that can be passed on to leaseholders at a percentage of the value of their equity in the property and (b) providing financial support in cases where the original developer has ceased trading and compensation can no longer be recovered through the Defective Premises Act 1972, for buildings under 18 metres in height that have been assessed as a fire risk.

Christopher Pincher:

Wherever possible, building owners and industry should make buildings safe without passing on costs to leaseholders and we are introducing new measures that will legally require building owners to prove they have tried all routes to cover costs. The fire risk is lower in buildings under 18 metres and costly remediation work is usually not needed. Where fire risks are identified, they should always be managed proportionately, minimising risk without creating a situation whereby people cannot move or access mortgage finance. The Secretary of State is looking very closely at this issue to make sure that everything possible is being done to support leaseholders. Further detail on the support offer for leaseholders in residential buildings of 11-18 metres will be released when all options have been fully considered.

Business: Finance**Jeff Smith:**[\[80352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the £1.5 billion fund announced in March 2021 to support businesses that were not able to benefit from business rates relief during the covid-19 outbreak, whether he plans to give local authorities information on the amounts that they are likely to receive for the purposes of assisting with their financial planning.

Jeff Smith:[\[80353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the £1.5 billion fund announced in March 2021 to support businesses that were not able to benefit from business rates relief during the covid-19 outbreak, when he plans to publish indicative criteria as to which businesses are eligible to receive assistance via that fund.

Kemi Badenoch:

The £1.5 billion fund will be allocated to local authorities based on the stock of properties in the area whose sectors have been affected by COVID-19 and are ineligible for existing support linked to business rates

My Department will publish guidance to help local authorities set up their local schemes once the legislation relating to COVID-19 Material Change of Circumstances provisions has passed. This will include the eligibility criteria for the scheme and individual local authority allocations. Decisions on the award of relief will ultimately be for local authorities, having regard to the guidance.

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: British Constitution and Elections**Angela Rayner:**[\[80321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which teams within his Department work on (a) elections and (b) constitutional policy.

Eddie Hughes:

The Elections and Registration and Franchise teams advise on elections. They will move into the new Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities from the Cabinet Office as part of the machinery of government change. Constitutional Policy remains a matter for the Cabinet Office.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Meetings**Owen Thompson:**[\[80391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 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.

Eddie Hughes:

Ministers holding meetings or phone calls on government business are routinely accompanied by a private secretary or other official, in line with the expectations of paragraph 8.14 of the Ministerial Code.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Senior Civil Servants**Robert Largan:**[\[80500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 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.

Eddie Hughes:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN 78525 on 29 November 2021.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Summit Resorts & Developments**Justin Madders:**[\[80339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will publish all details of meetings between Ministers and officials from his Department and representatives of Summit Resorts and Developments Limited, or its predecessor David Lloyd Developments Limited, since January 2019.

Eddie Hughes:

Details of ministerial meetings are published quarterly and can be found on Gov.uk.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: UN Climate Conference 2021

Ruth Jones:

[\[80476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 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.

Eddie Hughes:

No Ministers in this Department travelled to COP26 in Glasgow by airplane.

■ Freeports

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[79354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, on which date each of the freeports announced in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 (a) came into or (b) is planned to come into operation.

Neil O'Brien:

At Budget, on 27 October 2021, it was announced that the first Freeport tax sites would be in Humber, Teesside and Thames. Eligible businesses that base themselves in tax sites at these Freeports can benefit from several tax incentives. On 19 November, these tax sites and a customs site in Teesside were designated meaning that businesses are able to benefit from the tax benefits and customs facilitations from that date.

The Government is working hard to support all Freeports. Subject to agreeing their business cases, we expect the next set of Freeports to begin operations in 2022.

■ Housing: Construction

Mike Amesbury:

[\[80442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the risk of building new homes in flood prone areas; and what steps he is taking to ensure that new homes are not built in areas of high flood risk.

Christopher Pincher:

This Government takes the risk of flooding very seriously. The Government's policy statement on flooding and coastal erosion sets out our long-term ambition for managing the increasing challenges and boosting our resilience. It describes the Government's policies to better protect and better prepare the country.

When local areas consider where new homes should be built, our National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

In July 2021 the Government undertook a Review of policy on development in areas at flood risk. It concluded that the Government has robust measures in place to protect people and property from flooding which all local planning authorities are expected to follow. The review set out actions the Government should take and has already taken to ensure safety of new developments from flooding now and in the future. This included an update to the NPPF in July 2021 to make sure that all sources of flood risk need to be considered, taking into account future flood risk, to ensure that any new development is safe for its lifetime without increasing the risk of flooding elsewhere.

Furthermore, as part of our wider ambitions for an improved planning system we intend to review the NPPF to ensure that it contributes to climate change mitigation and adaption as fully as possible.

■ **Housing: Standards**

Marsha De Cordova: [\[80457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department plans to respond to the consultation on raising accessible housing standards.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[80458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether all new homes will meet the accessible and adaptable standard following the consultation on raising accessibility standards for new homes.

Christopher Pincher:

We are currently considering responses to the consultation on raising accessibility standards and will publish a government response setting out next steps as soon as possible.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Matthew Pennycook: [\[80416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to respond to the letter of 8 October 2021 from the hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich on his constituent's application to the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

A reply was sent to the Hon. Member on 25 November 2021.

■ **Motorway Service Areas: Parking Offences**

Sir Peter Bottomley: [\[78347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will designate parking contraventions at motorway service areas as specific use-class contraventions.

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[78348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will consult representatives of (a) Welcome Break and (b) other motorway service operators on designating parking contraventions by HGVs at motorway service areas a specific use-class contravention.

Neil O'Brien:

My Department has recently consulted on private parking contraventions as part of the 'Private Parking Charges, Discount Rates, Debt Collection Fees and Appeals Charter: Further Technical Consultation'. We will carefully consider all views submitted in response, including those of Welcome Break and other motorway service operators, before finalising the list of contraventions proposed in the consultation.

The consultation closed on 27 August and we will publish the response, together with the new parking Code of Practice, in due course.

■ Planning: Fire and Rescue Services

Catherine West:

[\[80420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of integrating the English planning and building inspectorate systems to help ensure that Fire Authority planning application recommendations are implemented.

Catherine West:

[\[80421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the advantages of planning and building inspectorates of other OECD countries.

Catherine West:

[\[80422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department plans to change the English planning system to mitigate fire risk in the context of the Grenfell disaster.

Christopher Pincher:

Following the Grenfell Tower fire on 14 June 2017 the Government commissioned the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety led by Dame Judith Hackitt. The report highlighted the need to transform the fire and building safety regime and recommended that "some minimum requirements around fire safety will need to be addressed when local planning authorities are determining planning applications and will require input from those with the relevant expertise."

The review took into consideration the experience of other countries' building regulatory frameworks. It noted that many of the concerns recognised with the English regulatory framework were shared across different countries. This included deviations from designs, potential conflicts of interest for third-party inspectors, lack of adequate competence, as well as lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities.

The review's findings and subsequent recommendations were also informed by case studies from countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Finland, the outcome of which was to move towards a culture of shared responsibility in how our planning system approaches building and fire safety.

In response to the review's recommendations, the Government introduced new requirements known as planning gateway one on 1st August 2020, which require the developer to submit a fire statement setting out fire safety considerations specific to the development with a relevant application for planning permission for development which involves one or more relevant buildings.

Relevant buildings under planning gateway one must contain two or more dwellings or educational accommodation and meet the height condition of 18 metres or more, or 7 or more storeys.

These changes are intended to help ensure that applicants and decision-makers consider planning issues relevant to fire safety, bringing forward-thinking on fire safety matters as they relate to land use planning to the earliest possible stage in the development process and result in better schemes which fully integrate thinking on fire safety.

Additional guidance on fire safety and high-residential buildings can be found in the following planning practice guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/fire-safety-and-high-rise-residential-buildings-from-1-august-2021>

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Rachael Maskell:

[80360]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the adequacy of local authority housing provision for accommodating Afghan refugees.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities are working closely together on resettling refugees from Afghanistan. Over 4,000 individuals have either moved into a settled home or are in the process of being matched. In the meantime we continue to put in place wrap around support for those in temporary 'bridging' accommodation, while we work to secure settled housing for the remaining families.

We are very grateful to the local authorities who have already agreed to support Afghan families to resettle, whether in local authority housing, in housing association properties, or in the private rented sector. We are working closely with local authorities and across Government departments to match the remaining families with settled housing as quickly as possible to enable those evacuated from Afghanistan to rebuild their lives here in the UK.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Bolton

Yasmin Qureshi:

[79324]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many bids were made by Bolton council to the Levelling Up Fund; how many of those bids were successful; and how much funding has been allocated to successful bids from Bolton.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 25 November 2021]: On 27 October we were delighted to announce the winners of the first round of the Levelling Up Fund. This will see £1.7 billion allocated to 105 bids. Citizens across the UK can expect to see projects getting underway from early 2022.

Bolton Council submitted two bids in Round One of the Fund. The first bid, for Bolton College of Medical Science, was successful and will receive £20 million of funding. The second bid, for Crompton Place, was unsuccessful but can be resubmitted in future rounds of the Fund.

We look forward to working with Bolton Council to deliver the exciting proposal put forward in the successful bid and encourage the Council to resubmit the Crompton Place bid in future rounds.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Finance

Valerie Vaz:

[81939]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will set out the process for allocating levelling up funds.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities has used a range of approaches to determine how funding is distributed through our levelling up funds, depending on the outcomes the department wants to achieve in places.

The Department recently published explanatory notes setting out the assessment and decision-making process for the Levelling Up Fund and the Community Renewal Fund. Information on the selection process for Town Deals is also on gov.uk.

■ Sanitary Protection: Waste Disposal

Rosie Cooper:

[82280]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to introduce a statutory obligation to provide sanitary bins in (a) existing and (b) newly built men's toilets.

Eddie Hughes:

We are considering how regulations and other approaches meet the needs of all toilet users, including carrying out research on the needs of all people using toilets and wider research on Part M of the Building Regulations (on access to, and use of

buildings). Evidence gathered will help government consider what changes should or can be made to statutory guidance on toilet provision and facilities.

■ Towns Fund

Steve Reed: [\[79389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many projects allocated funding under the Towns Fund have been completed.

Steve Reed: [\[79392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will publish an updated timetable for delivery of each project under the Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 25 November 2021]: Towns are in the process of completing their business cases and supplying the department with Summary Documents which, once approved, will allow DLUHC to release funding for projects.

The Town Deal programme is scheduled to run until financial year 25/26 with projects set to be delivered by that deadline. Some projects will also be delivered before then according to the timelines established by the towns.

It is expected that all funding provided from the Levelling Up Fund will be spent by 31 March 2024, and, exceptionally, into 2024-25 for larger schemes.

■ UK Community Renewal Fund

Steve Reed: [\[79390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will publish the details of all successful and non-successful bids made to the Community Renewal Fund by lead authorities.

Justin Madders: [\[79401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many applications have been made to the Levelling Up Fund, by constituency.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 25 November 2021]: The successful list of 477 bids made to the UK Community Renewal Fund were published on Gov.uk on the day of announcement: 3 November 2021

I wrote to all lead authorities who bid into the UK Community Renewal Fund immediately after the announcement, notifying them of the outcome of their bids.

Steve Reed: [\[79391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will publish all correspondence with Ministers of State for (a) Northern Ireland, (b) Scotland

and (c) Wales in respect of the draft shortlist of bids to be considered for funding under the Community Renewal Fund.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 25 November 2021]: Shortlists were provided to Ministers of State for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to confirm the successful bids to the UK Community Renewal Fund, however it is not standard practice to publish correspondence between Ministers.

■ Urban Areas: Economic Situation

Layla Moran:

[\[79456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings in the Local Government Association's report, entitled A vision for urban growth and recovery, on the impact of the overrepresentation of low earners in economically vulnerable sectors on the ability of urban areas to economically recover from the covid-19 outbreak.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 25 November 2021]: We appreciate the Local Government Association's detailed and insightful 'Vision for Urban Growth and Recovery' report and value the recommendations made. We also welcome the continued engagement with the sector as we progress our levelling up agenda. In this respect, we share the view expressed in the Report on the importance of continued partnership between Government and key stakeholder groups.

■ Urban Areas: Parks

Paul Howell:

[\[80494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the population density of a town or village would have to be to qualify for an Urban Pocket Park.

Kemi Badenoch:

We are investing £9 million through the Levelling Up Parks Fund to regenerate green spaces across the UK as part of our Levelling Up agenda. The scheme will be broader than earlier Pocket Parks programmes and further details will be announced shortly.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Judaism: Ministers of Religion

Ruth Jones:

[\[83475\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, when he last met the Chief Rabbi.

Boris Johnson:

Formal Ministerial meetings with external organisations are published each quarter on gov.uk.

TRANSPORT■ **Dispute Resolution****Patricia Gibson:**[\[82336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if the Government will introduce mandatory alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to help consumers resolve disputes in respect of the airline sector in the context of most other regulated sectors having mandatory ADR schemes.

Robert Courts:

The Government remains absolutely committed to ensuring consumers are protected when travelling by air. As announced in both the Global Travel Taskforce report in April, and the recent announcement on Regulatory reforms, we will consult on additional, flexible and modern tools to enforce consumer rights.

■ **Driving Licences****Caroline Lucas:**[\[81919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to require the DVLA to return identity documents to applicants via a tracked postal method that allow people to reclaim fees for replacements if lost in the post; and if he will make a statement.

Trudy Harrison:

There are no plans for the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) to routinely return identity documents via a tracked postal method. The DVLA advises applicants that if they enclose a stamped, self-addressed special delivery or signed for envelope with their application, documents will be returned in those envelopes. This information is shown on the DVLA's application forms.

In January, the DVLA introduced a facility for foreign nationals to evidence their identity and residency digitally. Those who have been issued with digital confirmation of their immigration status by the Home Office can generate a nine-digit share code through the [View & Prove your immigration status](#) service which can be used support an application for a driving licence. This will reduce the number of physical identity documents that need to be sent to the DVLA.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points****Felicity Buchan:**[\[82390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to (a) increase the availability of on-street electric vehicle charging points in line with projected

demand and (b) ensure electric vehicle charging points can be used with all electric vehicle models and are in good working condition.

Trudy Harrison:

We will invest over £1.3 billion in accelerating the roll out of charging infrastructure over the next four years, targeting support on rapid chargepoints on motorways and major roads, and installing more on-street chargepoints near homes and workplaces to make charging as easy as refuelling a petrol or diesel car.

So far, the £400 million public-private Charging Infrastructure Investment Fund has made three investments which will create 5,000 more rapid chargepoints across the UK and increase provision of on-street residential chargepoints for those without access to private driveways. The On-Street Residential Charging Scheme supports the rollout of local charging and is available to all UK local authorities to provide public chargepoints for their residents without access to private parking. This year there is £20 million available under the scheme and we have committed substantial funding to address this issue throughout this spending review period.

Our forthcoming Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Strategy will define our vision for the continued roll-out of a world-leading charging infrastructure network across the UK and will establish the Government's expectations for the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in the planning and deployment of charging infrastructure.

To increase confidence in the charging network and reduce range anxiety the Government consulted on measures to improve the consumer experience of public charging focusing on four key areas including ensuring the network is reliable and opening public EV chargepoint data to enable consumers to locate the right chargepoint for their needs. Our proposals will mean that consumers can easily understand where chargepoints are situated, whether they are working and available, and if they have the payment methods available that they prefer to use. We will publish our government response shortly and we will lay legislation in 2022.

All new EVs can charge on a 'Type 2 plug' for slow and fast charging. For rapid charging the choice is between Combine Charging System (CCS) or CHAdeMO. In 2017 we regulated through the Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Regulations for all charge points to have at least a Type 2 plug for AC charging or CCS plug for DC charging. Due to our 2017 regulations, and equivalent regulations in other areas of the world, requiring rapid charge points to have CCS, there are now only two EV models are available to buy in the UK with CHAdeMO sockets.

From the driver's perspective, if they drive a car which has a CCS then they should be able to use any rapid charge point. If they are driving a vehicle that uses a CHAdeMO connector they will be able to use almost all current rapid public chargers, as over 96% rapid charge points come with both CCS and CHAdeMO cables.

Felicity Buchan:

[82391]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the number of jobs that will be created from the nationwide rollout of electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

Trudy Harrison:

No such specific assessment has been made. Our Automotive Transformation Fund will accelerate the shift to zero emission vehicles and deliver support for 40,000 jobs in the automotive sector across the UK by 2030. More widely, decarbonising transport will lead to thousands of jobs being created in transport related green industries. The UK infrastructure sector is growing rapidly and our phase out dates for new petrol and diesel cars and vans have sent a clear signal of the UK's direction of travel unlocking private sector funding which is expanding chargepoint provision and creating jobs and investment across the country.

Our forthcoming Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy will define our vision for the continued roll-out of a world-leading charging infrastructure network across the UK and will establish the Government's expectations for the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in the planning and deployment of charging infrastructure.

■ Railways: North of England

Rachael Maskell:

[82351]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will have discussions with Transport for the North to ensure that the Integrated Rail Plan does not detract from the plans of Transport for the North.

Andrew Stephenson:

Consistent with its core statutory function, Transport for the North's (TfN) will continue to produce a Strategic Transport Plan (STP) for the North of England that outlines local and regional transport priorities. The Department is already in discussions with TfN about the upcoming STP and will continue to engage with TfN as this develops.

Rachael Maskell:

[82353]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he plans to take to ensure that the implementation of the Integrated Rail Plan does not lead to disruption on the Transpennine Route and reduce journey times between York and (a) Leeds and (b) Manchester.

Andrew Stephenson:

Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) is a major upgrade which will provide significant benefits to passengers in the North. Network Rail are reviewing the Strategic Access Plan principles for TRU and engaging with industry stakeholders to examine how different access agreements may be of benefit in limiting disruption where possible. We aim to provide as much notice as possible for any work along the route.

The Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands confirmed a further £625m in funding for the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) which will form the first part of

Northern Powerhouse Rail. The programme will see the TransPennine main line fully electrified and upgraded with digital signalling, capacity for extra services including freight, and to provide transformed punctuality. Our IRP plans will ultimately see journey times from Manchester to Leeds reduced to 33 minutes, with York to Leeds reduced to 19 minutes.

■ Railways: Yorkshire and the Humber

Rachael Maskell:

[\[82352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he plans to take to improve rail connectivity in Yorkshire in addition to the proposals set out in the Integrated Rail Plan.

Andrew Stephenson:

We have recently invested £160million in improving rail services in West Yorkshire through the Leeds Capacity Scheme, to increase reliability, reduce overcrowding, and to give a better travel experience for passengers.

More widely, we want to provide as much clarity and certainty as possible on other future rail enhancements and will set out our plans shortly.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[82354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to make improvements to rail journeys between York and Sheffield in addition to the proposals set out in the Integrated Rail Plan.

Andrew Stephenson:

We want to provide as much clarity and certainty as possible on rail enhancements and will set out our plans shortly.

■ Transport: North of England

Rachael Maskell:

[\[82350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to prioritise the economic and transport needs of the North during the reorganisation of his Department and Transport for the North.

Andrew Stephenson:

Under the new client framework for Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) as outlined in the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP), Transport for the North (TfN) will continue to provide advice to the Department through a joint sponsor Board for the programme. The precise terms of the sponsorship agreement will be discussed and agreed between TfN and the Department, but our ambition is for TfN to continue to input strategic direction to the programme to ensure that regional economic and transport priorities are fully considered in programme development. TfN will be provided with the funding necessary to act as co-sponsor on NPR and maintain access to core grant funding commensurate with undertaking their statutory functions.

■ Transport: North West**Damien Moore:**[\[80444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve direct transport links into central Manchester from Southport with (a) the rail network and (b) the bus network.

Trudy Harrison:

In collaboration with Network Rail and Transport for the North, The Department has developed the core of a new timetable for rail services in and around Manchester. It will provide more punctual, reliable journeys for passengers from December 2022, and includes services from Southport to both the North and South sides of Manchester city centre.

Ambitious infrastructure enhancements are then targeted to follow over the decade, and £26 million has been granted to Network Rail to develop and design improvements aimed at accommodating service demands.

In addition, all English Local Transport Authorities outside London – including the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority - have published Bus Service Improvement Plans, setting out local visions for transformed bus services. The Government will invest £1.2 billion of dedicated funding in bus transformation deals to deliver improvements in services, fares, and infrastructure.

Liverpool City Region will also benefit from £710 million allocated at Spending Review from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement.

■ Union Connectivity Review**Sir Graham Brady:**[\[80916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his planned timetable is for publication of the final report of the union connectivity review.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Sir Peter has published his Union Connectivity Review as of Friday the 26th of November, the Government thanks Sir Peter for his work and will respond to his recommendations in due course.

TREASURY**■ EU Grants and Loans****Gareth Thomas:**[\[80200\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Answer of 2 March 2021 to Question 157278, on EU Grants and Loans, what progress has been made on ensuring that UK entities are able to (a) participate in and (b) bid for EU funds for EU programmes between 2021-2027, including (i) the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), (ii) Horizon

Europe, (iii) Euratom Research and Training and (iv) Copernicus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Simon Clarke:

As part of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), the UK and the EU agreed the terms for our association to Horizon Europe, Euratom Research & Training (R&T), Fusion for Energy and Copernicus for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework. As the underpinning EU legislation was not yet adopted, a Joint Declaration set out the parties' intention to formalise UK participation at the earliest opportunity.

Now that the EU legislation is in force, the UK has communicated to the EU that it stands ready to adopt the Protocols at the earliest opportunity. We want to strengthen the valuable and long-standing partnerships in place between British and European researchers. Frustratingly, there have been persistent delays from the EU, which we have sought to address through both formal and informal discussions, so far without result. As Lord Frost set out to the European Scrutiny Committee on 25 October, the Government sees no legal or practical reason why the UK should not be able to associate, and we cannot wait indefinitely.

Pending association being finalised, UK researchers, businesses and innovators have been able to apply to Horizon Europe and Euratom R&T calls as 'associated candidates' since early 2021.

To provide reassurance to UK-based applicants, my Right Honourable Friend, the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation set out, in a Written Ministerial Statement (HCWS431), the Government's intention to guarantee funding for those eligible who have successfully bid for Horizon Europe funded activities in the first wave of calls but are unable to sign grant agreements.

■ **Islamic Centre of England: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

Theresa Villiers:

[80238]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he can recover payments made to the Islamic Centre of England in Maida Vale, London, under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme as a result of that organisation's links with the Iranian government.

Lucy Frazer:

We do not comment on the commercial or financial matters of identifiable organisations.

In designing the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Government has taken steps to protect public money against error, fraud, and abuse. Where the recipients of payments are found not to have been entitled to the money they have received, the Government has made provision for relevant powers and mechanisms to allow the money to be recovered and, where appropriate, penalties issued. These mechanisms have already been used to make recoveries and further compliance work is ongoing. However, there would be no basis for HMRC to set out to recover a grant from an employer that met the rules of the scheme.

■ Non-domestic Rates

Rachel Reeves: [82289]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total rateable value and number of (a) retail, (b) hospitality and (c) leisure properties is in England; and what proportion of those properties by (i) total rateable values and (ii) number will not benefit from the 50 per cent rates discount from 1 April 2022 as a result of the £110,000 cash cap announced in the 2021 Autumn Budget and Spending Review.

Lucy Frazer:

The Valuation Office Agency publish data for the total rateable value for different property types here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/non-domestic-rating-stock-of-properties-including-business-floorspace-2021>

The Government is delivering a tax cut worth almost £1.7 billion for retail, hospitality, and leisure businesses in the year 2022-23. Eligible properties will receive 50 per cent off their business rates bill, up to a maximum of £110,000 per business.

Together, the new Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief and the Small Business Rates Relief will mean that over 90 per cent of retail, hospitality and leisure businesses will receive at least a 50 per cent reduction in their business rates bills in the year 2022-23.

Rachel Reeves: [82293]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the (a) total rateable value and (b) number of (i) warehouse, (ii) industrial and factory, (iii) office, (iv) retail, (v) hospitality, (vi) leisure properties was in each of the nine standard English regions on 1 April (A) 2015 and (B) 2021.

Lucy Frazer:

The aggregated breakdowns requested in the question are not available. However, the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) will publish detailed relevant data on the total rateable value and properties covering each English region in due course. VOA statistics can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/valuation-office-agency/about/statistics>

■ Non-domestic Rates: Scotland

Rachel Reeves: [82290]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total rateable value and number of (a) retail, (b) hospitality and (c) leisure properties is in Scotland; and what proportion of those properties by (i) total rateable values and (ii) number will not benefit from the 50 per cent rates discount from 1 April 2022 as a result of the £110,000 cash cap announced in the 2021 Autumn Budget and Spending Review.

Rachel Reeves: [82291]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total rateable value and number of (a) retail, (b) hospitality and (c) leisure properties were in Wales as of 26 November 2021;

and what percentage of properties by (i) total rateable values and (ii) number will not benefit from the 50 per cent rates discount from 1 April 2022 due to the £110,000 cash cap announced in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021.

Rachel Reeves:

[82292]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total rateable value and number of (a) retail, (b) hospitality and (c) leisure properties is in Northern Ireland; and what proportion of those properties by (i) total rateable values and (ii) number will not benefit from the 50 per cent rates discount from 1 April 2022 as a result of the £110,000 cash cap announced in the 2021 Autumn Budget and Spending Review.

Lucy Frazer:

Non-domestic rates are a matter for the devolved Governments in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services

Bridget Phillipson:

[82294]

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

Bridget Phillipson:

[82295]

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

Bridget Phillipson:

[82296]

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

Bridget Phillipson:

[82297]

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 ten 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-updates>

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

■ **Treasury: Meetings****Owen Thompson:** [\[80395\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 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.

Helen Whately:

Ministers holding meetings or phone calls on government business are routinely accompanied by a private secretary or other official, in line with paragraph 8.14 of the Ministerial Code.

■ **Treasury: Senior Civil Servants****Robert Largan:** [\[80506\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 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.

Helen Whately:

The number of senior civil servants employed by HM Treasury split by the 12 NUTS1 UK regions at the requested dates are as follows:

NUTS1	DESCRIPTION	1 MARCH 2019	1 MARCH 2020	1 MARCH 2021	1 SEPTEMBER 2021
1	North East				
2	North West				
3	Yorkshire and Humber				
4	East Midlands				
5	West Midlands				
6	East of England				
7	London	116	133	160	154
8	South East				
9	South West				
10	Wales				
11	Scotland				
12	Northern				

					1
					SEPTEMBER
NUTS1	DESCRIPTION	1 MARCH 2019	1 MARCH 2020	1 MARCH 2021	2021

Ireland

■ Treasury: Staff

Chi Onwurah:

[\[82319\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in context of Taras Properties being listed as the sole shareholder of Reuben Brothers (Newcastle) Ltd listed with Companies House, what due diligence his Department carried out of (a) Taras Properties and (b) Reuben Brothers prior to moving 900 staff of his Department to a building owned by those organisations.

Lucy Frazer:

The Department has adhered to the Government's property spend control policy and the transaction in question was subject to approval by National Property Control which was granted on 2 November 2021. The property leasing due diligence process was applied to Taras Properties and the Reuben Brothers as linked individuals. The due diligence process includes assessing any potential reputational risks to HMRC and considers both the corporate structures and the tax compliance of the entities involved.

■ Treasury: UN Climate Conference 2021

Ruth Jones:

[\[80464\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 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.

Helen Whately:

No HMT Ministers travelled to COP26 by airplane. All Ministers took public transport.

■ UK Trade with EU: Exports

Emily Thornberry:

[\[82279\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether there will be any change in the frequency of (a) customs, (b) sanitary and phytosanitary and (c) safety and security checks applied at UK ports in relation to exports to the EU in the weeks leading up to Christmas 2021.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government's priority is to keep goods moving and avoid delays at the border. HMRC use a risk based and intelligence-led response to compliance issues, working alongside Border Force. HMRC, Border Force and other Government departments make targeted interventions. These are based on intelligence and threat assessment

and will typically involve documentary checks and physical interventions, designed, wherever possible, to avoid delaying traffic flows across the border.

Sanitary and phytosanitary checks on products of animal origin and live animals exported to the EU do not take place at GB ports. These checks take place on arrival in the EU, with baseline rates set out in EU law.

WALES

■ Windrush Compensation Scheme: Wales

Ruth Jones:

[\[81133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

Simon Hart:

UK Government is in regular engagement with the Welsh Government on a wide range of subjects, including the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

Home Office officials wrote to the Devolved Administrations, including the Welsh Government, to inform them of significant changes we made to the Windrush Compensation Scheme in December. Home Office officials have also engaged with the Welsh Government to encourage the promotion of engagement events the UK Government has held in Swansea, Newport and Cardiff.

The Government also raised awareness of the Windrush Schemes through the national advertising campaign, launched in August 2020, which included radio stations, digital channels and local press in Wales. Campaign materials were also made available in Welsh.

In addition, the Windrush Community Fund, which is a £500k fund to promote awareness of Windrush Schemes to affected communities, was promoted across the UK, including in Wales. The UK Government awarded over £24,000 in funding to Butetown Community Association who are a longstanding organisation in Cardiff, to deliver a series of projects to reach their local communities.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Meetings

Owen Thompson:

[\[80392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, 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.

Guy Opperman:

Ministers holding meetings or phone calls on government business are routinely accompanied by a Private Secretary or other official, in line with the expectations of paragraph 8.14 of the Ministerial Code.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Senior Civil Servants****Robert Largan:**[\[80502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, 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.

Guy Opperman:

The figures below show substantive paid SCS as at the labelled dates by region shown in SiP (staff in Post)

SCS SiP

REGION	31 ST MARCH 2019	31 ST MARCH 2020	31 ST MARCH 2021	30 TH SEPTEMBER 2021
North East	20	30	30	30
North West	30	30	40	30
Yorkshire and Humber	40	40	40	40
East Midlands
West Midlands
East of England	0	0	0	0
London	100	110	120	120
South East
South West
Wales
Scotland	10	10	..	10
Northern Ireland	0	0	0	0
Not Reported	10	10
All Employees	210	210	240	250

1. Numbers are rounded to the nearest ten, and cells containing between one and five employees are represented by '..'.

2. Figures relate to paid employees only and are shown in staff in post (SiP)

3. Numbers may not sum due to rounding to the nearest 10

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

Chris Stephens:

[\[82340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that bringing non-frontline departmental staff back into workplaces in (a) Scotland and (b) Wales is in accordance with the covid-19 safety policies in operation in those devolved nations.

Mims Davies:

The Department has prioritised the safety of our workforce and claimants throughout the pandemic and part of that is ensuring that we have robust national and site level risk assessments and guidance that ensures all appropriate mitigations are in place.

As part of regularly reviewing our risk assessments, in consultation with our departmental and local trade union colleagues we ensure that any differences in devolved administration regulations or guidance is reflected.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: UN Climate Change Conference 2021**

Ruth Jones:

[\[80478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2021 to Question 75126 on UN Climate Conference 2021: Government, how many Ministers in her Department travelled to COP26 by airplane.

Guy Opperman:

The Secretary of State travelled to COP 26 on a commercial flight which used sustainable aviation fuel. This fuel is produced from sustainable feedstocks including waste cooking oil and other (non-palm) waste oils, and also from landfill material. It provides at least a 70% reduction in carbon emissions compared to traditional jet fuel.

Any unavoidable carbon emissions from COP26 will be offset, including those associated with travel .

■ **Jobcentres: Coronavirus**

Chris Stephens:

[\[81981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what impact assessment she has made of the risk of covid-19 transmission of increased face-to-face Jobcentre appointments.

Mims Davies:

The Department has prioritised the safety of our workforce and claimants throughout the pandemic and part of that is ensuring that we have robust national and site level risk assessments and guidance that ensures all appropriate mitigations are in place. The impact assessment informs the generic risk assessment, which we then apply at a local level, within the parameters that are set.

We have a suite of Health & Safety risk assessments in place developed following extensive consultation with departmental trade union representatives. These cover all of the measures in place to protect staff and customers and are regularly reviewed.

■ Kickstart Scheme: North West

Conor McGinn: [82338]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in (a) St Helens North constituency, (b) Liverpool City Region and (c) the North West region have undertaken roles as part of the Kickstart scheme since its inception.

Mims Davies:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer given for PQ [58900](#) for a breakdown of jobs started by parliamentary constituency and local authority; as well as to PQ [71418](#) for a recent breakdown of jobs started by region.

■ Rents

Justin Madders: [80340]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department made of rental prices prior to the decision to maintain the Local Housing Allowance levels.

David Rutley:

Throughout the year, rent officers collect data about local market rents for both new tenancies and renewals of tenancies, which is available on: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/indexofprivatehousingrentalprices/september2021>.

■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

Vicky Foxcroft: [78459]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Written Statement of 9 July 2020 on Health Transformation Programme update, what assessment her Department has made of their experience of delivering services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chloe Smith:

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Department made a number of changes to health and disability benefits to safeguard the health of claimants and staff and to prioritise new claims and continuity of awards. These changes included:

- introducing the digital version of the PIP2 form, earlier than planned;
- suspending all face-to-face assessments and introducing telephone-based assessments and video assessments, in addition to paper-based assessments;
- enabling companions to join telephony assessments for further social support, as they would have done for a face-to-face assessment; and

- progressing assessments on the basis of the paper-based evidence alone, or that evidence together with a telephone assessment, to ensure decisions on Personal Independence Payments were made without delay.

The electronic and online PIP2 service, introduced at small scale during the pandemic, is being rolled out in a way that ensures that the system operates as smoothly as possible and we provide a positive claimant experience.

We are currently assessing these remote assessment channels. Findings from a survey of PIP and ESA/UC claimants who received a telephone assessment were published alongside the Green Paper. The Green Paper consultation has offered an opportunity to hear views on how we can improve assessments, including how we might provide a multi-channel health assessment service.

■ State Retirement Pensions

Tony Lloyd:

[80211]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people affected by delays in initiating payment of the state pension to those who reach the appropriate retirement age; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

This information is not collated as part of normal business and is only available at disproportionate cost to the Department.

Normal processes have now returned and payments are back to normal times.

Where we are awaiting additional information to process a customer's claim, these claims will be actioned on receipt of the required information.

■ Support for Mortgage Interest

Justin Madders:

[80332]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the success rate is for applications to the Support for Mortgage Interest loan scheme compared to the previous Support for Mortgage Interest payment scheme.

Guy Opperman:

Entitlement to help under the Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) loans system is the same as it was under the previous SMI benefit system. The key difference is that acceptance of the offer of a loan is optional. Around 20% of those eligible to receive a loan have taken up the offer so far, according to Management Information published in August 2020.

Information on take up of SMI can be found via this link - [Conversion of Support for Mortgage Interest \(SMI\) from a benefit into a loan](#)

Further statistics on the numbers in receipt of Support for Mortgage Interest loans can be found via the following link - [Support for Mortgage Interest statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

■ Universal Credit

Justin Madders:

[\[80333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how the actual cost of the implementation of the automated identification process in universal credit compared to estimate of £7.35 million, as stated in evidence to the court in the Johnson litigation.

David Rutley:

The Court of Appeal case was based on our understanding of the High Court's decision with regards to the interpretation of Regulation 54. The Court of Appeal disagreed with the High Court's interpretation of Regulation 54 and replaced it with a judgment of much narrower scope which was capable of implementation.

Costs are not readily identifiable for the implementation of the automated identification process as teams work in an agile way, and make a number of changes to specific parts of the system.

■ Universal Credit: Overpayments

Alan Brown:

[\[80355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2021 to Question 75018 on Universal Credit, how many waivers have been rejected in each respective period.

David Rutley:

The Department is unable to provide this information, as to do so would incur disproportionate costs.

■ Utilities: Billing

Stuart Anderson:

[\[80480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support people in financial hardship with utility bill payments in winter 2021-22.

David Rutley:

The Department for Work and Pensions is providing three primary sources of support with the cost of energy bills this winter - Winter Fuel Payments, Cold Weather Payments, and the Household Support Fund – in addition to more general support, such as Universal Credit.

The aim of the Winter Fuel Payment, which is worth up to £300 per year, is to help older people with the cost of heating their homes in the winter. Over 11 million pensioners benefit from Winter Fuel Payments at an annual cost of £2bn.

The Cold Weather Payment scheme helps vulnerable people in receipt of certain income-related benefits to meet the additional costs of heating during periods of severe cold weather, between 1st November and 31st March. Cold Weather Payments are targeted at those in receipt of eligible benefits with a pension element, or disability component, or where there is a child under five in the household.

Between 1 November 2020 and 31 March 2021 the Government made £98.8 million in payments to those in need.

The Warm Home Discount Scheme supports over 2 million low income and vulnerable customers each year with direct assistance with their energy costs. Energy suppliers provide rebates on energy bills currently worth £140 per household each winter. This year (2021/22), the scheme is projected to be worth £354 million.

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

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Boilers

Judith Cummins:

[\[73885\]](#)

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

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 29 November 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Greg Hands:

The official statistics published to date do not include a breakdown of all voucher applications by type of measure **installed**, but focus on those that are active within the system for work to be completed. **The statistics refer to applications that were submitted to the Green Homes Grant scheme, but for which installation has not yet been completed.**

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

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Hospitals: Construction

Daisy Cooper:

[\[62856\]](#)

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

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 1 November 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Edward Argar:

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

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

Daisy Cooper:

[62858]

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

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 1 November 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Edward Argar:

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

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

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

EDUCATION

■ Initial Teacher Training

The Minister of State for School Standards (Mr Robin Walker): [\[HCWS434\]](#)

Today, I am announcing the publication of the Government's response to the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Market Review report.

The [ITT Market Review report](#) was published in July 2021. The report draws on a strong evidence base and best practice examples to support its 14 recommendations for improving and delivering high-quality teacher training. After its publication, we held a public consultation and stakeholder engagement programme on the Review recommendations to ask for input from ITT providers, schools, teachers and interested bodies. This engagement has been crucial in informing the detail of the Government's response to the review.

The [Government response to the initial teacher training \(ITT\) Market Review report](#) sets out our plans for a new ITT market. These plans are based on many of the Review's recommendations and the best available evidence on the features of world-class training.

Our reforms to the ITT market will deliver consistently high-quality training so that all teachers begin their careers with the knowledge and skills they need to be effective in the classroom. The reforms establish a new set of Quality Requirements for all ITT programmes that lead to qualified teacher status. These will ensure that all ITT providers offer:

- an evidence-based training curriculum that, at a minimum, applies the principles of the [ITT Core Content Framework](#) ;
- intensive training and practice opportunities to students;
- a lead mentor or mentor leadership team to support trainees, with all mentors themselves offered a training curriculum.

When formulating our response, we have fully considered all views and feedback from the consultation and wider stakeholder engagement. Whilst we want the reforms set out in the response implemented as soon as possible, we have listened to the sector and understand that, to ensure success, we need to give schools and ITT providers reasonable time to prepare for implementation. We have therefore decided to extend the implementation timeline by one year, meaning that all ITT programmes leading to QTS will need to comply with the new ITT Quality Requirements from September 2024.

Most of the recommendations proposed in the ITT Market Review have been accepted with some amendments and clarifications based on the feedback received. These amendments include funding to support mentoring requirements, reducing some of the proposed minimum time allocations and giving providers more flexibility in how they deliver the new intensive placement.

We have also accepted the Review recommendation of an accreditation process that will require ITT providers to demonstrate that they meet the quality requirements. An accreditation process is necessary to ensure that all providers are treated fairly and that both new and existing providers meet the new requirements.

We will provide funding to support the implementation of these and further measures outlined in the government response in 2024/25. Additional funding will be subject to future Spending Review outcomes.

The Government is committed to levelling up education standards to help every child reach their full potential. Brilliant teachers are central to this ambition, which is why we are creating a world-class teacher development system, providing teachers and school leaders with evidence-based training and support at every stage of their career .

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Health update

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

[\[HCWS436\]](#)

The government is committed to achieving zero new HIV infections, AIDS and HIV-related deaths in England by 2030. Today I am pleased to announce the publication of a new Action Plan which will drive forward progress towards delivering on this commitment and sets out how we will achieve our interim ambition of an 80% reduction in new infections by 2025. To support this, NHSEI will expand opt-out testing in emergency departments in the highest prevalence local authority areas, a proven effective way to identify new cases, and will invest £20m over the next three years to support this activity. It is timely that we publish our plan shortly ahead of World AIDS Day to underline again our commitment to tackling HIV, show our support for people living with HIV and remember those we have lost to AIDS.

The reduction in HIV transmission in England is a success story. There was a 35% reduction in new HIV diagnoses in England between 2014 and 2019. In 2019 an estimated 94% of people living with HIV had been diagnosed, 98% of those diagnosed were on treatment, and 97% of those on treatment having an undetectable viral load – meaning they cannot pass on the infection.

However, our ambitions are highly stretching and will require a doubling down on existing efforts and the adoption of new strategies to ensure we reach everyone we need to. We will need to maintain the excellent progress made with key groups – gay and bisexual men, younger adults, those in London – and significantly improve diagnoses for other groups. To achieve this, the HIV Action Plan sets out how we will ensure that partners across the health system and beyond maintain and intensify partnership working around four core themes – prevent, test, treat and retain. We will enhance, expand and bring together single elements of evidence-based HIV prevention activities into a comprehensive combination prevention programme. Components include preventing people from acquiring HIV, ensuring those who acquire HIV are diagnosed promptly,

preventing onward transmission from those with diagnosed infection and delivering interventions which aim to improve the health and quality of life of people with HIV.

A national HIV Action Plan Implementation Steering Group, chaired by Kevin Fenton and comprising of all key partners, including the voluntary sector, will ensure we drive forward progress in line with our aims, and we will make an annual report to Parliament on our progress.

I would like to thank Dame Inga Beale, members of the HIV Oversight Group, the Independent HIV Commission, and all those that have helped for their excellent work in supporting the development of our Plan. The Action Plan sets out how we will continue to work together with all those who share our ambition to achieve zero new HIV infections. The publication of the Plan today is an important step towards achieving our goal.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Local Government Update

Minister of State for Equalities and Levelling Up Communities (Kemi Badenoch): **[\[HCWS435\]](#)**

On 25 October 2021, I announced to the House that the Secretary of State was minded to intervene at Slough Borough Council (“the Authority”) and to appoint Commissioners to take over functions associated with financial management and governance, oversight of the collection of revenues and distribution of benefits, and non-executive functions relating to the appointment and dismissal of statutory officers.

At the same time, I sought views on how best to improve political stability in the Authority’s leadership and to move towards a four yearly election cycle.

These proposals followed the publication of an external assurance review, led by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and Jim Taylor, the former Chief Executive of Salford City Council, Trafford Council and Rochdale Borough Council. The review showed that the Authority had failed in its Best Value Duty. This is a requirement set out in the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In addition, the review showed that the financial challenge was acute, and that the Authority could not become financially sustainable without Government support.

The governance element of the Review identified poor practices which had dated as far back as 2011, but which were still occurring today; the Council was unable to resolve such difficulties on its own (p.29). The Council had the third highest level of borrowing per head for councils in England, but there was little evidence of any concerted, strategic, or commercial plan of investment; there was little evidence that the Council understood the financial implications and risks of such borrowing (p.21).

Financial government was poor; the Council was not equipped to undertake pre-decision scrutiny; its budget lacked clear business cases setting out how its planned savings could

be delivered (p.17). There was no significant corporate ownership or understanding of finance; if the senior council senior team and senior members had acted more rigorously, the current financial impact on the Council could have been mitigated (p.18).

As part of my announcement in October, I invited the Authority to make representations about my proposals to formally intervene on or before 5 November 2021. The Authority, its Conservative Councillor Group, an independent Councillor and seven residents made representations. All representations supported the intervention and the proposal to appoint Commissioners. The Authority accepted the findings of the external assurance review, stated that it looked forward to working with Commissioners, and in relation to elections, confirmed that it had established a cross-party working group and planned a consultation. The Conservative Group and the independent Councillor pledged to work with the Commissioners. Residents were universally supportive of the intervention and keen to see real improvement in the Authority's services.

Best Value Intervention in Slough Borough Council

Following consideration of these representations, the Secretary of State has decided to proceed with the proposals announced on 25 October.

The Secretary of State is mindful that the lessons from past interventions suggest that once Commissioners are in post, additional issues can arise. He is therefore directing the Authority to undertake an assessment of the functional capability of all service areas within the next three months, to identify any gaps in capacity and capability, and may expand the scope of the intervention if necessary.

Appointing Commissioners for Slough Borough Council

The Secretary of State has decided to appoint two Commissioners with a proven record of leadership and transformation, strong financial management and governance, and the specific expertise that will be relevant to their functions.

- Max Caller CBE (Lead Commissioner) – Max led the Best Value Inspections at Northamptonshire and Liverpool and was a Commissioner at Tower Hamlets. Max is a former Chief Executive of the London Boroughs of Hackney and Barnet and former Chair of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
- Margaret Lee (Finance Commissioner) – Margaret recently retired from Essex County Council where she held senior finance roles, including the statutory finance officer, and is a member of the London Borough of Croydon Improvement and Assurance Panel.

The Commissioners have been appointed for three years from 1 December 2021 to 30 November 2024, or such earlier or later time as we determine. We are clear that the Directions should operate for as long, and only as long, and only in the form, as necessary.

The Commissioners will be asked to provide their first report within the next three months, with their initial views and an assessment of whether they require further support. If further appointments are necessary, we hope to reflect the diversity of Slough's

population. Further reports will be provided every six months, or as agreed with the Commissioners.

I want to be clear that most decisions will continue to be made by the Authority; the intention being that Commissioners will only use their powers as a last resort if they are dissatisfied with the Authority's improvement processes.

Commissioners will work collaboratively with the Children's Services Commissioner, Trevor Doughty, to make sure that these vital services continue to be delivered effectively and efficiently in line with the Authority's statutory duties. The Children's Services Commissioner will continue to support the Slough Children First company and Slough Borough Council on its important work to continue to improve children's social care services, which are no longer rated 'inadequate'. He will also work with the Council to explore the ideal future scope of services to be delivered by the company, including the recommendation on this in Jim Taylor's report.

Following the recent Ofsted-Care Quality Commission inspection of local services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), the local area must now prepare a Written Statement of Action setting out how it will improve these services. The Department for Education are supporting the Council in this important task, and are considering how to engage and work with the Commissioner team to ensure this work is also prioritised.

I am also asking the Commissioners to support the Authority in relation to the negotiations with the Department for Education on the safety valve intervention programme. The Authority will participate in the programme given the size of its Dedicated Schools Grant deficit. The programme requires collaboration across education and finance leadership for the long-term benefit of children and young people with high needs.

As with other interventions led by my department, the Authority will be directed to meet the costs of the Commissioners. The Government has reviewed the level of fees paid to Commissioners appointed using powers in the Local Government Act 1999 and has determined that they should be uplifted. The fees paid to individuals are published in appointment letters which are available separately on gov.uk. I am assured this provides value for money given the expertise that is being brought, and the scale of the challenge in councils requiring statutory intervention. Given the importance of these roles, my department will also move to a new annual open recruitment process to identify potential candidates for future Commissioner appointments and other non-statutory improvement roles. Further information on this process will be published in due course.

Future of Slough Borough Council

Since the publication of the external assurance review the Authority have updated their financial position. The situation is unprecedented. Commissioners will play an important role in informing Ministers' response to the situation in Slough, including the Council's request for exceptional financial support, and what the right medium-term plan might be for Slough, given the scale of the financial and wider challenges facing the Council.

Conclusion

The Government will continue to work closely with the political, business, and cultural leadership of Slough, and is committed to making sure the residents of Slough have what they need from their local council, including confidence in its service delivery and financial management and governance.

I have published the Directions and Explanatory Memorandum associated with this announcement at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/intervention-at-slough-borough-council>.