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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

#### ■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme: Small Businesses

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[81953\]](#)

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

**Paul Scully:**

As of our final evaluation of the scheme of July 6 2021, 1,357,116 Bounce Back Loans have been offered in England, to the value of £41.47bn. In the North East of England, 48,262 loans were offered to the value of £1,341,695,001.

Across the UK, 2,094,858 applications for a Bounce Back Loan were made; 1,560,309 were successful. We do not hold this data at regional level.

#### ■ Future Fund: Stocks and Shares

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[81957\]](#)

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 the criteria were for converting Future Fund loans into equity shares; and what conditions were associated with those equity shares.

**Paul Scully:**

The Future Fund issued loans under a Convertible Loan Agreement (CLA) on standard terms. This is a public document, available on the British Business Bank's website. Section 5(a) of the CLA sets out the criteria for conversion, which occurs automatically three years after the date of the CLA or earlier in the event of a sale of the company or a funding round. The CLA also defines the conditions associated with the equity shares, which depend on the event that triggered the conversion.

#### ■ Hospitality Industry: Recovery Loan Scheme

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[82022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of hospitality businesses that applied for a loan under the Recovery Loan Scheme were successful in their application in (a) Lewisham Deptford constituency, (b) London and (c) the UK.

**Paul Scully:**

The Recovery Loan Scheme (RLS) is delivered by the British Business Bank (BBB) through commercial lenders. The BBB does not capture application data on the RLS; lenders are required to notify the BBB of RLS facilities that have been offered and drawn.

## ■ Post Offices: ICT

**Peter Grant:** [\[84394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 20 October 2021 to Question 57139, on Post Offices, how many of the applications received after the Post Office's Historical Shortfall Scheme closed on 27 November 2020 have been assessed.

**Paul Scully:**

While Post Office Limited is publicly owned, it operates as an independent business. Decisions on making awards under the Historical Shortfall Scheme are for the Post Office to make.

**Peter Grant:** [\[84395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 20 October 2021 to Question 57139, on Post Offices, how many of the applications received after the Post Office's Historical Shortfall Scheme closed on 27 November 2020 have had an award made from that scheme.

**Peter Grant:** [\[84396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 20 October 2021 to Question 57139, on Post Offices, how many of the applications received after the Post Office's Historical Shortfall Scheme closed on 27 November 2020 have been refused payment from that scheme.

**Paul Scully:**

While Post Office Limited is publicly owned, it operates as an independent business. Decisions on making awards under the Historical Shortfall Scheme are for the Post Office to make.

## ■ Sharing Economy: Conditions of Employment

**Fleur Anderson:** [\[82109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to (a) regulate the gig economy, (b) ensure that gig economy workers are receiving pay for all working time and (c) ensure that unfair dismissals in the gig economy sector are being reduced.

**Paul Scully:**

This Government is clear that that everyone deserves to be treated fairly at work and rewarded for their contribution to the economy, both in terms of fair pay and fair working conditions.

An individual's entitlement to rights at work is determined by their employment status, employee, worker or self-employed. Gig economy workers can be classed under any of these depending on their employment relationship.

Employees are entitled to all rights including being protected against unfair dismissal (subject to qualifying periods) and have responsibilities towards their employer. An

employer needs to have a valid reason and take appropriate steps if they are to dismiss an employee. Employees who consider that their dismissal was unfair can complain to an employment tribunal, generally subject to a qualifying period of two years' service.

Workers have more flexibility over when, how much, and where they work but they are entitled to core protections such as minimum wage and holiday pay. If any worker is concerned they are not being paid at least the minimum wage, they should complain to HMRC who enforce the minimum wage. HMRC consider every complaint they receive, and since 2015 have ordered employers to return £100m to 1 million workers who had been underpaid. We have doubled the budget for minimum wage enforcement since 2015.

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ Veterans: Education and Training

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[82088\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress his Department has made on supporting education and reskilling opportunities for former service personnel in Newport West.

**Leo Docherty:**

This information is not held centrally.

Ensuring veterans enter appropriate post service employment is a top priority for this Government.

Eligible Service personnel and veterans can access three schemes: Standard Learning Credit, Enhanced Learning Credit and Publicly Funded Further and Higher Education schemes, which can help individuals pursue their personal and professional development through education. These schemes are available both during their Service and, for two of the schemes, for between five and ten years after discharge, based on the circumstances of departure.

The next iteration of the Veteran Strategy Action Plan will outline the next steps that this Government will take, including on education and reskilling, to deliver its ambition of making this country the best place in the world to be a veteran.

### ■ Veterans: Mental Health Services

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[82087\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to help improve provision of mental health services for former armed service personnel in Newport West.

**Leo Docherty:**

Our ambition is to ensure that no veteran's request for help will go unanswered. The Prime Minister recently announced an additional £5 million for service charities

following the UK's withdrawal from Afghanistan, which will be used on a range of projects including increasing capacity in mental health support. In March, the government also announced an additional £10 million to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to distribute to charitable projects supporting veterans' mental health needs. This is on top of the annual £10 million awarded to the Trust.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Army: Reorganisation

**John Healey:** [\[83246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 23 of the Future Soldier Guide, which body within his Department will lead the development of the Mercury procurement concept.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Army will lead the development of the Mercury project.

### ■ Clive Barracks

**Jamie Stone:** [\[82047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans his Department has for the future of Clive Barracks.

**Jamie Stone:** [\[82048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans his Department has for the future of Nesscliffe Training Area.

**Jamie Stone:** [\[82049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the impact of the reduction in day-to-day spending on the future viability of (a) Clive Barracks and (b) Nesscliffe Training Area.

**Jeremy Quin:**

In line with the announcement by Secretary of State for Defence on 25 November 2021, I can confirm that, following detailed assessment, the disposal of Clive Barracks will be delayed by four years from 2025 to 2029. Officials will continue to engage with the local authority to release the site for meaningful future use. All sites identified for disposal are maintained to ensure they support military capability and remain safe and legally compliant.

The Ministry of Defence has no plans to stop using Nesscliffe Training Area. In fact, this year has seen investment through the construction of three new carbon efficient accommodation blocks on the site.

**■ Guided Weapons**

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[81880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the initial operating capability is of the Martlet surface to air missile system.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The declaration of the Martlet Initial Operating Capability (IOC) in October 2021 was made following a review of the project to confirm that the system was suitable for service, supportable, and can be deployed from Royal Navy warships to provide a credible deterrence against small surface targets. The system is currently deployed with the HMS Queen Elizabeth Carrier Strike Group and a successful in-service firing from a Wildcat helicopter on that deployment was made prior to IOC being declared.

**■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft**

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[81886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the future attrition rates of F-35 aircraft.

**Jeremy Quin:**

A certain attrition of aircraft is built into the procurement profile. The fleet size assumes a risk of on average 1 aircraft loss every 30,000 hours.

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[82394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has contracted a vessel to help recover the F-35B aircraft that was recently ditched in the Mediterranean Sea.

**James Heapey:**

Ministry of Defence Salvage and Marine Operations (SALMO) have responsibility for the recovery of the F-35B aircraft. SALMO are working with NATO partners and their specialist salvage and recovery expertise to deliver this operation.

**■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft: Accidents**

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[81882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total cost incurred to the public purse, including support costs, has been of the recent ditching of the F-35B aircraft in the Mediterranean Sea.

**James Heapey:**

We are not yet in a position to provide the cost incurred to date of the recent F-35B aircraft crash as recovery is still underway.

**■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft: Procurement**

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[81885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many F-35B aircraft his Department has (a) taken receipt of and (b) on order as at 1 December 2021.



**Jeremy Quin:**

As at 1 December 2021, the Ministry of Defence has taken receipt of 24 F-35B aircraft and a further 24 F-35B are on order.

**■ Military Aircraft: Helicopters****Chris Loder:**[\[83485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential economic impact of the New Medium Helicopter contract on (a) the South West, (b) Dorset and (c) West Dorset constituency.

**Chris Loder:**[\[83486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the potential number of jobs that will be created by the contract for the New Medium Helicopter.

**Jeremy Quin:**

We expect the New Medium Helicopter Procurement to be the subject of Competition. However, at this stage I am not able to comment on the impact of the competition on economic activity or job numbers.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Meetings****Owen Thompson:**[\[84414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2021 to Question 76759 on Ministry of Defence: Meetings, how decisions are taken on whether or not a meeting needs to be minuted.

**Leo Docherty:**

Ministry of Defence private secretaries/officials make decisions on producing minutes based on the content of the discussion during the meeting. In accordance with Defence information and records management policy and guidance, the private secretary/official will be expected to produce minutes of meetings that form part of a regular administrative process, or where discussions cover high-level operational work, and/or when decisions are made. Minutes must reflect the outcomes of meetings concerning substantive issues, between: Ministers and other Ministers; Ministers and officials, including Special Advisers; officials and other officials; other government departments; dignitaries, foreign or otherwise; MPs (other than party political); and private sector organisations.

There is no requirement to produce minutes where the discussion did not meet the criteria described above.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Sewage****Luke Pollard:**[\[82081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much raw sewage is discharged from sewage treatment facilities on the defence estate.

**Jeremy Quin:**

97% of water and wastewater by volume is provided by five service contracts to Defence Estate sites in the United Kingdom. We have been assured by these providers that no raw sewage is discharged from Ministry of Defence sewage treatment facilities on the Defence Estate.

Specifically in relation to the HMNB Devonport the hon. Gentleman may wish to be aware that there is in addition an Environment Agency Permit relating to sewage and wastewater discharge. Defence acts in compliance with appropriate legislation and the Environment Agency requirements.

**Ministry of Defence: Written Questions****Tim Loughton:**[\[84298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to respond to Question 76548, on Ministry of Defence: Stonewall, tabled by the hon. Member for East Worthing and Shoreham.

**Leo Docherty:**

As the hon. Member was advised in my answer to Question 76548, it will take time to collate the information needed to produce the breakdown requested and I will write to you with an answer in due course. I hope to be able to do so later this month.

**RAF Shawbury****Jamie Stone:**[\[82046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans his Department has for the future of RAF Shawbury.

**Jeremy Quin:**

RAF Shawbury will continue to be an essential part of the RAF's training delivery establishments.

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****Events Industry: Insurance****Julie Elliott:**[\[84357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will list the live events that have successfully had their events covered through the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme since it was announced on 5 August 2021.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government recognises the important contribution that the live events sector makes to the UK's culture and economy, and the significant challenges the sector has faced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Live Events Reinsurance Scheme will provide live events across the country - such as music festivals,

conferences and business events with the confidence to plan for future events, and as such will support the UK's post-Covid economic recovery.

We are unable to share commercially sensitive data including the name of events who have secured policies but we can say that a broad range of events located across the UK have purchased cover through this scheme.

The scheme recently welcomed a sixth participating insurer and £800M of cover is available to support the live events sector.

## ■ Internet: Advertising

**Ruth Edwards:**

[84494]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what progress her Department has made on the launch of the Online Advertising Programme.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Online Advertising Programme will be focussing on reviewing the regulatory model for the online advertising sector. My expectation is that we can develop a regulatory framework which is robust, well funded, and able to promote compliance and enforce quick remedial action where required.

Following our initial call for evidence last year, officials have been analysing responses and engaging stakeholders in order to prepare for the consultation launch. My department is committed to launching a consultation on the Online Advertising Programme shortly.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Children's Centres and Family Hubs: Staff

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[84431]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of early years practitioners working in (a) children's centres and (b) family hubs.

**Will Quince:**

Children's Centres are required to provide access to early education and childcare (either by providing services on site or by providing advice and assistance on gaining access to services elsewhere). The majority of children's centres do not provide early education and childcare on site.

In January 2021, there were 2,341 staff working in Sure Start Children's Centres that provided funded early education, as set out in the 'Education provision: children under 5 years of age, January 2021' release, which can be found at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/36b29c63-0881-4bfe-a0e9-ade8580ca511>.

The department does not hold data on the total number of early years practitioners working in children's centres and family hubs.

**■ Coronavirus: Disease Control****Rachael Maskell:**[\[82363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to tackle levels of covid-19 infection among children in primary schools.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The department's priority is to maximise the number of children and young people in face-to-face education or childcare. We have several measures in place to reduce transmission across schools, colleges and nurseries.

Following our rollout of around 300,000 CO2 monitors, schools are finding the monitors helpful to manage ventilation and, in most schools, colleges and nurseries, existing ventilation measures are sufficient. In primary schools, the department recommends that face coverings should be worn by staff and visitors in communal areas.

We are continuing to provide lateral flow device (LFD) test kits for all primary school staff, but we do not advise regular asymptomatic testing of primary aged children. Where cases are high, local health teams can agree with primary schools to advise their staff and students who are identified by NHS Test & Trace as close contacts to undertake daily LFD testing. Testing of primary school children is left to parental discretion and test kits can be accessed via gov.uk or local pharmacies.

**■ Disability: Social Services****Alexander Stafford:**[\[82126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress his Department has made in reducing the backlog in disabled children's social care services.

**Will Quince:**

Social care services, including those for disabled children and their families, are provided on the basis of an individual assessment of each child and family's needs.

The department has not conducted an assessment of national waiting times for children's social care services. The government believes it is right for local authorities, who know their areas' needs best, to determine what services are required locally, including disabled children's social care services.

This year councils have access to £51.3 billion to deliver their core services, including a £1.7 billion grant for social care. The government has also given over £6 billion in unringfenced funding directly to councils to support them with the immediate and longer-term impacts of COVID-19 spending pressures, including children's services.

The department will continue to work with other government departments, including the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to ensure the needs of children's services are reflected.

In addition to statutory services, the department is providing £27.3 million to the Family Fund in the 2021-22 financial year to support over 60,000 families on low

incomes raising children and young people with disabilities or serious illnesses. Grants can be used for a range of purposes, including family breaks.

## ■ Hearing Impairment: Teachers

**Fleur Anderson:** [\[82112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will increase the number of teachers of the deaf.

**Will Quince:**

Over 41,000 new trainee teachers were recruited to start training in 2020/21. This is 23% more than in academic year 2019/20.

The department is determined that all children and young people, including those who are deaf or have a hearing impairment, receive the support they need to succeed in their education. It is a legal requirement for qualified teachers of classes of pupils with sensory impairments to hold the relevant mandatory qualification (MQSI). To offer MQSIs, providers must be approved by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education.

It is the responsibility of local authorities, schools, and colleges to commission appropriately qualified staff to support the education of children and young people in their area.

As a result of the Spending Review settlement, the department will make significant investment to ensure all children receive the support they need. This includes:

- An additional £4.7 billion for the core schools' revenue budget by financial year 2024-25, including an additional £1.6 billion for schools and high needs in 2022-23, on top of the funding we announced last summer.
- £2.6 billion over the next three years to deliver new places and improve existing provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities or who require alternative provision.

## ■ Schools: Sports

**Stephen McPartland:** [\[84349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to announce future plans for primary PE and sport premium funding.

**Will Quince:**

The department is considering arrangements for the primary PE and sport premium for the 2022-23 academic year and beyond and will confirm the position as early as possible in the new year.

## ■ Schools: Uniforms

**Justin Tomlinson:**

[\[83356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to (a) encourage more academies to adopt school uniforms and (b) make school uniforms more affordable.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The department sets out in statutory guidance that it strongly encourages schools to have a uniform and recognises the valuable role that uniforms can play in promoting the ethos of a school, setting an appropriate tone for education and providing a sense of belonging and identity.

It is for the governing body of a school (or the academy trust, in the case of academies) to decide whether there should be a school uniform, and if so, what it should be.

The government published statutory guidance on the cost of school uniforms on 19 November 2021, to ensure the cost of school uniforms is reasonable and secures the best value for money for parents. The department's guidance states that schools should keep the use of branded items to a minimum and should ensure that their supplier arrangements give the highest priority to cost and value for money. The guidance also requires schools to ensure that second-hand uniforms are available for parents to acquire.

The department's statutory guidance on the cost of school uniform can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cost-of-school-uniforms/cost-of-school-uniforms>.

## ■ Special Educational Needs

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[82125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the size of backlog in Education, Health and Care Plan assessments.

**Will Quince:**

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Regulations 2014 make clear that local authorities must complete an education, health and care plan (EHCP) assessment within 20 weeks from when the request is received, unless certain prescribed exceptional circumstances that are set out in paragraph 9:42 of the SEND Code of Practice apply.

The department does not collect data on the backlog of EHCP assessments.

The department uses data to monitor local authority performance and has been supporting local authorities to meet their statutory duties for SEND, including by providing challenge and support to those local authorities where there are long-standing delays. Additionally, because of circumstances relating to the COVID-19 outbreak, the department is carrying out monthly surveys of local authority performance. Each year, we also deliver a training programme to local authorities,

health and social care staff on their statutory duties for EHCP assessments, as well as funding projects to support children with SEND. The department also collects data, published annually, on the numbers of EHCP needs assessment requests, numbers of plans issued and timeliness. These data can be found at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>.

The latest data show that there were 76,000 initial requests for an EHCP needs assessment during 2020 and 60,100 new EHCPs issued. Of the 60,100 new EHCPs made during the 2020 calendar year (excluding cases where exceptions apply), 58.0% were issued within the 20 week time limit.

Furthermore, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) continue with their full inspection programme and our team of SEND advisers and colleagues in NHS England are continuing to provide support and challenge to help improve performance. Depending on the underlying issues that each authority faces, such as those relating to EHCP assessments, we commission specialist and regional support from our delivery partners or facilitate/fund peer to peer support. The department has commissioned the CQC and Ofsted, with the support of the Department of Health and Social Care, to develop a new area SEND inspection framework and are in discussion on timings that align with any recommendations from the SEND Review. It remains our priority that local areas provide the right services at the right time for children and young people with SEND.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Agriculture: Methane

**Dr Alan Whitehead:** [\[80187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to encourage UK farmers to invest in on-farm methane reduction.

**Dr Alan Whitehead:** [\[80192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to reduce rural methane emissions from farms.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Greenhouse gas emissions from UK agriculture are predominantly associated with methane and nitrous oxide. The UK has a strong record on reducing emissions from methane, one of the main greenhouse gases warming our planet, with around 13% of methane emissions cut from the agricultural sectors compared to 1990 levels. Since 1990 we are now producing a litre of milk with 21% less GHG emissions. However, we are not resting on this progress, and we will continue to take action to reduce UK methane emissions even further.

For example, livestock feed additives with methane inhibiting properties have the potential to reduce emissions, especially from housed cattle. Whilst this is an

emerging technology, the Government is actively investigating the promising role these products may have in delivering emissions savings in the medium term.

As announced at COP26, the UK is also proud to be one of the first signatories of The Global Methane Pledge, a commitment to take voluntary actions to reduce global methane emissions by at least 30% by 2030, against 2020 levels. More broadly our recently published Net Zero Strategy outlined our commitment for 75% of farmers in England to be engaged in low carbon practices by 2030, rising to 85% by 2035.

The Government will support the agricultural sector to reduce all emissions through the schemes set out in the Agricultural Transition Plan. We are introducing three schemes that reward environmental benefits: the Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery. Together, these schemes are intended to provide a powerful vehicle for achieving the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan and our commitment to net zero emissions by 2050, while supporting our rural economy.

Our plans include a range of policies and actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture. For example, our recently launched Sustainable Farming Incentive standards for soils can help create conditions for farmers to reduce the requirement to apply mineral fertilisers, so helping reduce emissions of nitrous oxide. In the future we are intending to introduce a Standard for Nutrient Management which will further incentivise reductions in the application of mineral fertilisers.

## ■ Carbon Emissions: Labelling

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[84318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with Departmental colleagues on the potential merits of introducing carbon labelling for products sold in the UK.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Specifically on food, although there are currently no legal requirements to display information stating the carbon emissions of food products, we are keen to work with industry to help reduce environmental impacts across the food system. This includes providing such information clearly to consumers where this is effective, without creating unnecessary burdens, costs or time-lags.

We have worked with The Competition and Markets authority to input into their guidance for businesses when making environmental claims and are liaising with the Environment Agency on their SEEBEYOND project which is looking at the standardisation of metrics in the food and drink sector.

We support the work of WRAP, who convene the Courtauld 2030 voluntary agreement. Courtauld's work includes agreeing a common set of emission factors and reviewing the pathway to robust data for supply chain emissions and governance.



We want to empower consumers with more effective information to help them make healthier, greener, and more sustainable choices in their diet. As part of the Government's Food Strategy, we are reviewing how food information can be improved so consumers can make more informed decisions whilst maintaining freedom of choice.

Outside of food, within the Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, the government committed to exploring a range of policy options that can increase overall demand for low emissions industrial products, including product labelling.

The Government has committed to developing detailed policy proposals in this area, beginning with a call for evidence, which will be published soon. The call for evidence will investigate a range of issues, including how low emissions products can be defined and the implementation of policy levers such as emissions labelling for industrial products.

#### ■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: York

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[81994\]](#)

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

**Victoria Prentis:**

Defra has one of its four core hubs in York which is home to core department staff and many of our arm's length bodies, including the Animal and Plant Health Agency, Rural Payments Agency, Marine Management Organisation and the Environment Agency. In September 2021 Defra had 875 civil servants in York, including 539 from the core department. This equates to around 8.8% of all our core Defra staff.

As announced on 19 November 2021 Defra is working to increase the number of roles outside London, including moving more to York. This will help deliver the Government's places for growth programme, which is working to move 22,000 civil service roles out of London by 2030.

#### ■ Floods: Northwich

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[82065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support representatives of Cheshire West and Chester Council in their investigations into the flooding in Northwich town centre.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Environment Agency (EA) worked closely with Cheshire West and Chester Council in the development of the Northwich Flood Risk Management Scheme, as a key delivery partner on the project, which was completed in 2017. Following the flooding in October 2019, the EA also worked with the council and water company on contingency plans and had contingencies in place prior to Storm Christoph.

Storm Christoph was the largest event experienced in Cheshire since records began, resulting in significant foul and surface water flooding in Northwich Town Centre and to communities across the borough.

After the event, the EA initiated a collaborative working group with United Utilities and the council to establish a timeline of the flooding in the town centre and to help investigate the sources of flooding and support the Section 19 investigations. The focus has been on mitigation, with the result being an upscaled multi-agency contingency plan now in place for the winter ahead.

The council set up a Flood Risk Action Scrutiny group of councillors, with the primary focus being on Northwich town centre. EA staff attended these meetings on request from the council in response to the councillors' questions to cover issues relevant to the EA, including main river maintenance, warnings, community resilience and operations.

The Government acknowledges the significant impact that climate change is likely to have, and is indeed already having, on the frequency and severity of flooding. Tackling climate change and ensuring that communities across the UK are resilient to its impacts is a Government priority. That is why we have committed to invest £5.2 billion in flooding and coastal erosion over 2021-27.

## ■ Food

**Ben Bradley:** [\[82063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Government plans to publish its response to the National Food Strategy.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The forthcoming Government Food Strategy is a once in a generation opportunity to create a food system that feeds our nation today and protects it for tomorrow. It will build on existing work across Government and identify new opportunities to make the food system healthier, more sustainable, more resilient, and more accessible for those across the UK. We will also look to drive growth and innovation across the agri-food chain and set a direction for key players within the food system.

The Government will consider the evidence of Henry Dimbleby's independent review throughout the development of the Food Strategy.

The Food Strategy will be published in early 2022.

**Dan Carden:** [\[84455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with Ministers in (a) the Department of Health and Social Care, (b) Cabinet Office, (c) Department for International Trade, (d) Department for Education and (e) other Government departments on the (i) recommendations of the National Food Strategy and (ii) development of the Government Food Strategy.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The forthcoming Government Food Strategy is a once in a generation opportunity to create a food system that feeds our nation today and protects it for tomorrow. It will cover the entire food system from farm to fork, building on work already underway in the Agriculture Act, Fisheries Act, and Environment Bill as well as docking into wider Government priorities, including Net Zero, 25 Year Environment Plan, and Build Back Greener. It will also consider the evidence of Henry Dimbleby's independent review of the food system.

Defra is therefore working very closely with all other relevant Departments on the Food Strategy – at official and Ministerial levels - to identify new opportunities to make the food system healthier, more sustainable, more resilient, and more accessible for those across the UK.

**Dan Carden:**[\[84456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to hold a public consultation on the Government Food Strategy White Paper after its publication.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The forthcoming Government Food Strategy is a once in a generation opportunity to create a food system that feeds our nation today and protects it for tomorrow. It will build on existing work across Government and identify new opportunities to make the food system healthier, more sustainable, more resilient, and more accessible for those across the UK.

Defra is committed to consulting stakeholders on any specific policies that affect them that are announced in or around the Food Strategy. Furthermore, in developing the Government Food Strategy, Defra is committed to listening to opinions from stakeholders across the entirety of the food system. We are speaking with a wide range of external and internal stakeholders to identify any policy gaps or potential options to transform the food system, using existing engagement forums and new relationships. In developing the Food Strategy, we are also considering Henry Dimbleby's independent review of the food system, which was underpinned by a Defra Call for Evidence and active citizen engagement.

**Jo Gideon:**[\[84496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he will publish the Government's response to recommendations of the National Food Strategy.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Government will publish a Food Strategy in early 2022. This will consider the evidence of Henry Dimbleby's review of the food system and build on existing work across Government to identify new opportunities to make the food system healthier, more sustainable, more resilient, and more accessible for those across the UK.

**■ Rivers: Sewage****Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[81928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the financial impact on riverside SMEs of local sewage pollution.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[82069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the financial impact on small and local business of rivers, lakes and seas being unswimmable as a result of sewage pollution.

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[82369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential financial impact to small and local business based near beaches and rivers of days rendered unswimmable as a result of sewage pollution.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government has not made an assessment of the impact on riverside SMEs of local sewage pollution.

However, the Government has been clear that the water industry's levels of sewage discharges from storm overflows are unacceptable and has made tackling this a priority. We are the first Government to take concerted action to tackle this historic infrastructure issue, including through the Environment Act. The provisions in the Environment Act place a duty on the water industry to achieve a progressive reduction in the adverse impacts caused by storm overflows. These include adverse impacts on public health.

The Government will publish a report before 1 September 2022 on the actions necessary, including the costs and benefits of the elimination of storm overflows. The report will consider a range of benefits, including those to business.

**■ Rivers: Standards****Luke Pollard:** [\[82072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the potential number of rivers that will achieve good ecological status in each of the next five years.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Environment Agency sets objectives for the ecological status of England's water bodies, including rivers, and sets out the programmes of measures to achieve those objectives in our river basin management plans. These plans are updated on a six-yearly cycle. The objectives for water bodies over the next six-year cycle (2021-2027) are contained in the updated draft river basin management plans which are currently available for statutory public consultation:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/draft-river-basin-management-plans-2021>

## ■ Sewage: Rivers

**Luke Pollard:** [\[82074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much raw sewage has been discharged into chalk streams in the last 12 months.

**Rebecca Pow:**

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

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

## ■ Sewage: Waste Disposal

**Luke Pollard:** [\[82070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what baseline his Department will use to determine progressive reductions in sewage discharges from combined sewer overflows.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[82071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the requirements in the Environment Act 2021 for water companies to reduce the impact of sewage discharges from storm overflows and show a reduction in sewage overflows, (a) in what format and (b) with what frequency will data on progressive reduction in sewage discharges from combined sewer overflows.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[82077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the timescale is for water companies to publish information on progressive reduction of raw sewage discharges under the Environment Act 2021.

**Rebecca Pow:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 1 December 2021, PQ [82067](#).

The Government has made tackling sewage overflows a priority and we are the first Government to take concerted action to tackle this historic infrastructure issue.

Earlier this year the Government published a new draft set of strategic priorities for the water industry's financial regulator Ofwat. In this publication Government set out its expectation that water companies must take steps to " *significantly reduce the frequency and volume of sewage discharges from storm overflows.*"

The Environment Act then placed this direction on a statutory footing, setting a duty for water companies to achieve a progressive reduction in the adverse impacts of discharges from storm overflows. Defra intends to set out the level of ambition expected by this in due course.

The Water Industry Act, as amended by the Environment Act, will include a duty on water companies to publish near real time information (within one hour) of the commencement of an overflow, its location and when it ceases, and to monitor the water quality upstream and downstream of a storm overflow or a sewage disposal works. These requirements will be part of the way we measure and evaluate the reduction in harm caused by storm overflows and the Government will bring forward implementing legislation in due course.

**Luke Pollard:**

**[82076]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has conducted or commissioned research on levels of public support for (a) action to stop raw sewage discharge and (b) potential increases in water bills arising from that action.

**Rebecca Pow:**

As part of the Storm Overflows Evidence Project commissioned by the Storm Overflows Taskforce, the consultants undertook a public attitudes survey on the issue of sewage discharges. This independent research project assessed the potential impact on rivers of reducing storm overflows and the related costs. The report, conducted by Stantec, has now been published on gov.uk and is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/storm-overflows-evidence-project>. The report is the first assessment of its kind ever conducted. The Government, together with the Storm Overflows Taskforce, will take account of its findings in future impact assessments.

Ofwat, the independent economic regulator, is responsible for ensuring that water companies charge fair prices and deliver quality services through the Price Review. As part of this process, water companies must engage with their customers and obtain broad customer support when developing their plans and making decisions around future investments.

## ■ Water

**Luke Pollard:**

**[82078]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his departments consultation entitled Water industry: government's strategic policy statement for Ofwat, which closed on 15 October 2021, if he will take steps to consult with hon. Members before the publication of the strategic policy statement.

**Rebecca Pow:**

A draft of the Strategic Policy Statement for Ofwat (SPS) was published for consultation on 22 July 2021. The consultation was open to the public until 15 October 2021. The Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) provided a response to the

consultation. I gave oral evidence to the EAC's Water Quality in Rivers inquiry on 15 September 2021, where the SPS was discussed. A draft of the strategic policy statement will be laid in Parliament in the New Year for a 40 day period, where it will then directly inform the Price Review process, including Ofwat's draft methodology due to be published in summer 2022.

## ■ Water Charges

**Luke Pollard:**

**[82075]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of requirements under the Environment Act 2021 on the customers water bills.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra published an impact assessment on 20 March 2020 ([Environment Act 2021 publications - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)) setting out the cost / benefit assessment of the Environment Act 2021 measures as were laid out in the then-draft Bill introduced in January 2020.

Several provisions in the Act will, however, be commenced by Regulations and detailed impact assessments will be undertaken as part of the development of those Regulations. These will include consideration of the impacts on customers.

The Defra-led Storm Overflows Taskforce has published a [Storm Overflows Evidence Project](#) on the costs, benefits and feasibility of different options for eliminating harm from storm overflows. The independent research conducted by Stantec presents a detailed overview of potential approaches that will act as an important evidence base for Government action. This is the first comprehensive analysis of its kind and the Government will take account of its findings in future impact assessments.

## ■ Water Companies: Fines

**Luke Pollard:**

**[82079]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much the Exchequer has received in fines from water companies since 2010.

**Rebecca Pow:**

In the period from 2010 to date, the Treasury has received about £143 million from imposed fines on water companies. These have been the result of Environment Agency prosecutions and Ofwat enforcement investigations.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Developing Countries: Education****Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[84321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to ensure that (a) girls and (b) girl-led groups are partners in initiatives on girls' education supported by the UK.

**Vicky Ford:**

We used our Presidency of the G7 in May to agree a leader-level Girls' Education Declaration prioritising girls' education in the recovery from the pandemic. The Girls' Education Declaration commits the G7 to work with developing country partners, multilateral institutions, civil society, girl-led groups and youth leaders, to remove the obstacles to education that stand in girls' way and empower girls to lead change, including in peacebuilding and efforts to tackle the climate crisis. The Prime Minister also launched the Girls' Education Action Plan in May which commits the UK, through our Special Envoy, to engaging with youth activists and encouraging their leadership as a powerful catalyst for change.

Our flagship 'Girls' Education Challenge' supports girls to gain the critical skills needed to make the most of their potential. For example, in Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe we are working with CAMFED to support over 269,000 girls to get a high quality education and thousands of learner guides, graduates from the programme, to lead initiatives to support girls' education within their communities and join forces with district and national authorities to drive change at a wider scale, ultimately re-setting the context for future generations of girls.

■ **Ethiopia: Armed Conflict****Stephen Farry:**[\[81154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to support diplomatic efforts to end the conflict in Ethiopia.

**Vicky Ford:**

We are extremely concerned by the ongoing conflict in Ethiopia. We continue to engage with all parties to the conflict and have regular discussions with them. We are fully supportive of the efforts of the African Union (AU) High Representative for the Horn of African Region, Olusegun Obasanjo, to find a path to meaningful negotiations. I spoke with him on 4 November to discuss the situation and make clear our strong support, and also spoke with AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Bankole, on 8 November. We also supported efforts by US Secretary of State Blinken to resolve the conflict in Ethiopia on his visit to Kenya on 17 November and his call for an unconditional ceasefire in Ethiopia.

I also spoke with State Minister Redwan on 18 November, stressing the need for all parties to the conflict to engage in meaningful talks, lift the blockade on aid, and urged him to end the mobilisation of civilians and ethnically targeted arrests. I have



continued to emphasise the need for a ceasefire and a humanitarian corridor through recent calls with my international counterparts, including those from Kenya, Ethiopia, the UN A3, and the African Union.

The Foreign Secretary 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.

## ■ Nigeria: Christianity

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[84313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his counterpart in the US Administration on the decision to amend its list of countries of particular concern to exclude Nigeria in the context of continuing reports of persecution of Christians in that country.

**Vicky Ford:**

The removal of Nigeria from the list of Violators of Religious Freedom is a matter for the Government of the United States of America alone.

The Government is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. This is one of the Government's longstanding human rights priorities. Through our co-founding membership of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance, we work with other countries, including the United States of America, to advocate for the rights of those who face discrimination or persecution because of their religion or belief.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Health Services

**Alex Sobel:** [\[84462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that NICE guidelines on treating and caring for people with ME are implemented across the NHS effectively, including within GP surgeries, hospital treatment and long term care.

**Alex Sobel:** [\[84463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance is provided to medical practitioners on applying gradual exercise management and other non physical treatments to patients with ME.

**Gillian Keegan:**

While the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guidelines are not mandatory, we expect the healthcare system to take them into account when

designing services to meet the needs of their local population and to implement guidelines over time. NICE is working with system partners to support the implementation of the guideline for myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS).

The guideline recommends that any programme based on fixed incremental increases in physical activity or exercise, such as graded exercise therapy, should not be offered for the treatment of ME/CFS. Any physical activity or exercise programmes should only be considered for people with ME/CFS in specific circumstances and should begin by establishing the person's physical activity capability at a level that does not worsen their symptoms. The guideline also contains recommendations on energy management, rest and sleep, pain, medication for symptom management, dietary management and supportive cognitive behavioural therapy.

## ■ Coronavirus

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[83431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timeframe is for knowing the transmissibility rate of the omicron variant of covid-19.

**Maggie Throup:**

*[Holding answer 2 December 2021]:* It is likely to be several weeks before a robust analysis on the transmissibility rate of the Omicron COVID-19 variant is available.

## ■ Coronavirus: Children

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[82056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish data on the number of covid-19 hospitalisations among children aged 0 to 18 in (a) 2020 and (b) 2021 to date.

**Maggie Throup:**

This information is not collected in the format requested. Data on hospital admissions for COVID-19 in children is published monthly by NHS England where the available age groups are 0 to five years old and six to 17 years old.

However, between 19 March and 31 December 2020, 929 children aged 0 to 17 years old were hospitalised with COVID-19 and 3,042 children aged 0 to 17 years old between 1 January 2021 and 3 November 2021.

## ■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[83497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether local authorities will be permitted to carryover remaining Contain Outbreak Management Fund allocations into 2022-23 to enable the continuation of contact tracing.

**Maggie Throup:**

*[Holding answer 2 December 2021]:* The current terms of the grant state that the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) must be spent within this financial year. No decisions have been made regarding any remaining funding in 2021/22 and we are currently assessing future use of the COMF.

We continue to work with local authorities to ensure that the Fund delivers the objectives of Local Outbreak Management Plans to best support their communities.

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[83498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to allocate additional Contain Outbreak Management Funding to local authorities for carrying out contact tracing in 2022-23.

**Maggie Throup:**

*[Holding answer 2 December 2021]:* We are currently assessing the future provision of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). We continue to work with local authorities to ensure that the 2021/22 COMF delivers the objectives of Local Outbreak Management Plans to best support their communities.

**■ Coronavirus: Disease Control****Rachael Maskell:** [\[72521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the transmission of covid-19 in areas that have high levels of both vaccination and covid-19 infections.

**Maggie Throup:**

*[Holding answer 16 November 2021]:* 'COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan 2021' outlines our plan to reduce infection rates. This includes maximising vaccine uptake among those eligible and booster vaccines for vulnerable adults, supporting the National Health Service and social care, identifying and isolating positive cases, providing guidance and pursuing an international approach.

We are working with local areas to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The Contain Framework sets out a range of measures available for local areas, such as support for an enhanced response in areas with challenging disease situations. This includes national funding for local communications, targeted surge testing and vaccination logistical support.

**■ Coronavirus: Screening****Cat Smith:** [\[75014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many private providers of covid-19 testing have been removed from the Government's list of accredited private testing providers.

**Maggie Throup:**

In total 169 providers have been removed from the Government's list of private testing providers.

**■ Coronavirus: Vaccination****Dan Jarvis:**[\[74994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure UK citizens who have received their Covid-19 vaccinations in New Zealand are able to receive an NHS Covid Pass.

**Dan Jarvis:**[\[74995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to extend the pilot scheme launched on 30 September 2020 in England for residents vaccinated abroad to request that their vaccines are uploaded to the national database to include UK citizens vaccinated in New Zealand.

**Maggie Throup:**

*[Holding answer 18 November 2021]:* The pilot scheme will be deployed nationally in December, supported by online bookings and further vaccination sites. We are working to understand which non-Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency-approved equivalent vaccines we would be confident to recognise in the NHS COVID Pass. Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Moderna and Janssen vaccines administered in New Zealand recorded with the national service will be able to generate a NHS COVID Pass shortly.

**Nick Gibb:**[\[80898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of 12- to 15-year-olds have had their covid-19 vaccination in (a) England, (b) West Sussex and (c) Bognor Regis and Littlehampton.

**Maggie Throup:**

As of 25 November, in England, 1,165,483 or 40.5% of 12 to 15 year olds and 19,615 or 46.7% of 12 to 15 year olds in West Sussex have received a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

Data is not available for the number of vaccinations given to those aged 12 to 15 years old in Bognor Regis and Littlehampton.

**Jesse Norman:**[\[80972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of covid-19 vaccines in Herefordshire.

**Maggie Throup:**

*[Holding answer 2 December 2021]:* Herefordshire has one of the highest vaccination rates in the country, with 94.5% of all over 50 year olds and those in at-risk groups having received at least one dose, 92.6% a second dose and 60.2% a booster, as of 26 November 2021.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is ensuring it has the staff and volunteer capacity available to deliver additional vaccine appointments to meet demand. This includes a recruitment campaign for trained clinical staff to assist the programme.

**Jim Shannon:**

**[80999]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to help increase take up of the covid-19 booster vaccination.

**Maggie Throup:**

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

There are more clinics in England delivering COVID-19 vaccines including pharmacies, general practitioner practices and other community sites. Hundreds of walk-in sites are available to allow people to receive their booster dose without an appointment. The National Booking Service was also updated in November to allow those eligible for a booster vaccine to pre-book five months after their second dose.

**Dr Ben Spencer:**

**[81140]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the (a) level of covid-19 vaccine hesitancy amongst women and girls of childbearing age due to concerns around fertility and menstrual disturbance and (b) effectiveness of the Government's strategy to tackle that hesitancy.

**Maggie Throup:**

The latest assessment on COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in the United Kingdom is available at the following link:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/datasets/coronavirusandvaccinehesitancygreatbritain>

The latest data published in August 2021 shows 4% of adults reported vaccine hesitancy in the UK. In females aged between 16 to 29 years old, hesitancy increased to 9%, whilst for females aged between 30 to 49 years old vaccine hesitancy was at 6%. This is compared to 19% in females aged 16 to 29 years old and 14% for those aged 20 to 49 years old in February 2021.

Whilst vaccine hesitancy has decreased, the Department continues to work closely with our partners to address concerns around pregnancy, breastfeeding and fertility. Our vaccine toolkits for stakeholders, partners and employers provides information on these concerns, and we have shared case stories of women of childbearing age who have received the vaccine before, during or after pregnancy to reassure women who may still be concerned. We have also worked with trusted sources to publicly address and reassure the concerns of younger women. At a local level we have supported

webinars and engagement sessions specifically focused on women's vaccines concerns and tailored to specific demographic groups.

**Kate Osamor:** [\[82034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of people who are housebound who were eligible for a covid-19 vaccination received the vaccination in each month from January 2021 to November 2021.

**Kate Osamor:** [\[82036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time was for people who are housebound to receive their covid-19 vaccinations in each month from January 2021 to November 2021.

**Maggie Throup:**

The data requested is not held centrally in the format requested. Identifying those who are housebound is managed at a local level as it requires access to more detailed patient information.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[83430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he will know the efficacy of vaccines against the omicron variant of covid-19.

**Maggie Throup:**

*[Holding answer 2 December 2021]:* The UK Health Security Agency will evaluate the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines against the Omicron variant as soon as sufficient cases have arisen through pillar 2 community testing. Generally, this is approximately 500 cases. If an outbreak occurs in a closed setting, outbreak vaccine effectiveness investigations may be possible.

International evidence on vaccine effectiveness may also emerge at an earlier date, if the number of cases is greater overseas.

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[84489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2021 to Question 76833 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, how patients who have received a vaccination overseas can contact the National Immunisation Management Service in order to create a NIMS record.

**Maggie Throup:**

People residing in England and vaccinated overseas with Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Moderna and Janssen vaccines can now be given access to an NHS Covid Pass. Those individuals should contact their general practitioner or 119 to book an appointment in a regional vaccination centre to record their vaccination through the National Immunisation Management Service and create an NHS COVID Pass.

There are currently seven sites capable of reviewing vaccination evidence with 13 further sites pending.

**Daisy Cooper:**[\[84490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2021 to Question 76833 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, what guidance his Department has been provided to (a) GPs, (b) vaccination centres and (c) 119 call handlers on referring those who have received an eligible overseas vaccination to the National Immunisation Management Service.

**Maggie Throup:**

To support the new validation service, vaccination centres have been given training, guidance and instructions on the process. General practitioners will receive information about referring eligible individuals to the service when the pilot scheme is transferred to a fully live service.

The service management team at 119 have been briefed on the process. As the pilot to date has been limited to a closed cohort of known cases, currently 119 call handlers are unable to refer individuals to the service. Call handlers will be able to make these referrals once the national service has been launched and callers will be guided to use the national booking service.

**Daisy Cooper:**[\[84491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2021 to Question 76833, on Coronavirus: Vaccination, whether he plans to extend the system for recording overseas vaccinations for UK residents who have received (a) Pfizer, (b) AstraZeneca, (c) Moderna and (d) Janssen vaccines in countries other than (i) the United States of America, (ii) Iceland, (iii) Norway, (iv) Liechtenstein, (v) Switzerland, (vi) Australia, (vii) Canada and (viii) the EU.

**Maggie Throup:**

From 25 November, people residing in England and vaccinated overseas with Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Moderna and Janssen vaccines can now be certified using the NHS COVID Pass. Individuals should contact their general practitioner or 119 for an appointment at a regional vaccination centre to record their vaccinations in the National Immunisation Management Service. Further expansion of the service is planned in due course.

**■ Dental Services: Lancaster and Fleetwood****Cat Smith:**[\[81042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help improve access to NHS dentists for people in the Lancaster and Fleetwood constituency.

**Maria Caulfield:**

National Health Service dental practices are currently prioritising urgent care, vulnerable groups and children, followed by overdue routine care. New infection prevention and control guidance was published on 24 November, which will support NHS dentistry to provide more appointments whilst keeping patients, dentists, and

their teams safe. There are 56 urgent dental centres in Lancashire and South Cumbria which patients can contact directly via the local dental advice triage helpline.

#### ■ Department of Health and Social Care: York

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[82002\]](#)

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

**Edward Argar:**

As part of the Budget in 2020, the Government committed to relocating 22,000 Civil Service roles from Greater London to locations across the United Kingdom, 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 have the skills, transport links and capacity to meet our needs, as well as ensuring locations are suitable for the long-term success and sustainability of the Civil Service.

#### ■ Drugs: Death

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[66230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to reduce the number of drug-related deaths in the UK.

**Maggie Throup:**

The Government will publish its long-term drug strategy by the end of this year. The strategy will be informed by Dame Carol Black's independent review of drugs, outlining actions to reduce drug-related deaths.

#### ■ Hospitals: Discharges

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[82061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will update the discharge to assess guidance for hospitals to ensure that the executive lead for hospital discharge has specific responsibility for carers.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We recognise the important role that the executive lead can play in provide strategic oversight of the discharge to assess process. Carers should be supported throughout the hospital discharge process. This includes determining if they are able to provide care and supplying information and advice for further support when the patient is discharged.

Updated hospital discharge guidance is due to be published in spring 2022. We are co-producing this guidance with carers' organisations to ensure rights and protections for carers throughout the discharge process.



## ■ Maternity Services: Standards

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[82372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that local maternity units provide expectant mothers with the best possible care.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The NHS Maternity Transformation Programme is delivering measures to ensure that local maternity units provide expectant mothers with the best possible care. This includes £52 million to accelerate the digital maternity programme to ensure everyone will have access to their maternity notes and information electronically by 2023/24. Midwives, general practitioners and other clinicians caring for a pregnant woman will also have easy access to information. This will improve the experience for women by reducing the burden of repeating information to each healthcare professional throughout their pregnancy and ensure the best health and care outcomes by preventing important details from being missed.

A further £6.8 million has been provided to support Local Maternity Systems to implement equity and equality action plans and targeted and enhanced Continuity of Carer to improve safe outcomes for mothers and babies from black, Asian and mixed ethnic groups and those living in the most deprived areas. In addition, local and regional leadership is being strengthened with the majority of regional obstetricians and deputy regional chief midwives' roles now filled. The Maternity Safety Support Programme works proactively with identified trusts to advise and support them to improve their Care Quality Commission rating or address any other areas of concerns raised by other stakeholders.

## ■ Mental Health Services: Children

**Mr Virendra Sharma:**

[\[84319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of children awaiting mental health treatment on the NHS.

**Mr Virendra Sharma:**

[\[84320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, (a) how many children are waiting for emergency mental health treatment and (b) what steps he will take to help those children access that treatment as soon as possible.

**Gillian Keegan:**

No such estimate has been made, as there is not currently a waiting time standard for children's mental health services.

However, NHS England and NHS Improvement have consulted on the potential to introduce five new waiting time standards. These include urgent referrals to community based mental health crisis services being seen within 24 hours from referral and very urgent referrals being seen within four hours. Additionally, children and young people presenting to community-based mental health services, should start to receive care within four weeks from referral. This consultation closed on 1

September 2021 and the outcomes will inform a recommendation to the Government in due course on whether and how to implement these new access standards.

We are investing an additional £79 million in 2021/22 to expand children's and young people's mental health services, including urgent or emergency care. The funding will allow around 22,500 more children and young people to access community health services, as well as accelerating the coverage of mental health support teams in schools and colleges. In addition, for those with severe needs or in crisis, all National Health Service mental health providers have established all-age 24 hours a day, seven days a week urgent mental health helplines. The NHS Long Term Plan commits to invest at least an additional £2.3 billion a year into mental health services in England by 2023/24. This will see an additional 345,000 children and young people accessing NHS-funded mental health support by 2023/24.

### ■ Multiple Sclerosis: Drugs

**Margaret Ferrier:**

[\[81972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to increase access to new medicines for people with progressive forms of MS.

**Edward Argar:**

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body responsible for developing evidence-based recommendations for the National Health Service on whether licenced medicines represent a clinically and cost-effective use of resources. NICE appraises all new medicines, including for multiple sclerosis and is committed, wherever possible, to publishing draft guidance at the time of licensing with final guidance published within three months of licensing.

NICE has published guidance recommending a number of medicines for multiple sclerosis for routine use on the NHS. The NHS in England is legally required to fund medicines recommended by NICE.

### ■ Neurology: Finance

**Margaret Ferrier:**

[\[81975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with the Treasury on a multi-year funding envelope for training for neurology professionals.

**Edward Argar:**

Following the conclusion of the Spending Review, plans for individual National Health Service workforce budgets in England, including for training neurology professionals, will be subject to a detailed financial planning exercise and finalised in due course. Through this exercise, the Department has held discussions with HM Treasury and will continue to do so until a settlement has been achieved.

## ■ NHS Test and Trace: Operating Costs

**John Redwood:**

[\[56707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to reduce the costs of NHS Test and Trace.

**Maggie Throup:**

NHS Test and Trace activities transferred to the UK Health Security Agency with effect from 1 October 2021. The recent Spending Review confirmed £9.6 billion for key COVID-19 programmes and related health spending. This allows for a reduced test and trace programme and will reduce costs from the £15 billion allocated in 2021/22. Plans are being developed to determine how best to reduce costs and activities to operate within a lower funding allocation from April 2022.

However, in line with the approach taken throughout the pandemic, the response will be kept under review and cross-Government discussions are ongoing to determine the appropriate level of COVID-19 test, trace and isolate activities.

## ■ Nutrition

**Andrew Selous:**

[\[81892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the UK Nutrient Profiling Model 2018 review consultation, what plans his Department has to publish the outcomes of that consultation; and if he will make a statement.

**Maggie Throup:**

In 2016, Public Health England was commissioned to review the UK Nutrient Profiling Model (NPM) 2004/5 algorithm to ensure it aligns with dietary recommendations, particularly for free sugars and fibre, from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition. A consultation was held in 2018 which sought views on the modifications made to the UK NPM 2004/5, specifically its alignment with current UK dietary recommendations. The outcome of the review will be published in due course.

## ■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges

**Feryal Clark:**

[\[82120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing a medical exemption from prescription charges for people affected by Crohn's Disease or ulcerative colitis.

**Edward Argar:**

No assessment has been made and we currently have no plans to review or extend the prescription charge medical exemptions list to include Crohn's Disease or ulcerative colitis.

Approximately 89% of prescriptions are already dispensed free of charge and arrangements are in place to help those most in need. To support those who do not qualify for an exemption, the cost of prescriptions can be capped by purchasing a prescription pre-payment certificate, which can be paid for in instalments. A holder of

a 12-month certificate can get all the prescriptions they need for just over £2 per week.

### ■ Primodos: Compensation

**Peter Dowd:** [\[84379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to implement a compensation framework for people who have experienced harm as a result of Primodos.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Government's response to the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review (IMMDS) was published on 21 July 2021. We did not accept the report's fourth recommendation, which called for separate redress schemes should be set up for hormone pregnancy tests such as Primodos, sodium valproate and pelvic mesh

Our priority is to make medicines and devices safer. The Government's response sets out the changes in place since the IMMDS Review's report was published and further action we will take to implement the recommendations accepted and to improve patient safety.

### ■ Prostate Cancer: Medical Treatments

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[83250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he expects to receive from the National Institute for Health Research the results of the high-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU) therapy for prostate cancer research.

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 2 December 2021]:* The randomised controlled trial of Partial prostate Ablation versus Radical prostatectomy (PART) in intermediate risk unilateral clinically localised prostate cancer a feasibility study' was funded and supported by the National Institute for Health Research. The research was undertaken between 2015-2017 and the results were published on 1 September 2018 at the following link:

<https://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/hta/hta22520#/full-report>

### ■ Shellfish: Norovirus

**Luke Pollard:** [\[82073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the levels of norovirus in shellfish.

**Maggie Throup:**

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is the Central Competent Authority for assessing the food safety risks associated with food, including norovirus in shellfish.

The FSA considered the risks associated with norovirus in shellfish in 2012 when the European Union proposed the introduction of regulatory limits. It concluded that

establishing such a limit was not possible due to uncertainties in the evidence base, particularly in interpreting testing data in the absence of an infectious dose or a testing method that determines infectivity.

A five-year FSA-funded research study, NOVAS, published in 2020 has shown that although almost 70% of oysters sold in the United Kingdom were contaminated with detectable levels of norovirus at the point of sale, this contributed 3% of overall norovirus foodborne infection. The FSA continues to monitor developments.

## ■ Strokes: Health Services

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[81058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has he made of the potential merits of the German model of urgent stroke interventions.

**Maria Caulfield:**

In May 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement published the National Stroke Service Model. This sets out the standard for stroke treatment, including prevention, urgent and emergency care, rehabilitation and life after stroke care.

The German model of urgent stroke interventions is very similar to the model used by the National Health Service in England. Both models emphasise the importance of screening for a stroke in the pre-hospital setting, thrombolysis should be given to any stroke patients where appropriate who do not have significant contraindications and the potential benefits of mechanical thrombectomy.

## ■ Strokes: Screening

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[81057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to institute mobile screening for stroke, to allow treatment to be provided in ambulances as occurs in Germany.

**Maria Caulfield:**

In early 2022, NHS England and NHS Improvement will fund several areas in England to implement pre-hospital video triage for people with a suspected stroke. Patients will receive a video consultation from their home or within an ambulance with a hospital-based stroke clinician, who will advise the paramedics on the best treatment.

NHS England and NHS Improvement will continue to work with ambulance services in England and integrated stroke delivery networks to improve pre-hospital care for stroke patients and deliver improvements and innovation across the hyperacute stroke pathway.

**Travel: Coronavirus****Theresa Villiers:**[\[74904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November 2021 to Question 67098 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of NHS England including records of covid-19 booster vaccinations in the NHS App in the context of the requirement by Israel and Austria of proof of a booster vaccination for specific travellers to those countries.

**Maggie Throup:**

*[Holding answer 18 November 2021]:* The NHS COVID Pass can now be used to demonstrate proof of a booster or third dose for outbound international travel and this is available through the NHS App and NHS.UK. Booster vaccinations are not required for domestic certification in England.

**Peter Kyle:**[\[83440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will update the NHS App to enable children between the ages of 12 and 15 years old to provide evidence of their vaccination status for the purposes of international travel.

**Maggie Throup:**

*[Holding answer 2 December 2021]:* We are looking at ways to provide fully vaccinated 12 to 15 year olds with a travel NHS COVID Pass, which will be available shortly. Further information will be made available in due course, including details of the existing digital or non-digital NHS COVID Pass routes that will initially be available to this group.

**HOME OFFICE****Home Office: York****Rachael Maskell:**[\[81995\]](#)

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

**Damian Hinds:**

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

Home Office location decisions take into account a range of factors including our operating models, workforce and location analysis. The Home Office will select places that we assess 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.

**■ Police: Standards****Grahame Morris:** [\[84334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2021 to Question 76646, what assessment she has made of the impact of Government policy on the increase in police response times since 2010.

**Kit Malthouse:**

Accountability for police performance lies with Chief Constables and democratically elected Police and Crime Commissioners. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services regularly inspects forces' performance and makes recommendations for improvement where necessary.

We expect Chief Constables to ensure that appropriate action is taken within their force to address these recommendations, progress against which is monitored by the Inspectorate.

**■ Refugees: Afghanistan****John Healey:** [\[84304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy applicants have indefinite leave to remain.

**Victoria Atkins:**

As part of Operation Warm Welcome, ARAP applicants in the UK are entitled to Indefinite Leave to Remain.

The Home Office is contacting those here in the UK in order to assist them to register their Indefinite Leave to Remain status.

No one will be required to leave the United Kingdom, or be disadvantaged in any way, while we work through their cases.

More information can be found in the Afghanistan Resettlement and Immigration Policy Statement

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement-accessible-version#afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy>

**John Healey:** [\[84305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding per Afghan resettled in the UK will be provided to local authorities for resettlement under the (a) Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and (b) Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Councils who support people through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) or Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme will receive £20,520 per person, over 3 years, for resettlement and integration costs. Local

councils and health partners who resettle families will also receive up to £4,500 per child for education, £850 to cover English language provision for adults requiring this support and £2,600 to cover healthcare.

A further £20 million of flexible funding will be made available to support local authorities with higher cost bases with any additional costs in the provision of services. In addition, the previously announced Afghan Housing Costs Fund will increase from £5 million to £17 million and run for 2 extra years to help local authorities provide housing and give certainty that funding will be available in the future.

The ACRS scheme is not currently open.

## ■ Spiking

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[84472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the outcomes of Devon and Cornwall Police's anti-drink spiking campaign.

**Rachel Maclean:**

This is an issue that the Government takes very seriously. Reports of spiking, whether that is adding substances to drinks or injecting people with needles, are extremely concerning. We have every sympathy with victims and anyone who might feel unable to enjoy a night out without fear. We utterly condemn the people who perpetrated those attacks, and they should be brought to justice.

We are aware of emerging good practice on this issue – for example, Devon and Cornwall Police introduced a force-wide strategy to obtain a more detailed picture of the issue around drink spiking. This is in partnership with other agencies and the licensing trade. Officers are able to utilise drink testing and urine testing to get immediate results when allegations are made. This has been in place since 1st August and has reassured many individuals as well as providing the basis for a more effective and immediate investigation into offences.

My officials are engaging with Devon and Cornwall police to understand more about the strategy and how the lessons learned could be applied to other areas of England and Wales. We are aware of the good work being carried out in areas such as Bristol, and are grateful for the action taken independently by venues to ensure the safety of their patrons.

More widely, the Home Secretary has already asked the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to urgently review the extent and scale of the issue, and we are receiving regular updates from the police. The police are working locally, regionally and nationally, including with our partners in the National Crime Agency.

The abhorrent crimes of spiking also speak to broader issues of violence against women and girls. We published our new cross-Government tackling violence against women and girls strategy this summer, to help to ensure that women and girls are



safe everywhere. We are delivering a pilot £5 million safety of women at night fund, focused on preventing violence against women and girls in public spaces at night, particularly in the night-time economy. That is in addition to the £25 million safer streets fund, which focuses on improving public safety, with an emphasis on the safety of women and girls, and their feelings of safety in public spaces.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

### ■ New Palace Yard: Flags

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[84316\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission will ensure that the St Patrick's Cross flag will be flown in New Palace Yard on 17 March 2022 on the same terms as the flag of Scotland was flown on St Andrew's Day on 30 November 2021.

**Sir Charles Walker:**

The New Palace Yard flags are an initiative by the Speaker and decisions about which flags are flown there are not decided by the Commission. Members can make representation to the Speaker about flags they wish to be flown.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Ministry of Justice: York

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[82006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, 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.

**James Cartlidge:**

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.

The Ministry of Justice are currently developing plans on how best to support the Government's commitment, taking into account a range of factors including our operating models, workforce and location analysis. We are a nationally dispersed department with a national service profile, including our non-departmental public bodies and government agencies. Our intention is to maximise the use of our current estate to grow our presence in all regions, to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of the Civil Service.

**■ Prison and Probation Service: Staff****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[81911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to HM Prison and Probation Service annual staff equalities report: 2020 to 2021, published on 25 November 2021, what comparative assessment he has made of the reasons for the rate of awards of special bonuses in 2020-21 being higher for (a) men compared to women, (b) white staff compared to staff from Black, Asian and other Ethnic Minority Communities, (c) disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff and (d) staff with non-Christian religious affiliations compared to staff with Christian or no religious affiliation.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Special Bonuses are payable to HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) staff, under Reward and Recognition policies, to recognise and reward in-year performance and staff who go above and beyond their normal duties. The Reward and Recognition policies apply, and are available equally, to all HMPPS staff. Nominations for in-year awards are subject to approval by panel. On the basis that reward and recognition payments are paid on merit it is to be expected that payments, year to year, may vary across different demographics within the workplace.

It should also be noted that a number of Special Bonuses under other arrangements – particularly as part of Covid-19 overtime schemes – were paid during 2020-2021 and these could possibly skew figures depending on the level of take up across the prison and probation estates and the demographics of staff within those prisons or approved premises.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[81912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to HM Prison and Probation Service annual staff equalities report: 2020 to 2021, published on 25 November 2021, what assessment he has made of the reasons for the rate of raising grievances in 2020-21 being higher for (a) staff from Black, Asian and other Ethnic Minority Communities compared with White staff, (b) disabled staff compared with non-disabled staff, (c) non-Christian staff compared with Christian staff and (d) Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual staff compared with heterosexual staff.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The reasons for the higher rates of grievance for (a) staff from Black, Asian and other Ethnic Minority Communities compared with White staff, (b) disabled staff compared with non-disabled staff, (c) non-Christian staff compared with Christian staff and (d) Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual staff compared with heterosexual staff in HMPPS are routinely reviewed by our HR team and HMPPS senior leaders.

The extensive work HMPPS has done to encourage staff to report concerns or inappropriate behaviour on the grounds of race, disability, religion or sexuality is likely to be driving the increased grievance rates.

Interventions like the HMPPS's Tackling Unacceptable Behaviour Unit (TUBU), established in August 2020, are actively demonstrating that there is no place for any form of unacceptable behaviour in HMPPS, and such behaviour is contrary to its core values and will not be tolerated. All allegations of unacceptable behaviour are taken seriously, investigated and, where appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken. Furthermore, work continues to simplify our HR policies and strengthen guidance and supporting information to make sure staff feel safe to "speak up".

## ■ Prisoners

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[81907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Prison population projections: 2021 to 2026, published on 25 November 2021, for what reason there is a fall in the projected Fine Defaulter prison population from July 2022.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The fine defaulter population is assumed to remain at the average population observed in

October 2020 to March 2021 inclusive. This small population is rounded to zero for presentation in the tables.

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[81908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Prison population projections: 2021 to 2026, published on 25 November 2021, whether those projections account for any projected increase in the number of people given a short determinate sentence who are immediately released from prison following sentence as a result of time served on remand.

**Victoria Atkins:**

To a certain degree the prison population projection incorporates extended time spent remanded in custody. For example, the modelling accounts for lower volumes of offenders starting determinate sentences, due to increased numbers serving the custodial part of their sentence on remand.

## ■ Prisoners on Remand

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[81909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Prison population projections: 2021 to 2026, published on 25 November 2021, Table 3.1, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the increase in projected remand populations relative to those projected in the publication Prison Population Projections: 2020 to 2026, published on 26 November 2020.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The 2021 remand population projection has changed compared to the 2020 remand population projection due to the further lockdowns that occurred post 2020 publication and the resulting slower than anticipated court recovery.

The 2021 remand projection modelling methodology has been improved since the previous publication. The court recovery assumptions in the modelling have also been updated.

The 2021 remand population projection modelling does not include any additional policy changes compared to the 2020 publication.

This Government committed to building as many prison places as we need to meet demand. We are undertaking the largest prison building programme in a century. We are investing £3.5 billion over the next three years to deliver 18,000 additional, modern prison places and £250 million to deliver a further 2,000 temporary prison places across England and Wales by the mid-2020s. This will help to manage the increasing demand.

## ■ Prisoners' Release

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

**[81905]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Prison population projections: 2021 to 2026, published on 25 November 2021, what estimate he has made of the number of prisoners serving an Indefinite Sentence for Public Protection who will be (a) released and (b) recalled in each year in the forecast period.

**Kit Malthouse:**

PROJECTION YEAR	TOTAL ESTIMATED PRISONERS RELEASED AFTER IPP SENTENCE	TOTAL ESTIMATED PRISONERS RECALLED AFTER IPP SENTENCE
Jul-21 to Jun-22	200	800
Jul-22 to Jun-23	200	700
Jul-23 to Jun-24	200	700
Jul-24 to Jun-25	100	700
Jul-25 to Mar-26	100	500

All figures rounded to the nearest 100.

## ■ Prisoners: Gambling

**Margaret Ferrier:**

**[81970]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what support is provided to prisoners with a gambling disorder whilst serving custodial sentences.

**Margaret Ferrier:**

**[81971]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if specific support is provided through the probation system to those with gambling disorder.

**Victoria Atkins:**

In England and Wales, screening takes place to identify problem gamblers so they can receive appropriate support. Prisoners are seen by NHS healthcare services on reception and can be referred to addiction services to help address problem gambling, while in Probation there is a toolkit that can be used to address some of the areas of need associated with gambling. Regions may also commission additional services or additional staff training from specialist providers.

Following assessment, offenders in prison or probation may be eligible for an accredited offending behaviour programme (OBP) to address the issues that led to their offending. While not specifically designed to address problem gambling, there are programmes that aim to enable participants to be less impulsive and more flexible in their thinking, and that tackle a number of the cognitive issues commonly associated with problem gambling.

## ■ Slavery: Prosecutions

**Holly Lynch:**

**[82013]**

To ask the Secretary of State Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of successful prosecutions made under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 in each year since the Act came into place.

**James Cartlidge:**

The Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions and convictions for offences under the Modern Slavery Act in the 'Outcomes by Offence' data tool, available below:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/987715/outcomes-by-offence-2020.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987715/outcomes-by-offence-2020.xlsx)

- Use the 'Offence' filter to select '106 Modern Slavery'.

## LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

### ■ Building Safety Fund

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

**[84451]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 21 June 2021 to Question 16009 on Building Safety Fund, when the Building Safety Fund will reopen to new applicants on a case by case basis.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Buildings that may have missed the original registration deadline for the Building Safety Fund will have a further opportunity to register. Details on how to do this will be provided in due course.

**■ Cost of Living****Anneliese Dodds:** [\[84460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether a calculation of cost of living affordability for (a) key workers, (b) people receiving the National Minimum Wage and (c) people receiving the National Living Wage is included in all of his Department's policy planning for recovery from the covid-19 pandemic.

**Anneliese Dodds:** [\[84461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether a calculation of housing affordability (a) in general and (b) in the private rented sector for (a) key workers, (b) people receiving the National Minimum Wage and (c) people receiving the National Living Wage is included in all of his Department's policy planning for recovery from the covid-19 pandemic.

**Eddie Hughes:**

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department commissioned the Household Resilience Study – a follow-up to the English Housing Survey, conducted in 3 waves between June 2020 and May 2021. The research collected includes affordability data from owner-occupiers, mortgagors, and both privately and socially renting tenants.

The study explored numerous measures of affordability, such as proportion of income spent on rent or mortgage, and ease in keeping up with heating costs or other household bills. The data received through the Household Resilience Study includes information on keyworker status and can be broken down by income levels.

Findings from the Household Resilience Study, alongside regular engagement with stakeholders, are used to inform policy decisions across the department, including relevant areas of post-pandemic recovery planning. Monitoring of renters' financial resilience through the study has informed the additional £65 million of funding, announced in October, to support renters with arrears recover from the impact of the pandemic.

The latest findings from the Household Resilience Study Wave 3 can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/household-resilience-study-wave-3>.

**■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: York****Rachael Maskell:** [\[81998\]](#)

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

**Eddie Hughes:**

As part of Budget 2020, the Government committed to relocating 22,000 Civil Service roles from Greater London to locations across the UK 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.

■ **Islam: Wales****Ruth Jones:**[\[82089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on his plans to tackle Islamophobia; and if he will make a statement.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government remains committed to tackling islamophobia and recognises the discrimination and intolerance faced by Muslim communities. Our counterparts in the Welsh Government have been consulted on our upcoming Hate Crime Strategy and this will be published in due course.

■ **Landlords: Registration****Caroline Lucas:**[\[81917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) potential merits of a national landlord register and (b) impact such a register has had on protecting the rights of private renters in (i) Scotland, (ii) Wales and (iii) Northern Ireland; what plans his Department has to bring forward legislative proposals to introduce a similar database for England; and if he will make a statement.

**Eddie Hughes:**

The Government has committed to exploring the merits of introducing a national landlord register in England as part of a commitment to drive up standards in privately rented accommodation. We are engaging with a range of stakeholders and potential users of a register such as private landlords, local authority enforcement officers, letting agents and private tenants to inform this work. We are also engaging with officials in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and will seek to learn from the different approaches applied. We will publish a White Paper that will set out our proposals for private rented sector reform.

**■ Non-domestic Rates****Rachel Reeves:**[\[84342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what proportion, by rateable value, of )a) industrial and warehouse, (b) office and (c) retail properties benefitted from transitional relief limiting their business rates payable in (i) 2017-18, (ii) 2018-19, (iii) 2019-20, (iv) 2020-21 and (v) 2021-22; and what proportion, by rateable value, in each category did not benefit from the full reduction in rates payable as a result of downward transition limits in each of those years.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Department does not collect information on the types of property in receipt of transitional relief.

**■ Rented Housing: Reform****Fleur Anderson:**[\[82110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will bring forward the Renters Reform Bill.

**Eddie Hughes:**

The Government remains committed to building back fairer and delivering a better deal for renters. We will publish a White Paper which sets out a package of reforms to create a fairer private rented sector. This will include further detail on repealing Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988, and on targeted enforcement measures that drive out criminal landlords.

We are undertaking robust and structured stakeholder engagement, working closely with the sector to inform our plans, while also learning from impact of the pandemic on the sector. We will bring forward legislation in due course, following the publication of the White Paper.

**NORTHERN IRELAND****■ Northern Ireland Office: Meetings****Owen Thompson:**[\[80399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 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.

**Conor Burns:**

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.



**TRANSPORT****■ Department for Transport: York****Rachael Maskell:****[81996]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, 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.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

There are currently no plans to move Civil Servant jobs in the Department for Transport to York. The department has committed to have 650 roles across Leeds and Birmingham by 2025, in support of the Government's commitment to relocate 22,000 Civil Service roles out of London and the South East. There are currently no confirmed plans for any of the Department's non-departmental bodies to move to York. The Department will continue to work with the *Places for Growth* Programme based in the Cabinet Office to consider locations outside of London and the South East as part of our future workforce strategy.

With respect to the GBR headquarters, the location for this has not been decided and the details of the selection process will be announced shortly.

**■ Electric Vehicles: Supply Chains****Dr Luke Evans:****[82379]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that the £1 billion of Government support for the electrification of vehicles and their supply chains includes (a) rural SMEs and (b) farms.

**Trudy Harrison:**

In November 2020, the Prime Minister announced a 10 Point Plan for a green industrial revolution, making clear our ambition to end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030. To achieve these ambitions to accelerate the UK's transition to zero emission vehicles, it is vital that we develop our capacity to manufacture key components for these vehicles, including batteries. The Automotive Transformation Fund has been set up to support the creation of a localised, internationally competitive electric vehicle supply chain right here in the UK.

As part of the Net Zero Strategy, a further £350m of funding was announced for the Automotive Transformation Fund (ATF). This is additional to the £500m of funding previously announced. The ATF supports R&D and capital investments across strategically important parts of the electric vehicle supply chain. The fund is open to applications from large, medium and small companies, provided they can demonstrate how their proposed project meets the ATF's key objective of supporting the key elements of the electrification of the automotive sector. These technologies developed with HMG support, will be of benefit in the production of a range of types of vehicles including off-road vehicles as well as passenger cars and vans.

Government regularly engages with manufacturers, including supply chain businesses and automotive trade associations on opportunities to support the growth and competitiveness of the sector in the UK

### ■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Forests

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[84397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Information Commissioner's Office's Decision Notice of 16 September 2021, reference IC-76902-C8V1, what representations he has received on the findings of the Information Commissioner's Office's investigation that HS2 Ltd breached Regulations 11 and 14 of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 in respect of the request to disclose information on whether HS2 Ltd agreed a departure from the Ecology Technical Standard in relation to the ancient woodland translocation works with the works contractor.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

As a Non-Departmental Public Body, HS2 Ltd is independently responsible for compliance with the Environmental Information Regulations, and was the subject of ICO Decision Notice IC-76802-C8V1, which it has complied with.

Whilst the Department will receive updates on HS2 Ltd's compliance with the Regulations, it was not a participant in this case and we have not identified any representations made to the Secretary of State regarding the ICO's findings.

### ■ Railways: Construction

**Mr Richard Holden:**

[\[83515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many miles of new railway was built and in which regions (a) from 1997 to 2010 and (b) from 2010 to date.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Office of Rail and Road publish railway infrastructure statistics, which contain the total length of track in Great Britain (including Scotland). The table below gives total track length from 1999-00. This information is not available by region and this data is not available prior to 1999.

The year-on-year change in track length is the net change of new track added minus length of track closed. Therefore, a year-on-year increase does not necessarily equal the total length of new track added.

***Track Miles of the rail network in Great Britain. Source: ORR***

YEAR	TOTAL TRACK MILES	YEAR	TOTAL TRACK MILES
1999-00	19,167	2010-11	19,330
2000-01	19,167	2011-12	19,302
2001-02	19,866	2012-13	19,309

YEAR	TOTAL TRACK MILES	YEAR	TOTAL TRACK MILES
2002-03	19,738	2013-14	19,320
2003-04	19,613	2014-15	19,337
2004-05 <sup>1</sup>	19,562	2015-16	19,383
2005-06	19,328	2016-17 <sup>3</sup>	19,400
2006-07 <sup>2</sup>	19,302	2017-18	19,286
2007-08	19,313	2018-19	19,319
2008-09	19,336	2019-20	19,398
2009-10	19,308	2020-21	19,418

*1 Prior to 2004-05 route length data and electrification data was collected using various systems and collected on a semi-annual basis. These systems, whilst often the most accurate measures available at the time, would not have provided as accurate a measure as the GEOGIS system and there is therefore a break in the time series between 2003-04 and 2004-05.*

*2 There is a break in the time series between 2006-07 and 2007-08 due to a new methodology where the route classification reference data was revamped.*

*3 There is a break in the time series between 2016-17 and 2017-18 due to Network Rail replacing GEOGIS, its master database for track assets, with a new system called INM (Integrated Network Model). This means any comparison of the current route length with previous years must be treated with caution.*

## ■ Railways: Electrification

**Mr Richard Holden:**

**[83514]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many miles of railway was electrification completed in each calendar year since 1997.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Office of Rail and Road publishes information about delivered electrification, the relevant information for Great Britain is shown below.

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<b>FINANCIAL YEAR</b>	<b>NEW ELECTRIFICATION PROJECTS TRACK MILES</b>
1997-98	0
1998-99	0
1999-00	0
2000-01	0
2001-02	0
2002-03	0
2003-04	14
2004-05	24
2005-06	3
2006-07	0
2007-08	0
2008-09	22
2009-10	0
2010-11	66
2011-12	0
2012-13	6
2013-14	38
2014-15	110
2015-16	4
2016-17	0
2017-18	181
2018-19	549
2019-20	156
2020-21	111

This information has been extracted from Table 6320 on the ORR's data portal published here: <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/infrastructure-and-emissions/rail-infrastructure-and-assets/table-6320-infrastructure-on-the-mainline/>.

## ■ Railways: Yorkshire and the Humber

**Rachael Maskell:**

[82356]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of improving rail links between York and Hull.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

In January 2020, the Government pledged £500 million for the Restoring Your Railway programme to deliver on our manifesto commitment to start reopening lines and stations to reconnect smaller communities, regenerate local economies and improve access to jobs, homes and education. The bid for the Beverley to York line to the third round of the Ideas Fund, to improve connectivity and speed of travel between Hull, York and intermediate towns, was successful. Government will be awarding up to £50,000 of funding to the promoters to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case.

## ■ Shipping: Containers

**Mr Steve Baker:**

[84344]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to work with the shipping industry to reduce container shipping prices; and if he will make a statement.

**Robert Courts:**

My Department is engaging with, and closely monitoring, the sector, along with other government departments. Shipping costs during 2021 have risen to a global high level in international freight markets as a result of unprecedented levels of demand driven by changed consumer behaviour during the pandemic.

Historical trends in the shipping sector shows pricing responds to supply and demand. Although industry estimates that high levels of demand and pricing are likely to continue into 2022, it is expected that pricing levels should similarly re-adjust when the current demand drivers change.

Nevertheless, Government continues to engage with the sector and will consider options to act in any helpful and appropriate way.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

[84345]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for International Trade on reducing the cost of container shipping prices; and if he will make a statement.

**Robert Courts:**

I refer my hon Friend the Member for Wycombe to the answer I gave on December 3, to Question UIN 84344 <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-30/84344> where I noted that my Department is closely

engaged with other government departments on this matters. This includes teams in the Secretary of State for International Trade's Department.

## ■ Shipping: Exhaust Emissions

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[84350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Clydebank Declaration for Green Shipping Corridors, what process his Department will use to identify (a) ports and (b) operators on (i) international and (ii) domestic shipping routes for participation in green shipping corridors.

**Robert Courts:**

The Clydebank Declaration represents the beginning of a multi-year process to develop green shipping corridors. As such, launching the Declaration is the first step on that voyage in establishing at least six corridors by middle of this decade, across all signatory States.

We are now moving, with other States and the industry, to exploring, designing and then delivering a corridor or corridors in the UK.

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[84351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of declarations signed by the Government at COP26 on seafarer (a) employment and (b) training in the shipping industry.

**Robert Courts:**

The 'Declaration on Zero Emission Shipping by 2050' and the 'Clydebank Declaration for Green Shipping Corridors' are both state-led initiatives and signatories are responsible for developing their respective domestic policies to support delivery.

The UK delivery will be guided by the Maritime 2050 Strategy, the Clean Maritime Plan, the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, and the Net Zero Strategy

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[84352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to announce the first green shipping corridors from UK ports in response to the Government's status as a signatory to the Clydebank Declaration announced at COP26.

**Robert Courts:**

The Clydebank Declaration represents the beginning of a multi-year process to develop green shipping corridors. As such, launching the Declaration is the first step on that voyage in establishing at least six corridors by middle of this decade, across all signatory States.

We are now moving, with other States and the industry, to exploring, designing and then delivering a corridor or corridors in the UK.

**Alex Cunningham:**

[84353]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Government's support for the (a) Clydebank Declaration for Green Shipping Corridors and (b) Declaration on Zero Emission Shipping by 2050 on the (i) environment and (ii) People and Skills route maps in the Maritime 2050 strategy.

**Robert Courts:**

The Clydebank Declaration represents the beginning of a multi-year process to develop green shipping corridors. As such, launching the Declaration is the first step on that voyage in establishing at least six corridors by middle of this decade, across all signatory States.

We are now moving, with other States and the industry, to delivering on these declarations. The Global Maritime Forum have performed an assessment of the role that shipping corridors can play in decarbonising international shipping, this can be found at: [www.globalmaritimeforum.org/content/2021/11/The-Next-Wave-Green-Corridors.pdf](http://www.globalmaritimeforum.org/content/2021/11/The-Next-Wave-Green-Corridors.pdf)

**Alex Cunningham:**

[84354]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions his Department has had with members of the Clean Maritime Council on the Clydebank Declaration for Green Shipping Corridors.

**Robert Courts:**

Since late 2019, my Department engaged continuously with a variety of States, industry bodies, research organisations and across Whitehall in the development of its ambitious COP26 maritime programme, including the Clydebank Declaration. This included a discussion at the most recent Clean Maritime Council on 16 September 2021.

**Alex Cunningham:**

[84355]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had at the International Maritime Organisation's Marine Environment Protection Committee on zero emission shipping.

**Robert Courts:**

The International Maritime Organization's (IMO's) Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) met between the 22 and 26 of November for its 77<sup>th</sup> Session. The United Kingdom submitted a proposal referring to scientific evidence from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicating the steps required to keep to the Paris Agreement temperature goals. The proposal by the United Kingdom supported the adoption of a resolution recognising the importance of international shipping reaching zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 2050.

Unfortunately, this resolution, supported by many like-minded ambitious Member States, did not gain sufficient support. Although the United Kingdom would have preferred to send a stronger message in a resolution, the Government is pleased that the MEPC initiated the review of the initial IMO strategy on reduction of Greenhouse

Gas Emissions from ships and recognised the need to strengthen the ambition in the strategy during this revision.

## TREASURY

### ■ Health: Standards

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[82119\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on ensuring Government spending helps to improve the nation's health.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

Treasury ministers, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer, are in regular contact with ministers in the Department for Health and Social Care on a wide range of issues.

### ■ Heat Batteries: VAT

**Dr Alan Whitehead:** [\[81857\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2021 to Question 76540 on Heating: VAT, for what reason heat batteries are not considered to be an Energy Saving Material.

**Helen Whately:**

Heat batteries are not defined as energy-saving materials in VAT legislation. Although the Government keeps all taxes under review, there are no plans to extend this definition.

However, the installation of a battery may benefit from the 5% reduced rate of VAT if it is ancillary to the installation of a qualifying energy-saving material (for example, solar panels) in residential accommodation. Further information can be found in VENS AV3200 and 3210 in HMRC guidance, which is available on GOV.UK.

### ■ Non-domestic Rates: Scotland

**Rachel Reeves:** [\[84339\]](#)

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 and (vi) leisure properties was in Scotland on 1 April (A) 2015 and (B) 2021.

**Rachel Reeves:** [\[84341\]](#)

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 and (vi) leisure properties was in Northern Ireland on 1 April (A) 2015 and (B) 2021.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Non-domestic rates are a devolved matter in Scotland and Northern Ireland.



## ■ Overseas Aid

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[82108\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will reverse his decision to reduce the Official Development Assistance budget from 7 per cent to 5 per cent of Gross National Income.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

The Government remains committed to international development and providing support to the world's poorest. However, we face extraordinary fiscal circumstances as a result of our unprecedented support to the economy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The United Kingdom remains one of the leading development donors in the world, providing over £10 billion this financial year towards our key international development priorities.

In July, the Chancellor set out the responsible fiscal circumstances under which we will return to spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA: when the independent Office for Budget Responsibility's fiscal forecast confirms that, on a sustainable basis, the government is not borrowing for day-to-day spending and underlying debt is falling:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-07-12/hcws172>.

Given the government's careful stewardship of the public finances and the strength of the recovery, the ODA fiscal tests are now forecast to be met in 2024-25. As such, the 2021 Spending Review provisionally sets aside additional unallocated ODA funding for 2024-25, on top of departmental ODA settlements, to the value of the difference between 0.5% and 0.7% of GNI.

The government will continue to monitor future forecasts closely and, each year over this period, will review and confirm, in accordance with the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015 Act, whether a return to spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA is possible against the latest fiscal forecast.

## ■ Public Sector: Newport West

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[82084\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking to support the provision of public services in Newport West constituency.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

As set out in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, Newport West will benefit from UK Government support that applies in all parts of Wales, from targeted UK Government investment in the local area, and from funding that the UK Government provides to the Welsh Government.

The UK Government set out a range of policies that will apply in all parts of Wales. This includes increasing the National Living Wage, cutting the Universal Credit taper rate, increasing the Universal Credit work allowances, investing in R&D, funding the commitment to recruit additional police officers, and freezing fuel and alcohol duty.

The UK Government is providing targeted support by contributing £500 million to the Cardiff City Region Deal, of which £105 million was accelerated at Spending Review 2021. The Government has also launched the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund for local infrastructure projects with round two opening in Spring 2022. In addition, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will help people access opportunity in places in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities. The UKSPF will ramp up to £1.5 billion per year in 2024-25 and funding will at a minimum match the size of EU Structural Funds in all nations, each year.

The UK Government is also providing the Welsh Government with an additional £2.5 billion per year on average over the Spending Review 2021 period through the Barnett formula, on top of the annual £15.9 billion annual baseline funding. These are the biggest annual block grants, in real terms, of any spending review settlement since devolution in 1998 and will enable the Welsh Government to provide further support in areas such as schools, housing, transport, health and social care. In addition to this, over the Spending Review 2021 period the UK Government is providing the Welsh Government with £0.9 billion for farmers, land managers, and rural communities and businesses, as well as £6.2 million to support fisheries.

#### ■ Standard of Living: Newport West

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[82083\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of inflation on living standards of residents in Newport West.

**John Glen:**

Economies are experiencing high inflation, in part due to pressures from rising energy prices and disruptions to global supply chains. These global pressures are the main driver of higher inflation in the UK.

The Government's commitment to price stability remains absolute. The Bank of England is responsible for controlling inflation – since the Bank became responsible for controlling inflation it has averaged close to the 2% target.

We understand that inflation, if higher than income growth, can reduce households' real incomes, and that higher prices can increase the cost of living for people and households.

That is why we have taken targeted action to help families with the cost of living, including through freezing fuel and alcohol duties, the energy price cap, the Warm Home Discount and the £500m Household Support Fund to help the most vulnerable families this winter. We are also making work pay by reducing the Universal Credit taper rate from 63% to 55%, increasing work allowances by £500 per year and increasing the National Living Wage to £9.50 per hour.

**■ Treasury: York****Rachael Maskell:**[\[81993\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 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.

**Helen Whately:**

At Budget 2021, the Chancellor announced that the Government's new economic campus will be located in Darlington. There will be at least 750 roles based there, across teams from HM Treasury, the Department for International Trade, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Office for National Statistics and the Competition and Markets Authority. Additional teams from the Department for Education are already based at the campus. The campus is now operational and we are continuing to work at pace to develop it as quickly as possible.

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.

**■ Water Companies: Fines****Luke Pollard:**[\[82080\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his planning assumption is on the amount the Exchequer will receive in fines from water companies in each of the next five years.

**Helen Whately:**

We are unable to forecast sector specific fines, which are set as an outcome to legal proceedings and vary based on the offence.

In the period from 2010 to date, the Environment Agency have brought 190 successful prosecutions against the Water Companies with the Courts imposing fines of approximately £140 million.

**WOMEN AND EQUALITIES****■ Females: Night Clubs**

**Ruth Jones:** [\[82091\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions she has had with the Home Secretary on the Government's response to the recent increase in spiking injections of young women in nightclubs.

**Ruth Jones:** [\[82092\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions she has had with the Welsh Government on the Government's response to the recent increase in spiking injections of young women in nightclubs.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

I have regular discussions with colleagues across government on a range of equalities issues. Reports of spiking, whether that is adding substances to drinks or injecting people with needles, are extremely concerning, and this is an issue which the Government takes very seriously.

The Home Secretary has already asked the National Police Chiefs' Council to urgently review the extent and scale of the issue, and the Home Office is receiving regular updates from the police who are working locally, regionally and nationally, including with partners in the National Crime Agency. Police forces in Wales have been involved in these discussions and the Welsh Government will be kept apprised of any developments.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****■ Coronavirus: Scotland: Wales**

**Chris Stephens:** [\[82339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to coordinate its policies on the covid-19 restrictions that are in operation in Scotland and Wales through the devolved Administrations; and if she will make a statement.

**Guy Opperman:**

*[Holding answer 1 December 2021]:* We take the Health and Safety of DWP staff and customers very seriously. We have robust risk assessments and guidance to ensure all appropriate mitigations are in place to keep our people safe.

As part of regularly reviewing our risk assessments, working with our departmental and local trade union colleagues, we consult the legislation and guidance of the devolved administrations ensuring that any differences are reflected within the risk assessment and communicated to staff based in offices in Scotland and Wales.

Staff based in Scotland should be following the safety measures included in the DWP risk assessments that incorporate any differences in Scottish government guidance.

Since the start of the pandemic, DWP has rigorously followed guidance from the respective governments in the devolved nations, thus allowing people to work safely from the office, or at home. We are committed to continuing this approach as we learn to live with the virus and return more of our people to the workplace in a safe, steady and controlled way.

We are constantly reviewing our position as and when new government guidance is issued. No matter where our people are working now, or in the future, their safety and compliance with government guidance is our number one priority.

If your constituents remain concerned about their own, or their colleagues' personal safety and / or any of the practices within their specific office, they can raise this with their line manager.

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

**Ronnie Cowan:**

[\[81990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that departmental staff who have underlying health conditions can continue to work from home and not mandated to return to the office on a hybrid basis.

**Ronnie Cowan:**

[\[81991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to help support departmental staff who have been working from home since the outbreak of covid-19.

**Guy Opperman:**

We take the Health and Safety of DWP staff and customers very seriously. We have robust risk assessments and guidance to ensure all appropriate mitigations are in place to keep our people safe.

As part of regularly reviewing our risk assessments, working with our departmental and local trade union colleagues, we consult the legislation and guidance of the devolved administrations ensuring that any differences are reflected within the risk assessment and communicated to staff based in offices in Scotland and Wales.

Staff based in Scotland should be following the safety measures included in the DWP risk assessments that incorporate any differences in Scottish government guidance.

Since the start of the pandemic, DWP has rigorously followed guidance from the respective governments in the devolved nations, thus allowing people to work safely from the office, or at home. We are committed to continuing this approach as we learn to live with the virus and return more of our people to the workplace in a safe, steady and controlled way.

We are constantly reviewing our position as and when new government guidance is issued. No matter where our people are working now, or in the future, their safety and compliance with government guidance is our number one priority.

If your constituents remain concerned about their own, or their colleagues' personal safety and / or any of the practices within their specific office, they can raise this with their line manager.

#### ■ Department for Work and Pensions: York

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[82001\]](#)

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

**Guy Opperman:**

DWP have no specific plans to move any departmental or non-departmental roles to York as part of our Places for Growth commitment.

#### ■ Family Hubs

**Andrew Selous:** [\[81893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that reducing parental conflict services forms a core element of the support being made available to parents and families through family hubs.

**Guy Opperman:**

Family Hubs are a way of joining up locally to improve access to services, improve the connections between families, professionals, services, and providers, and put relationships at the heart of family help. Family Hubs can include both physical locations and virtual offers, with a range of services for families with children of all ages, and a great Start for Life offer at their core.

It is essential that all local services for families work together effectively. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Department for Education (DfE) and the National Centre for Family Hubs are working closely together to ensure that policy alignment nationally facilitates local joined up working to support children and families to thrive. This includes joining up work on Reducing Parental Conflict with Family Hubs.

#### ■ Offshore Industry: Industrial Health and Safety

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[80982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the level of (a) safety critical and (b) environmental maintenance backlogs in the offshore oil and gas industry since January 2019 to date.

**Chloe Smith:**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) uses its Offshore Safety and Environmental Critical Element (SECE) Management and Verification Inspection Guide when inspecting duty holder compliance in this subject. Maintenance backlogs are covered by the Guide and attract a score. The scores have both numeric and descriptive classifications: unacceptable (60), very poor (50), poor (40), broadly compliant (30), fully compliant (20) and exemplary (10).

In 2019, HSE completed 26 SECE inspections and scored 1 x very poor, 9 x poor, 15 x broadly compliant and 1 x fully compliant. In 2020, there were 22 inspections with 4 x poor, 16 x broadly compliant and 2 x fully compliant scores. Since January 2021, there have been 19 inspections with 3 x poor and 16 x broadly compliant scores. Whenever HSE finds examples of non-compliance, they are raised as issues with the duty holder in a letter, and in some cases a notice. These are then monitored to ensure compliance by the due date.

Recognising the potential impact of the pandemic in 2020, HSE wrote to production installation duty holders with a detailed question set on maintenance and inspection backlogs, which includes several questions on SECE management. This has enabled HSE to assess SECE backlog management for a representative sample of UK Continental Shelf (UKCS) production duty holders. HSE will use the question set again from the start of 2022 as part of its ongoing intervention targeting procedure so that those duty holders that appear not to be managing their SECE backlog effectively can be prioritised for inspection.

**■ Post Office Card Account: Social Security Benefits****Ben Lake:**[\[85345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of requiring people whose benefit payments are paid into a Post Office card account to set up an alternative arrangement on people in (a) Ceredigion and (b) other rural areas.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Department expects that benefit claimants and pensioners will benefit from the additional services that transactional accounts offer compared to Post Office card accounts

**■ Social Security Benefits****Debbie Abrahams:**[\[81959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many internal process reviews her Department has (a) started and (b) completed on cases of death or serious harm since July 2019.

**Chloe Smith:**

The Internal Process Reviews (IPRs) that have been started since July 2019, are as follows:

DEATH*	114
Serious Harm**	31

The IPRs that have been completed since July 2019, are as follows:

DEATH*	93
Serious Harm**	21

\* Death includes the categories death, alleged suicide and confirmed suicide.

\*\* Serious Harm includes the categories self-harm, serious harm, attempted suicide and 'other'.

## ■ Universal Credit

**Wendy Chamberlain:**

[\[83491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of ending the £20 uplift to universal credit on levels of foodbank use in the UK.

**David Rutley:**

The uplift to Universal Credit was a temporary measure, that is why an assessment has not been completed on its withdrawal.

Foodbanks are independent, charitable organisations and the Department for Work and Pensions does not have any role in their operation. There is no consistent and accurate measure of food bank usage at a constituency or national level. We understand the data limitations in this area, and thus from April 2021 we introduced a set of questions into the Family Resources Survey (FRS) to measure and track food bank usage. The first results of these questions are due to be published in March 2023 subject to usual quality assurance. These questions will allow us to gauge where people in food security are seeking help and over time will allow us to build a time series on the scale of food bank usage.

This Government is wholly committed to supporting low-income families, including through spending over £110 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2021/22 and by increasing the National Living Wage by 6.6% to £9.50 from April 2022.

With the success of the vaccine rollout and record job vacancies, our focus now is on continuing to support people into and to progress in work. Our multi-billion-pound Plan for Jobs, which has recently been expanded by £500 million, will help people across the UK to find work and to boost their wages and prospects.

In addition, Universal Credit recipients in work will soon benefit from a reduction in the Universal Credit taper rate from 63% to 55%, while eligible in-work claimants will



also benefit from changes to the Work Allowance. These measures represent, for the lowest paid in society, an effective tax cut of around £2.2 Billion in 2022-23, and will benefit almost two million of the lowest paid workers by £1000 a year on average.

We recognise that some people may require extra support over the winter as we enter the final stages of recovery, 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.

To support low income families further we have also increased the value of Healthy Start Food Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25, helping eligible low income households buy basic foods like milk, fruit and vitamins, and we are investing over £200m a year from 2022 to continue our Holiday Activities and Food programme, which is already providing enriching activities and healthy meals to children in all Local Authorities in England.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

#### ■ Building Digital UK Update

**Minister for Media, Data, and Digital Infrastructure (Julia Lopez):** [\[HCWS440\]](#)

Broadband plays a pivotal role in today's society. Its significance has been highlighted by Covid-19 and its importance will only increase in future years. Tackling the digital divide means ensuring that everyone in the UK can access and use digital communications services. Achieving this means ensuring the right infrastructure is in place to deliver nationwide connectivity for all.

In 2020, the Government committed to a new programme of work which would see a £5 billion investment in fixed broadband infrastructure and £0.5 billion in mobile broadband infrastructure over the coming decade. The programmes are a top priority for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and represent a significant increase in ambition and scale from previous schemes.

The organisation responsible for delivering the investment in broadband infrastructure, Building Digital UK (BDUK), has historically delivered spending commitments as a directorate within the Department. However, BDUK requires expert and independent board oversight, appropriate operational autonomy and delegated authority to further drive effective delivery.

I am therefore announcing my intention to establish BDUK as a specialist delivery Executive Agency of the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in April 2022, to drive the effective execution of BDUK's substantial portfolio of delivery commitments.

As an Executive Agency, BDUK will be a clearly designated unit that will be administratively distinct but will remain legally within the Department.

The objectives for BDUK are complex, challenging and on a demanding timescale. The move to an Executive Agency will improve the likelihood of success by enabling BDUK to deliver in a manner tailored to its specific requirements, reducing dependencies on central Departmental functions for critical path activity.

### HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

#### ■ Covid-19 update

**Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Sajid Javid):** [\[HCWS442\]](#)

Today the Government publishes the Health and Social Care Approach to Winter. This joint publication between DHSC and NHS England and Improvement sets out the expected challenges of this winter, and the wide range of preparations we have made to ensure that health and social care services remain resilient, joined up and available to patients over the coming months

The document also announces the allocation of £700 million Targeted Investment Fund announced in September this year. At least £330 million will be invested in NHS estate, and £250 million on digital initiatives that aid elective recovery efficiency and reconfiguration, with a further £120 million to support associated or additional revenue costs

Funding has now been allocated to regions on a weighted population basis, with investment of: • £112 million in North East and Yorkshire • £97 million in the North West • £131 million in the Midlands • £78 million in the East of England • £105 million in the South East • £69 million in the South West, and • £109 million in London The importance of these preparations has been brought home to everyone over the last few days with the emergence of the B.1.1.529 “Omicron” COVID-19 variant. With the rollout and acceleration of COVID-19 boosters alongside the largest flu vaccine programme in UK history, we are doing more than ever to support people to stay well this winter. We will continue to work closely together across health and social care to ensure people continue to access the services they need, when they need them.

## WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

### ■ Final report on progress to address COVID-19 health disparities

**Minister for Equalities (Kemi Badenoch):**

[\[HCWS441\]](#)

I am publishing today my final report on progress to address COVID-19 health disparities among ethnic minority groups.

When the Prime Minister asked me to lead this work in June 2020, we knew that ethnic minorities were more likely to become infected and to die from COVID-19 but we did not know why. Thanks to analysis from the Government’s Race Disparity Unit and new research backed by over £7 million in Government funding, we now have a much better understanding of the factors that have driven the higher infection and mortality rates among ethnic minority groups. These include occupation, living with children in multigenerational households, and living in densely-populated urban areas with poor air quality and higher levels of deprivation.

We also know that once a person is infected, older age, male sex, and having a disability or a pre-existing health condition (such as diabetes) increase the risk of them dying from COVID-19. Genetics may also play a role in survival rates from COVID-19. 61 per cent of south Asian people carry a gene which doubles the risk of respiratory failure and death from COVID-19 in under 60 year olds, compared with 16 per cent of people of European ancestry.

These insights have been crucial in shaping our response to COVID-19.

Early action, informed by the emerging data and scientific advice, focused on reducing the risk of infection and protecting key frontline workers who were most at risk, particularly our NHS workers. Our approach evolved as our understanding of the risk factors developed. For example, in the second wave of the pandemic, we published guidance on preventing household transmission, recognising that people from the

Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic groups faced a higher risk of dying from COVID-19 and are more likely to live in multigenerational households. We also piloted approaches where families could get jabbed together at vaccine sites to promote uptake in these groups.

The most significant measure to protect ethnic minorities from the risk of COVID-19 has been the vaccination programme. We led the way in terms of the scale of our programme to approve, procure and deploy the COVID-19 vaccines. The largest mass-vaccination programme in British history has been delivered through an unprecedented partnership approach between citizens, national and local government, health agencies, and the voluntary and community sector. This has involved tackling misinformation and building trust with ethnic minority groups through measures such as housing vaccination centres in places of worship and providing over £23 million in funding to the Community Champion scheme, which has used trusted local voices to drive up vaccination rates. These learnings are informing our approach to the current rollout of the booster programme to ensure we continue to drive up vaccination rates in ethnic minority groups.

Through these combined efforts we have seen increases in both positive vaccine sentiment and vaccine uptake across all ethnic groups since vaccine deployment began.

There are a number of wider public health lessons that we must learn from these experiences and these are reflected in the recommendations in my report, which the Prime Minister has accepted in full. These recommendations will still be applicable even as we see the emergence of new variants. Work on addressing COVID-19 disparities will now be taken forward by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the new Office for Health Improvement and Disparities as part of our longer-term strategy to tackle health disparities.