

Daily Report

Monday, 6 December 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 6 December 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:05 P.M., 06 December 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Alexander Temerko

Angela Rayner:

[82327]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will place copies of correspondence (a) to Ministers in his Department from Alexander Temerko of 8 February 2021 and 22 March 2021 in respect of the Aquind Interconnector project, (b) from Ministers in his Department replying to Alexander Temerko and (c) from Ministers forwarding the original letters to other Ministers and officials in the Library.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 1 December 2021]: This correspondence has already been released in response to a previous Freedom of Information request [reference 11805], and I will place copies of that disclosure in the Libraries of the House, alongside a copy of the response from my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State, dated 19 April 2021.

In line with departmental Propriety Guidance, the then Energy Minister (my Hon. Friend, the Member for the Berwick-upon-Tweed) recused herself from the decision for the proposed Aquind interconnector from 8 January.

As a result of this action, she was removed from the process - this means that no discussions were had, nor correspondence entered into by the Minister in respect of the Aquind Interconnector project. This correspondence was not shown to the Minister as a consequence.

■ Animal Experiments

Caroline Lucas:

[80273]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the new Advanced Research and Invention Agency will provide dedicated funding for research that uses and seeks to further develop (a) the use of advanced cultures of human cells and tissues, (b) artificial intelligence, (c) organ-on-a-chip technology human tissue models and (d) other techniques that do not use animals relevant to disease modelling and drug testing for humans; whether he plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of having as a focus for that Agency the acceleration of the replacement of animal experiments with such techniques; and if he will make a statement.

George Freeman:

The CEO and leadership of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA), not Government, will be responsible for the strategic direction of their programme portfolio. While there are many UK funding programmes for which Ministers do set the strategic direction, ARIA is specifically being set up without those constraints.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme: Small Businesses

Chi Onwurah:

[81954]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many small businesses awarded loans from the Coronavirus Bounce Back Loan Scheme were in arrears with re-payments in (a) England and (b) North East England as of 25 November 2021.

Paul Scully:

The latest available data from the British Business Bank (BBB) is available here:

<https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/covid-19-emergency-loan-schemes-repayment-data/>.

■ Bulb Energy: Insolvency

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[83225]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the potential cost to the taxpayer of the collapse of Bulb Energy Ltd.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[83226]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the costs associated with Bulb Energy Limited being taken into the special administration regime will be (a) met from the public purse or (b) passed on to customers through energy bills.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 2 December 2021]: The Government has made a £1.7 billion loan facility available to the energy administrators for Bulb Energy, to provide working capital for a six-month period. The value of this facility is a contingency - it gives confidence to the energy administrators to carry out their duties effectively – protecting Bulb customers and keeping costs to a minimum for consumers.

The Government will recoup costs through the administrators realising the value of Bulb's assets, or through the established shortfall recovery mechanism which will see a levy charged on industry.

■ Business: Carbon Emissions

Seema Malhotra:

[84365]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment his Department has made of progress being made by businesses in the (a) hospitality, (b) retail and (c) leisure sectors in reducing their carbon emissions.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 3 December 2021]: The Government encourages all UK businesses with 500 employees or fewer to visit the UK Business Climate Hub and sign up to the globally recognised small business climate commitment. Businesses, distinguished

by sector including retail, hospitality and entertainment, gain access to a range of resources to help them achieve net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest.

Part of the commitment is disclosing progress on a yearly basis. In order to help businesses to report annually, they are now encouraged to use CDP's new Climate Disclosure Framework.

The Government is also working closely with major trade associations across these sectors who have industry-wide net zero strategies. These include the British Retail Consortium who have published their Climate Action Roadmap, the Retail Sector Council who have produced an SME Green Guide, and Zero Carbon Forum who have released their Net Zero Roadmap, which is endorsed by UKHospitality.

The Government published the first ever hospitality strategy, which includes the commitment to help hospitality businesses and its supply to decarbonise. The recently formed Hospitality Sector Council was set up to work with the sector, by co-creating solutions while delivering the commitments set out in the strategy, such as developing a greener sector.

■ Carbon Emissions: Research

Dan Carden:

[\[85361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the £5.2 billion research and development funding announced at the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, what proportion of that funding will support the UK's net zero target.

George Freeman:

The Autumn 2021 Spending Review (SR) announced record-breaking investment in the UK's world leading research base, increasing by £5.2 billion to £20 billion per annum by 2024/25 in line with the target of UK economy-wide R&D investment reaching 2.4% of GDP by 2027. The Net Zero Strategy also confirmed that we have mobilised over £26 billion of government capital investment for the green industrial revolution, including at least £1.5 billion for net zero research and innovation.

Following the SR, BEIS is currently working through the allocations process to set detailed R&D budgets through till 2024/25. Further details of how this funding will be allocated will be announced in due course.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Small Businesses

Chi Onwurah:

[\[81952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and industrial Strategy, how many small businesses awarded loans from the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme are in arrears with re-payments in (a) England and (b) North East England.

Paul Scully:

The latest available data from the British Business Bank (BBB) is available here:

<https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/covid-19-emergency-loan-schemes-repayment-data/>.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Rachael Maskell:****[82360]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what further steps he is taking to expedite the UK's contribution to (a) COVAX and (b) other global vaccine initiatives to safeguard against further covid-19 virus mutations.

George Freeman:

At the G7, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister committed that the UK will donate 100 million doses by June 2022, of which 80% will be distributed via COVAX. To date, we have donated over 20m doses of AstraZeneca bilaterally and through COVAX to over 30 countries.

This builds on the funding the UK provided to COVAX in 2020 to help kickstart the facility, including £71 million to join and strengthen the joint vaccine purchasing scheme and donating £548 million specifically to support access in lower-income countries through the COVAX Advance Market Commitment.

Alongside our ongoing support to COVAX, in April 2021 the UK launched the Pandemic Preparedness Partnership to save lives from future diseases and prevent another global pandemic. The Partnership reports to the G7 Governments and aims to reduce the impact of future pandemics by making Diagnostics, Therapeutics and Vaccines available within 100 days.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[82367]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of covid-19 vaccine doses that his Department will have donated to COVAX by the end of January 2022.

George Freeman:

[Holding answer 1 December 2021]: To date, COVAX have accepted UK donations of 26.2 million doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. Of this, 6.2m doses have already been delivered via COVAX to some of the world's most vulnerable people. A further 11 million doses have been received by COVAX and have been, or shortly will be, allocated and delivered in line with COVAX's fair allocation model. The remaining 9 million doses that have been committed will be received by COVAX by the end of 2021.

In addition, the Government announced at the G20 in October that the UK will donate at least 20 million more doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca from the remainder of our contract in 2022 and will donate all the 20 million Janssen doses ordered by the Government to COVAX. Janssen aim to prioritise these deliveries to countries based

on need, so COVAX will receive the much-needed vaccines as soon as they come off the production line.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Taskforce On Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform**

Theresa Villiers:

[80232]

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

George Freeman:

My Rt. Hon. Friend will be unsurprised to hear that I welcomed the radical and ground-breaking report from TIGRR. On 16 September, my Noble Friend the Rt. Hon. Lord Frost outlined the Government's overall response to the report. This included the list of recommendations which BEIS agreed to take forward. Lord Frost also wrote to my Rt. Hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green. These can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/brexit-opportunities-regulatory-reforms>

BEIS is continuing work to implement the agreed recommendations, subject to parliamentary time allowing.

Recent public consultations relevant to the agreed TIGRR recommendations include:

Offshore Networks Coordination –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/offshore-transmission-network-review-proposals-for-an-enduring-regime> ; and

Reforming the framework for better regulation –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-the-framework-for-better-regulation>.

We are analysing responses to the consultations and will announce more in due course. The conclusions of the latter consultation in particular – on which we are working closely with Lord Frost's Brexit Opportunities Unit – will allow us to modernise our approach to regulatory design and deliver the aims for regulation in the Plan for Growth: to cut red tape, unlock cutting-edge technologies and boost competition.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: York**

Rachael Maskell:

[81997]

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

George Freeman:

As part of the Budget in 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.

BEIS has commitments to relocate 1350 roles outside of London into the following locations: Salford, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Darlington, Cardiff and Belfast.

Energy Company Obligation**Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[81859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the Energy Company Obligation 4 scheme for 2022-26 on other Government energy efficiency schemes including the proposed Home Upgrade Grant due to commence in 2022; and what steps his Department is taking to ensure integration of energy efficiency schemes.

Greg Hands:

The Government remains committed to improving the energy efficiency of homes as the most sustainable approach to tackling fuel poverty. The Government is investing over £2 billion through projects such as the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG), Local Authority Delivery Scheme, Sustainable Warmth Competition and the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. In addition, the Energy Company Obligation supports home upgrades across Great Britain. These schemes are retrofitting low-incomes households with appropriate measures to make them more energy efficient and cheaper to heat.

Energy Company Obligation: Buildings**Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[81861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether energy customers will be able to refuse any particular measure or installation at their property required under the Energy Company Obligation 4 scheme for 2022-26.

Greg Hands:

Households will be able to refuse any measure or installation at their property under ECO4.

Green Homes Grant Scheme**Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[81853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many and what proportion of the vouchers issued to homeowners under the Green Homes Grant scheme have been extended past their original expiry date as a result of circumstances outside their control.

Greg Hands:

Under the Green Homes Grant Scheme vouchers are issued with a 90 day validity period.

The validity period of many vouchers has been extended on request. However, data on voucher extensions is not collected.

■ Help to Grow Scheme**Kate Green:**[\[85251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it is his policy to allocate the number of places on Help to Grow Management courses by (a) region in England and (b) devolved nation in the UK.

Kate Green:[\[85252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many places he has allocated for Help to Grow Management in each (a) region of England and (b) devolved nation of the UK in (i) 2021-22, (ii) 2022-23 and (iii) 2023-24.

Paul Scully:

Help to Grow: Management aims to support up to 30,000 small and medium-sized (SME) businesses to boost their leadership and management capability over the lifetime of the programme. The programme will be delivered across all regions of England and the Devolved Administrations, and we will work with our delivery partner and the Small Business Charter accredited business schools to ensure that there is strong take up of the programme in every region, and that we effectively support all areas of the UK with lower productivity, in alignment with Government's levelling up agenda.

■ Insolvency**Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[82265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether there is a threshold for the number of customers a company must have to be entered into the Special Administration Regime, rather than using the Supplier of Last Resort mechanism.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 1 December 2021]: There is no set threshold at which a company would be entered into a Special Administration Regime. Ofgem consider the specifics of the failed supplier and the circumstances in the supply market at the time. If Ofgem considers a Special Administration Regime appropriate, it may make an application to the Court for a decision, with the consent of the Secretary of State.

■ Oil: Shetland**Claudia Webbe:**[\[78514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the (a) accuracy of reports that burning all 800 million

barrels of oil in the new Cambo oil field would be ten times the annual emissions of Scotland and (b) the implications for the UK's climate commitments of that matter.

Greg Hands:

No decision has yet been made regarding the proposed Cambo field, which is expected to produce up to 170 million barrels of oil over 25 years.

The figure of 800 million barrels refers to an estimate of Cambo's total oil in place, of which only a fraction can be feasibly produced.

Oil and gas production from existing licenses is already factored into our projections of future supply, and even as we move towards net zero, we will remain net importers of oil and gas.

■ **Post Offices: ICT**

Peter Grant:

[\[85322\]](#)

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 applications were made to the Post Office's Historical Shortfall Scheme, which was open from May 2020 to November 2020.

Peter Grant:

[\[85323\]](#)

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 to the Post Office's Historical Shortfall Scheme have been processed.

Peter Grant:

[\[85324\]](#)

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 to the Post Office's Historical Shortfall Scheme have had an award paid from the scheme.

Peter Grant:

[\[85325\]](#)

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 to the Post Office's Historical Shortfall Scheme have been refused an award by the 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.

■ **Renewable Energy: Community Development**

Helen Hayes:

[\[84417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to encourage growth of community energy projects.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 3 December 2021]: The Government has received the Environmental Audit Committee's (EAC) report into community energy, which makes several recommendations to government.

In order to support community energy projects, the Government funds the Rural Community Energy Fund. The £10 million scheme supports rural communities in England to develop renewable energy projects, which provide economic and social benefits to their community. We also continue to work with Community Energy England to share best practice within the sector, so less experienced communities can learn from those already operating.

Helen Hayes:[\[84418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential barriers to community energy projects; and what steps he is taking to tackle those barriers.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 3 December 2021]: The Government has received the Environmental Audit Committee's (EAC) report into community energy, which makes several recommendations to government.

In order to support community energy projects, the Government funds the Rural Community Energy Fund. The £10 million scheme supports rural communities in England to develop renewable energy projects, which provide economic and social benefits to their community. We also continue to work with Community Energy England to share best practice within the sector, so less experienced communities can learn from those already operating.

■ Small Businesses: Carbon Emissions**Seema Malhotra:**[\[84363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps his Department has taken to inform SME businesses of how to reduce their carbon emissions.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 3 December 2021]: We continue to support UK businesses to meet their net zero commitments alongside engaging large corporates. The former Net Zero Business Champion, my Hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs, led the Race to Zero, a campaign targeting small and micro businesses across the UK. To date 2,507 have joined. Through our small business campaign, the Government has taken an important step towards making net zero relevant to SMEs by helping them access the support they need.

Once they have made the small business climate commitment, businesses receive monthly communications directly from BEIS with the latest policy and regulatory

changes, and opportunities such as educational events, consultations and competitions as well as the Together For Our Planet digital toolkit.

■ SME Climate Hub

Seema Malhotra:

[84364]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2021 to Question 78413, on SME Climate Hub, how many and what proportion of small businesses in the UK have signed up to the SME climate hub.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 3 December 2021]: Currently, 2507 UK SMEs have made the SME Climate Commitment (including 14 in overseas territories, and 17 awaiting approval).

UK has by far the most signups in the world; the total constitutes just under 80% of global SME Climate Commitments, and is an order of magnitude higher than the next best country (US on 121).

Since May 2021, when the UK Business Climate Hub was launched, an average of 65 businesses per week have made the commitment. This number has accelerated to an average of 82 per week over November.

UK commitments span every devolved nation and region in the country, and 26 different sectors.

■ Space Debris

Sir Greg Knight:

[85196]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the volume of debris and space junk including obsolete satellites that are orbiting the earth; what assessment he has made of the potential danger such items in orbit pose to (a) human life and (b) operational satellites in orbit; and if he will make a statement.

George Freeman:

The UK is the leading contributor to the European Space Agency's Space Safety programme, who estimate there may be more than 36,000 pieces of space debris in orbit larger than 10cm. This is just the number we can reliably track, there are likely to be many millions of smaller objects:

https://www.esa.int/Safety_Security/Space_Debris/Space_debris_by_the_numbers.

Debris and the risk it poses to UK satellites is monitored 365 days of the year by the UK Space Agency and Ministry of Defence. The UK is taking action on space debris by enhancing our national capabilities to warn of dangerous collisions in orbit and agree new international rules on sustainable operations in space.

■ Telecommunications: Climate Change

Grahame Morris:

[\[83313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to climate proof basic infrastructure, such as utility cabling, from extreme weather conditions by encouraging the use of underground ducting in preference to overhead cabling.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 2 December 2021]: Great Britain has one of the most robust energy systems in the world, however, we recognise that risks from climate-related hazards will become more common as our dependence on electricity grows and the variability of our weather increases.

BEIS is working with the energy industry, regulators and other stakeholders to reduce vulnerabilities and ensure an effective response to actual or potentially disruptive incidents to ensure security of supply.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Conflict of Interests

Feryal Clark:

[\[84503\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent steps he has taken to eliminate conflicts of interest in Government business.

Michael Ellis:

The Ministerial Code and the Civil Service Code both set out the requirement for Ministers and Civil Servants (including Special Advisers) to act with integrity. Under these codes, it is not appropriate for a conflict of interest to exist and any such conflicts must be resolved. Further requirements are set out in those Codes and in the Civil Service Management Code regarding the declaration, assessment and management of outside interest - these details include how any actual, perceived or potential conflicts should be handled. For Ministers, the Independent Adviser, Lord Geidt, provides independent advice about outside interests. For Civil Servants, the independent Civil Service Commission is able to consider where the requirements of the Civil Service Code have not been met.

The Prime Minister asked Nigel Boardman to conduct an independent review into the development and use of supply chain finance in government earlier this year. Mr Boardman provided recommendations which were published on 16 September, some of which were in relation to improved management of outside interests in the Civil Service.

The government also notes the work of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs and Treasury Committees, as well as the Standards Matter 2 report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life. We will consider their work alongside Mr

Boardman's recommendations and set out a substantive government policy statement to Parliament in due course.

■ **Government Departments: Contracts**

John Healey:

[\[85186\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many Government contracts there have been where Departments have sought and (a) received and (b) not received assurances regarding contractor's tax affairs, by Department, since 2014-15.

Michael Ellis:

This information is not held centrally.

■ **UK Commission on Covid Commemoration**

Cat Smith:

[\[86113\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to announce the (a) membership and (b) terms of reference of the commission on covid-19 commemoration.

Michael Ellis:

The Government fully recognises the need to remember those who have died during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 12 May, the Prime Minister announced the establishment of a UK Commission on Covid Commemoration to consider the most appropriate way to remember those who have lost their lives and to recognise those involved in the unprecedented response. The Government will set out the Commission membership and terms of reference in due course.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

Jim Shannon:

[\[84358\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment the Church has made of where persecution of religion and belief is most concerning.

Andrew Selous:

Government restrictions on religion or belief have increased globally in recent years as have societal hostilities. Studies undertaken by the Pew Research Centre indicate that the level of religious restrictions is highest in the Middle East-North Africa region, but that some of the biggest increases in religious restrictions over the past decade have occurred in Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, while the levels of social hostilities towards religion or belief norms have increase most in the Americas, Europe and sub-Saharan Africa.

Jim Shannon:

[84359]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church is taking to support teachers and education.

Andrew Selous:

The Church of England has invested substantial resource in supporting the development of teachers and education.

At a diocesan level, every diocese has an Education team which provides training and support for the 4,600 Church of England schools across England.

At a national level the Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership has invested in peer support leadership networks in which over 1,200 schools participate. These cover a variety of subjects important to education and also offer support for addressing mental health and well-being, grief, trauma and other issues that have been particularly important through the pandemic. The Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership also provides excellent leadership development programmes and the Church of England is one of 9 national providers of National Professional Qualifications, offering the suite of NPQs to ensure CPD for staff in Church of England, catholic and community school is prioritised. These NPQs are fully funded for all teachers in all state schools in England and are a brilliant opportunity for teachers and schools to benefit from high quality coaching, support and CPD.

COP26

■ Climate Change

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[76581]

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he plans to take help encourage signatories of the Glasgow Pact to implement domestic climate change mitigation policies.

Alok Sharma:

We will continue to demonstrate strong UK leadership over our Presidency year, working with our COP26 partners Italy, the incoming COP Presidency Egypt, the Chairs of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies, the UNFCCC Secretariat, parties and civil society partners to build on the momentum and high ambition from COP26 to ensure that countries deliver on their commitments.

The Paris Rulebook, for how the Paris Agreement is delivered, was also completed at COP26. This will allow for the full delivery of the landmark accord, after agreement on a transparency process which will hold countries to account as they deliver on their targets.

The Glasgow Climate Pact requests Parties to revisit and strengthen the 2030 targets in their nationally determined contributions as necessary to align with the Paris Agreement temperature goal by the end of 2022, taking into account different national circumstances. We will continue to use the year of our COP26 Presidency to keep up

the pressure to deliver on the commitments made, and urge parties to go further and faster on delivering on climate change.

■ Coal: Climate Change

Rachael Maskell:

[\[75925\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what assessment he has made of the likelihood of achieving a new global deal on coal by COP27.

Alok Sharma:

At COP26, all parties agreed to phase down the use of coal. The Glasgow Climate Pact secured its specific mention for the first time ever. The Global Coal to Clean Power Transition Statement gained 77 signatures from countries, subnationals, and organisations, and the Powering Past Coal Alliance grew to 165 members. The Just Energy Transition Partnership for South Africa was also announced, which will demonstrate the strength of a just transition from coal to clean power.

Consigning coal to history remains a priority for the UK in our COP Presidency year. The UK Presidency will work alongside the Powering Past Coal Alliance, Energy Transition Council, and other international mechanisms to ensure that there is more progress on moving from coal to clean power by COP27. This includes a strategic partnership between the Energy Transition Council and the Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet, a \$10 billion fund aiming to deliver clean, renewable energy to 1 billion people in developing countries. Clean power is already cheaper than coal in most of the world, generating more jobs, and giving people cleaner air as well as a safer climate. We want to help all countries access those benefits as soon as possible.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021

Rachael Maskell:

[\[75924\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what his priorities are for the remainder of his presidency of COP26.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[75926\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what his priorities will be for COP27.

Alok Sharma:

The Glasgow Climate Pact, combined with increased ambition across adaptation, finance and mitigation means that 1.5°C remains in sight, but only with concerted and immediate global efforts. So our Presidency year, which started in Glasgow and will end at COP27 in November 2022, will continue to focus on high ambition and driving ambition across our four goals: mitigation, adaptation, finance and collaboration. Through the UK's Presidency year, we will build on the legacy of the Glasgow Climate Pact.

The Glasgow Climate Pact requests Parties to revisit and strengthen the 2030 targets in their nationally determined contributions as necessary to align with the Paris

Agreement temperature goal by the end of 2022, taking into account different national circumstances. We will continue to use the year of our COP26 Presidency to keep up the pressure to deliver on the commitments made and go further and faster.

We will continue to demonstrate strong UK leadership over our Presidency year, working with our COP26 partners Italy, the incoming COP Presidency Egypt, the Chairs of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies, the UNFCCC Secretariat, parties and civil society partners to build on the momentum and high ambition from COP26.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[76657\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the actions agreed at COP26 on the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 celsius.

Alok Sharma:

Our key aim was to keep alive the possibility of limiting the rise in global temperature to 1.5°C, and we have delivered. But this is based on commitments made and relies on concerted and dedicated delivery by all countries.

The UK Presidency has also given significantly more focus to championing real world sectoral action than ever before and as a result has garnered significant commitments across high emitting sectors of coal, nature and land use, road transport, and methane, critical to achieving a 1.5 degree pathway.

Pledges, initiatives and funding announced in Glasgow have contributed to reducing the significant gap to achieving 1.5. The Glasgow Climate Pact requests Parties to revisit and strengthen the 2030 targets in their nationally determined contributions as necessary to align with the Paris Agreement temperature goal by the end of 2022, taking into account different national circumstances.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces: Families

John Healey:

[\[83240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to publish the Armed Forces Family Strategy by the end of 2021.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence intends to publish the Armed Forces Families Strategy in December 2021.

■ Army: Reorganisation

John Healey:

[\[83243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 10 of the Future Soldier Guide, when he expects the Force Mental Health team to be established within the Field Army.

Leo Docherty:

The new high readiness Force Mental Health Team is planned to be established by November 2023, but its formation and some delivery will begin as soon as personnel become available. There will be two new teams, one within each of two new Multi-Role Medical Regiments, consisting of Mental Health Nurses with access to an on-call Psychiatrist.

John Healey:[\[83245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 23 of the Future Soldier Guide, when he plans to publish the Land Industrial Strategy.

Jeremy Quin:

The Land Industrial Strategy continues to be refined following engagement with industry and academia. It will be published as soon as possible.

Chris Loder:[\[83487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the future possibilities for British defence manufacture under the Future Soldier plan for the Army.

Jeremy Quin:

As set out in DSIS there will be significant opportunities for UK Defence Manufacturers in meeting the requirements for enhanced Army Capabilities. Further information will be available on the publication of the Equipment Plan and Land Industrial Strategy.

■ Army: York**Rachael Maskell:**[\[82348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces personnel will be located in York to support the new 19th Battalion of the Reservists planned to be based in York.

James Heappey:

The reformed 19th Brigade will be specifically designed to command and force generate Army Reserve combat units and will be established in 2022. Headquarters 19th Brigade will be located at Imphal Barracks in York, with a workforce requirement of approximately 20 personnel.

Headquarters 19th Brigade will relocate with Headquarters 1st (UK) Division to Catterick in 2029, prior to the disposal of Imphal Barracks in 2030.

Rachael Maskell:[\[82349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, where in York he plans to base the new 19th Reserve Battalion dealing with civil resilience.

James Heappey:

The reformed 19th Brigade will be specifically designed to command and force generate Army Reserve combat units and will be established in 2022. Headquarters

19th Brigade will be located at Imphal Barracks in York, with a workforce requirement of approximately 20 personnel.

Headquarters 19th Brigade will relocate with Headquarters 1st (UK) Division to Catterick in 2029, prior to the disposal of Imphal Barracks in 2030.

■ **Defence Digital and Submarine Delivery Authority: Incentives**

Mr Mark Francois:

[81878]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether bonus payments have been made to the (a) Head of Defence Digital and (b) Head of the Submarine Delivery Authority during their current terms of office as of 25 November 2021.

Leo Docherty:

The Head of Defence Digital (Chief Information Officer) has not received any bonus payments during their current term of office.

The annual performance awards made to the Chief Executive Officer of the Submarine Delivery Agency are detailed in the Agency's Annual Report and Accounts:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/submarine-delivery-agency-sda-annual-report-and-accounts>

The Annual Report and Accounts for 2020-21 will be published in due course. No award has yet been paid for 2020-21.

■ **Defence Equipment and Support: Incentives**

Mr Mark Francois:

[81877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will provide details of all bonuses paid to the current head of Defence Equipment and Support, broken down by (a) year, (b) amount and (c) reason for the award.

Jeremy Quin:

The current Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), Sir Simon Bollom, has been in post since 21 May 2018.

The annual performance awards paid to date to the CEO are detailed in the DE&S Annual Report and Accounts for 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Performance awards are based on meeting a number of challenging targets alongside assessment from the DE&S Board Chair and Ministry of Defence Permanent Secretary.

■ **Gurkhas: Pensions**

Stephen Morgan:

[84457]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of the disparity in funding between the Gurkha Pension Scheme and pensions for UK members of the armed forces on the widows of Gurkhas.

Leo Docherty:

It is not possible to directly compare the two pension schemes as they are designed for different purposes, but both are fair. Legacy Gurkha pensions are different but are objectively and reasonably justified and suited the circumstances of the time.

Gurkhas who left after 15 years' service will have received pension payments for over 25 years before most British soldiers of the same rank and length of service would receive a pension under the AFPS. In most cases the lifetime value of a pension provided under the legacy GPS is of a similar or higher value than a pension provided under the AFPS. Provision for widows is set at 60% of pension for the GPS and 50% under AFPS.

Stephen Morgan:[\[84458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent estimate he has made of the cost of providing Gurkhas on the Gurkha Pension Scheme a retrospective pension equivalent to their UK counterparts.

Leo Docherty:

We do not make retrospective changes to public pensions. For most Gurkha veterans the 1948 legacy Gurkha Pension Scheme (GPS) provides a pension at least as good, and in many cases better, than that given to their British counterparts with identical periods of service. Our view is that the 1948 legacy GPS is a very fair scheme.

Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft: Accidents**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[81879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the recent ditching of the F-35B aircraft in the Mediterranean Sea, for what reason the pilot so ejected from that aircraft.

James Heappey:

A Service Inquiry is in the process of being convened to investigate the circumstances and cause of this accident, and as such it is inappropriate to speculate on the cause of the accident or the pilot's ejection.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**Broadband: Brigg and Goole****Andrew Percy:**[\[83305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of properties have access to superfast broadband in Brigg and Goole constituency.

Julia Lopez:

According to the independent website [Thinkbroadband](#), over 94.5% of premises in the constituency of Brigg and Goole have access to superfast broadband (≥ 30 Mbps).

■ Broadband: Stockport

Navendu Mishra:

[83505]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support the roll out of full fibre to the premises ultrafast broadband in Stockport.

Julia Lopez:

At present, 93% of premises can access ultrafast broadband (>100Mbps) in the constituency of Stockport, which compares favourably with the UK average of 69.03% (Thinkbroadband).

As announced in our [latest Project Gigabit delivery update](#), the Government is assessing further Regional Supplier procurements for areas such as Stockport, where very extensive commercial delivery continues. We will provide further information for Greater Manchester and Merseyside (Lot 36) in future quarterly updates.

We also continue to subsidise telecoms providers to deliver connections to the hardest-to-reach areas through the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme. A total of 48 vouchers have been used to support gigabit connections in the Stockport constituency so far, worth £123,083.

Additionally, there is an ongoing partnership between Virgin Media Business and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) to deliver a project under the Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN) programme. The project is partly funded by the UK Government and will underpin a wide range of digital transformation and smart city projects aimed at improving the lives of those who live in Greater Manchester.

In its first year alone, the Greater Manchester LFFN project, which is the largest within the programme, has delivered £11.8 million of economic benefit to the region through the programme's commitment to local employment.

The ongoing delivery through this project will deliver full-fibre connectivity to 1,500 public sites across the city region. Stockport is at the forefront of this project, with 134 of the 138 public sector sites covered by the project within the town having received a full-fibre connection.

■ Cinemas

Justin Tomlinson:

[83354]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government can take to protect the exclusivity window that cinemas have for new film releases.

Julia Lopez:

The Government recognises the important cultural and economic value of cinemas, which is why we are pleased to have supported the sector during the pandemic with £33.8 million of Culture Recovery Fund awards and our generous package of pan-economy measures.

In film distribution, an exclusivity window is the period of time for which a film is only available in cinemas before it is released more widely, such as on a video-on-demand service. The Government encourages industry to work together on the agreements regarding exclusivity windows and does not intend to intervene.

■ Internet: Harrassment

Ruth Cadbury: [84370]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department has taken to tackle online abuse of school staff.

Ruth Cadbury: [84371]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with (a) the Secretary of State for Education and (b) officials in the Department of Education on tackling online abuse of teachers.

Ruth Cadbury: [84372]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment has she made of the levels of online abuse of school staff.

Chris Philp:

The recent increase in online abuse towards school staff is unacceptable. Under the draft Online Safety Bill, companies in scope will need to minimise and remove illegal content including criminal online abuse.

Major platforms will also need to address legal but harmful content for adults. These companies will have to set out clearly what legal content is acceptable on their platforms and enforce their terms and conditions consistently and transparently.

If platforms fail in their duties under the Bill, they will face tough enforcement action including fines of up to 10% of global annual qualifying turnover.

Ministers have regular meetings and discussions with their ministerial colleagues on a range of issues, including online abuse. Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.

■ Live Events Reinsurance Scheme

Lucy Powell: [85274]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many applications have been received for the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme since its opening.

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 Covid-19 pandemic has presented. The Live Events Reinsurance Scheme is designed to provide confidence to event organisers and enable them to plan future events, thereby supporting the economic recovery out of Covid-19.

The scheme is a reinsurance scheme whereby insurers provide cover to purchasers, and eligible policies are then reinsured under a reinsurance contract with the government - the terms of which are publicly available. As such the government does not receive applications to the scheme: policies are either eligible or ineligible.

■ **Social Media: Eating Disorders and Self-harm**

Andrew Percy: **[83304]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to hold social media platforms accountable for content promoting eating disorders and self-harm on their platforms.

Chris Philp:

The strongest protections in the Online Safety Bill will be for children. Services in scope of the Bill which are likely to be accessed by children will need to do much more to protect them from harmful content. This includes content promoting eating disorders or self-harm content.

Major platforms will also need to address legal but harmful content accessed by adults.

The Government will set out in secondary legislation priority categories of harmful material for children and adults. If platforms fail in their duties under the Bill, they will face tough enforcement action including fines of up to 10% of global annual qualifying turnover.

The Government asked the Law Commission to review current legislation on harmful online communications. It has now published final recommendations, which includes a proposed new offence to address the encouragement of self-harm. The Government is considering the Law Commission's recommendations and will set out our position in due course.

■ **Sports Competitors: Visas**

Kevin Hollinrake: **[84412]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure professional athletes can train visa free for more than 180 days outside the UK.

Nigel Huddleston:

It is up to the individual (including professional athletes) to check the rules of each country they intend to travel to ahead of time, whether an EU member state or non-EU country, in case they need to apply for a visa, work permit, or provide other documentation. UK nationals are able to travel visa-free to the Schengen Area for short-term visits (up to 90 days in 180) for a limited number of activities, including attending sporting events, tourism and short-term study. For those undertaking longer-term stays (exceeding the 90 days limit), a visa and/or work permit may be required directly from the host nation.

■ Streaming and Television: Advertising

Chi Onwurah:

[83370]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2021 to Question 80988, for what reason advertising on online services and broadcast services is regulated differently with regard to length of adverts.

Julia Lopez:

For television, the restrictions on the amount and scheduling of advertising are set out in Ofcom's [Code on the Scheduling of Television Advertising](#) (COSTA). No such restrictions apply to commercial radio stations.

COSTA places no limits on the amount of advertising an on-demand programme service can show. Regulation designed for broadcast services has not always been directly transposed to apply to online services. This reflects the more complex, non-linear nature of online advertising. The regulation of online advertising is currently under review.

■ Tourism: Coronavirus

Seema Malhotra:

[84367]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the impact on businesses in the tourism sector of the temporary measures in respect of the wearing of face coverings and self-isolation approved by the House on 30 November 2021.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government has put in place a measured and proportionate set of restrictions.

Hospitality businesses are exempt from enforcing customers to wear masks and this assessment has been made from a practical point of view as the nature of hospitality visits is to eat and drink.

The Government has worked to strike a balance with introducing new measures.

Face coverings will be required in shops including ones located in larger premises and retail travel agents. Masks will also be required in transport hubs.

In terms of international travel, the government has sought advice from the UK Health Security Agency (UKSA) and travellers into the UK must now take a PCR test on Day 2 instead of a lateral flow test. There is also mandatory isolation in place to ensure we have the strongest safeguards against importing the new variant. This is to allow time for operational implementation.

Businesses still have a legal duty to manage risks to those affected by their business by carrying out a health and safety risk assessment, including the risk of COVID-19.

We are continuing to listen to stakeholders during this time.

EDUCATION■ **Children: Disability**

Alexander Stafford: [84529]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the impact on wellbeing of disabled children and families as result of the taken for those children to receive respite and short break services.

Will Quince:

I refer the hon. Member for Rother Valley to the answer I gave on 19 November 2021 to Question [76049](#).

■ **Families: Government Assistance**

Caroline Lucas: [83302]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to require local authorities to record and publish the number of families they support through Section 17 of the Children Act (1989), including reasons for the support; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

There are no plans to require local authorities to publish this information.

All local authorities in England are required to record and submit detailed data through the annual children in need census. This is published by the department at both national and local authority level. It includes data on both primary needs for assessment and on prevalent factors at the end of the assessment and is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/characteristics-of-children-in-need-2020-to-2021>.

■ **National Vocational Qualifications: National Income**

Kate Green: [85253]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's publication Build Back Better: Our Plan for Growth, if he will publish the (a) number of people aged between 16 and 64 that qualified to NVQ4+ in each NUTS2 region in England and (b) gross value added per hour worked in each of those regions in the most recent year for which both sets of data are available.

Alex Burghart:

The Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Nomis data portal provides official labour market statistics. The attached table provides the number of people aged between 16 and 64 that are qualified to NVQ4+ in each Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics 2 (NUTS2) region in England in 2020 as estimated from the annual population survey.

Latest data on gross value added per hour worked is published by the ONS and available here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/labourproductivity/datasets/subregionalproductivitylabourproductivitygvaperhourworkedandgvaperfilledjobindicesbyuknuts2andnuts3subregions>. This data release uses International Territorial Levels as the new UK geographies classification system. This has superseded the NUTS classification system. This transition has not changed the names of regions or the areas covered by them.

Attachments:

1. 85253_table
[85253_number_of_people_qualified_to_NVQ4+_in_each_NUTS2_region_table.xls]

■ **Pre-school Education: Scotland**

Luke Pollard:

[\[83462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the inclusion of sustainability in The National Standard for early years learning and childcare providers in Scotland, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including sustainability in the inspection criteria for early year settings.

Will Quince:

This is a matter for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman. I have asked her to write to the hon. Member and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ **Schools: Exercise and Sports**

Justin Tomlinson:

[\[83355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to encourage uptake in school sports and physical activities.

Will Quince:

The cross-government School Sport and Activity Action Plan (July 2019) aims to ensure that sport and physical activity are an integral part of both the school day and after school activities so that all children can take part in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. The government has confirmed its intention to publish an update to the action plan shortly.

In October 2021 the government announced that it will invest nearly £30 million per year to open up school sport facilities in England, as well as to improve the teaching of physical education (PE) at primary school. More detail will be confirmed on this additional investment in due course.

Through the primary PE and sport premium, the government has invested over £1.6 billion of ringfenced funding to primary schools to improve PE and sport since 2013.

■ Schools: Mental Health Services

Sarah Champion:

[83385]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Government plans to introduce a statutory requirement to have a trained mental health professional or counsellor in every school in England.

Will Quince:

The government remains committed to promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges. The department recognises that it is more important now than ever that children and young people have access to the support they need for their mental health and wellbeing, and we know that having the right provision within education settings is key to ensuring they do so.

Schools already support the mental wellbeing of their pupils as part of their curriculum provision and pastoral support, which is paid for from schools' core funding. The autumn 2021 Spending Review delivers an additional £4.7 billion for the core schools' budget by 2024-25, compared to previous plans.

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

These teams are comprised of newly trained Education Mental Health Practitioners, an entirely new role, as well as more senior clinicians and therapists, they work alongside existing provision, such as counselling services, to help ensure children and young people get the support they need. They support staff within schools and colleges to develop their whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing, as well as providing early intervention for those experiencing mild to moderate issues and liaising with external specialist services where additional support is needed.

The government is providing £9.5 million to offer senior mental health lead training to around a third of all state schools and colleges in England in the 2021/22 financial year. The senior mental health lead is a strategic leadership role, with responsibility for overseeing the school's 'whole school approach' to mental health and wellbeing. As part of this training, leads will learn about how to develop a culture and ethos that promotes positive mental health wellbeing, as well as how to make the best use of local resources, including counselling services, to support children and young people experiencing issues.

School-based counselling, by well-qualified practitioners, can be an effective part of a 'whole school approach'. Our national survey of school provision, published in 2017, found that 61% of schools offered counselling services, with 84% of secondary schools providing their pupils with access to counselling support. Recently, findings from the department's COVID-19 School Snapshot Survey in July 2021, found that

96% of schools were providing support in school for pupils identified as having mental health needs.

The department has produced guidance on how to deliver high quality school-based counselling, to further support schools who have decided that counselling support is appropriate for their pupils. As a result of the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, the department has committed to updating this guidance to make sure it reflects the current context.

The guidance sets out our strong expectation that over time, all schools will offer counselling services, alongside other interventions.

However, with regards to mandating counselling for schools, the department will not be doing so as we believe it is vital that schools have the freedom to decide what support to offer their pupils, based on their particular needs.

■ **Schools: Ventilation**

Ian Byrne:

[\[85399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Government's announcement of 21 August 2021 that all school settings would be provided with CO2 monitors during the autumn term, how many CO2 monitors have been supplied to schools in Liverpool West Derby constituency as of 1 December 2021.

Ian Byrne:

[\[85400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Government's announcement of 21 August 2021 that all school settings would be provided with CO2 monitors during the autumn term, how many CO2 monitors have been supplied to schools in England as of 1 December 2021.

Ian Byrne:

[\[85401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Government's announcement of 21 August 2021 that all school settings would be provided with CO2 monitors during the autumn term and that special schools would receive them from September 2021, how many CO2 monitors have been supplied to special schools in Liverpool West Derby as of 1 December 2021.

Ian Byrne:

[\[85402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Government's announcement of 21 August 2021 that all school settings would be provided with CO2 monitors during the autumn term, and that special schools would receive them from September 2021, how many CO2 monitors have been supplied to special schools in England as of 1 December 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

As of 26 November, the department has delivered 329,231 carbon dioxide monitors to almost all eligible education and childcare settings, backed by £25 million in government funding.

Special schools and alternative provision were prioritised for the first deliveries, given their higher than average number of vulnerable pupils. Deliveries to these settings are now complete.

Over 99% of eligible schools, colleges, and the majority of early years settings have now received their allocation of CO2 monitors. Final deliveries will be made before the end of term, enabling all settings to identify areas where ventilation can be improved and provide reassurance that existing measures are working.

The department does not hold data on the number of settings by ward or parliamentary constituency. However, further information can be found on the fortnightly statistical release at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/co2-monitors-cumulative-delivery-statistics>.

■ Special Educational Needs

Thangam Debbonaire:

[84391]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if the Government will provide additional support to local authorities to meet increased demands for statutory assessments for Education and Health Care Plans for children, beyond specific support from the Department for Education and Ofsted to manage historical backlogs.

Will Quince:

The Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities is responsible for local government funding, including funding necessary to support local authorities to meet their statutory duties with regards to all children's services, including special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services.

This year, local authorities have access to £51.3 billion to deliver their core services, including SEND services. Local authorities have the flexibility to spend according to local needs and priorities, including to undertake education, health and care needs assessments.

The autumn 2021 Spending Review delivered an additional £4.7 billion for the core schools' budget by financial year 2024-25. That includes an additional £1.6 billion for schools and high needs in financial year 2022-23, on top of the funding we announced last summer. The department will confirm in due course how this additional funding for 2022-23, and for the two subsequent years, will be allocated for schools and high needs. Increasing funding for schools should help to reduce the demand for statutory assessment, thereby reducing the burden on local authorities.

We have introduced the 'safety valve' intervention programme for those local authorities with the very highest percentage dedicated schools grant deficits. The programme requires the local authorities involved to develop substantial plans for reform to their high needs systems, with support and challenge from the department, to rapidly place them on a sustainable footing, including appropriately managing demand for education. The department will help these local authorities with additional funding over time to contribute to their historic deficits, contingent on delivery of reforms and targets set out in published agreements.

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

Thangam Debbonaire:

[84392]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate the Government has made of the proportion of Education and Health Care Plans that have been issued within 20 weeks nationally.

Will Quince:

The number and percentage of education, health and care (EHC) plans that have been issued within the statutory timescale of 20 weeks is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/9641146e-f32a-4f3f-925c-bde4cc238be0>.

The latest published data shows that 58.0% (31,446) of EHC plans issued in 2020, excluding exceptions, were issued within 20 weeks.

■ Vocational Education: British National (Overseas)

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[83255]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether Hong Kongers aged 24 and over on the British National (Overseas) Visa have immediate access to the Government's National Skills Fund, including access to the Skills Bootcamps and free level 3 qualifications for adults.

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[83256]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether Hong Kong British National (Overseas) passport holders arriving in the UK have immediate access to Government-funded adult vocational training.

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[83257]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether Hong Kong British National (Overseas) passport holders will have access to the Lifelong Loan Entitlement when it launches from 2025.

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[83258]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether Hong Kong British National (Overseas) passport holders have access to funding for training for adults through the adult education budget on arrival to the UK.

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[83259]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what vocational training options are available for adult British National (Overseas) passport holders on arrival to the UK; and whether funding options for that education are immediately available to those people.

Alex Burghart:

Full details on education and training for those arriving from Hong Kong on the British Nationals (Overseas Visa), are set out in the government's welcome pack for arrivals from Hong Kong on the British Nationals (Overseas) visa. The welcome pack is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1013244/HK_BN_O_Welcome_Pack_August_2021.pdf.

Hong Kong British Nationals and their dependents have access to further education (FE) and training for those aged 16-19, whether that's in school sixth forms for 16-18 year-olds or other FE settings for 16-19 year-olds. In line with existing eligibility rules, and after three years ordinary residency in the UK, they will have access to further education and training for adults (19 years and above).

The Lifelong Learning Entitlement will be introduced from 2025 and the department will consult on its scope and policy in due course, as part of our planned pathway to delivery.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Albatrosses: Climate Change****Ruth Jones:****[82085]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of climate change on the albatross population.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK's seabirds are an important part of our natural heritage, and their protection is a high priority for this Government.

The UK is committed to the conservation of albatrosses through its membership of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP). The UK ratified ACAP in 2004 and ACAP action plans have been developed and formally adopted for each UK South Atlantic Overseas Territory (SAOT). The Action Plans currently focus efforts at coordinating actions and research to mitigate known priority threats to ACAP species, including incidental mortality in commercial fisheries, introduced predators, pollution and climate change. To assess these threats, the population status of ACAP species across the UK SAOTs is regularly monitored, with comprehensive demographic studies undertaken at a number of sites.

The 2019 Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Report identified climate change as one of the leading drivers of biodiversity loss, including as a key threat to species. The Convention on Biological Diversity is the global treaty on biodiversity aiming to tackle these drivers. The UK is playing a leading role in developing an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework under the Convention, and we are calling for ambitious global targets to bend the curve of biodiversity loss by 2030. This includes targets to ensure at least 30% of the land and

of the ocean globally is protected, ecosystems are restored, species population sizes are recovering and that by 2050 extinctions are halted.

■ **Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control**

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[85184]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he will take to (a) make epidemiological assessments and (b) measure bTB levels before the Government decides culling permits for new badger culls; and what levels of disease will be reached before decisions on permits are made.

Jo Churchill:

As set out in the Government response to Professor Sir Charles Godfray's review of the bTB strategy[1] [2], the next step of the strategy involves phasing out badger culling to focus on the wider rollout of badger vaccination. In the Government's response to the January 2021 consultation[3], we stated that no new intensive cull licences will be issued after 2022 and new supplementary badger culling licences have been limited to a maximum of two years.

However, culling would remain an option where epidemiological assessment indicates that it is needed. We are still developing the policy to licence badger culling under these exceptional circumstances. Once developed, we intend to consult on the Government's proposals.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-strategy-for-achieving-bovine-tuberculosis-free-status-for-england-2018-review>

[2] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-strategy-for-achieving-bovine-tuberculosis-free-status-for-england-2018-review-government-response>

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

■ **Compost: Peat**

Theresa Villiers:

[85203]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish his consultation on banning the use of peat in amateur horticulture.

Rebecca Pow:

We intend to publish this consultation in December 2021.

■ **Deposit Return Schemes**

Ruth Jones:

[82094]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that forthcoming deposit return schemes in the devolved nations are (a) interoperable and (b) do not disadvantage consumers or businesses based on their geography.

Ruth Jones:

[82095]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what meetings he plans to hold with his counterparts in the devolved Administrations to discuss the coordination of the delivery of deposit return schemes in the four nations of the UK.

Ruth Jones:

[82096]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that forthcoming Deposit Return Schemes are part of a UK-wide recycling ecosystem and that consumers and businesses are not disadvantaged based on their geography.

Jo Churchill:

Although waste management is a devolved policy, we work closely with colleagues in devolved administrations to ensure consistency where possible. Ministers regularly meet with colleagues in the devolved administrations to discuss a range of issues.

■ **Farming Investment Fund: West Dorset**

Chris Loder:

[R] [83484]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of farmers who will benefit from the Farming Investment Fund in West Dorset.

Victoria Prentis:

The Farming Investment Fund is not geographically targeted. I would encourage farmers, growers, foresters and contractors in all areas, including those in West Dorset, to consider what equipment, technology and infrastructure would most improve their business and to take this opportunity to invest to help their businesses to prosper.

■ **Fishing Catches**

Virginia Crosbie:

[83523]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to require supertrawlers operating within UK waters to (a) publish catch records, including species discard, (b) report dolphin or other sensitive species bycatch and (c) be transparent with data so that consumer labelling can accurately identify seafood caught using sustainable fishing methods and minimised bycatch.

Victoria Prentis:

The Marine Management Organisation publishes annual statistics on catch, effort and fleet data in aggregated from which includes catch by gear type:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/marine-management-organisation/about/statistics>.

The UK discard/bycatch information, derived from scientific fisheries observer programmes in each of the UK administrations, is the EU Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) database. Data collected up to the end of 2020 have been submitted to the EU STECF in accordance

with UK obligations and can be found here: [Fisheries Dependent Information - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

All wild-capture commercial fishers are required to report incidental mortality or injury (bycatch) of marine mammals during fishing operations to the Marine Management Organisation. These data are used in UK bycatch monitoring programmes to help identify and where possible reduce potential impacts with sensitive marine species. The UK government funds a comprehensive and well-respected bycatch monitoring programme, which provides essential observer data on incidents of sensitive species bycatch. Annual reports are published online here: [Defra, UK - Science Search](#).

UK regulations require fishery and aquaculture product labelling to indicate the production method, area where the product was caught or farmed, and category of fishing gear used in capture of fisheries.

■ Food

Ben Bradley:

[82371]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if the Government's response to the National Food Strategy will consider the significant pressures that the food and logistics sectors are under and deliver strategies to tackle those pressures.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain, as demonstrated throughout the Covid-19 response. There are well-established ways of industry and government working together to respond to risks that arise, including the recent challenges to our supply chains brought on by global pressures. The forthcoming UK Food Resilience Report will set out the detailed evidence around the resilience of our food supply chains.

The Government Food Strategy will build on the UK Food Resilience Report, and identify new opportunities to drive long-term change to make the food system healthier, more sustainable, more resilient, and more accessible for those across the UK. This will include consideration of the immediate pressures facing the sector.

■ Food: Coronavirus

Sarah Owen:

[85390]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of increased covid-19 restrictions abroad on people's access to food in UK supermarkets in the coming weeks.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain, as demonstrated throughout the Covid-19 response, and it is well equipped to deal with situations with the potential to cause disruption. Our high degree of food security is built on supply from diverse sources; strong domestic production as well as imports through stable trade routes. Access to a range of diverse supply chains helps to ensure that any disruption from

risks such as adverse weather, disease, or the imposition of Covid-19 restrictions by exporting countries does not affect the UK's overall security of supply.

Defra have well established ways of working with the food retailers and across Government including the Devolved Administrations to monitor risks that may arise, including from increased Covid-19 restrictions in other countries. This includes extensive, regular and ongoing engagement in preparedness for, and response to, issues with the potential to cause disruption to food supply chains.

■ Hedges and Ditches

Feryal Clark:

[83519]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds report entitled Mind the Gap, published in November 2021; and what steps he is taking to improve agricultural policy to protect hedgerows and wildlife in the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

While no formal assessment of the report has been made, we agree about the value of hedgerows to our countryside. Hedgerows provide vital resources for mammals, birds and insect species, and they also act as wildlife corridors, allowing dispersal between isolated habitats. Many are also important historical and cultural landscape features.

Legal protection for hedgerows in England and Wales is provided by the Hedgerows Regulations 1997. These regulations prohibit the removal of most countryside hedgerows (or parts of them) without first seeking approval from the local planning authority. It decides whether a hedgerow is 'important' and should not be removed because of its wildlife, landscape, historical or archaeological value.

Alongside the Hedgerows Regulations, all wild birds, their eggs and their nests are protected, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, making it an offence to kill, injure or take wild birds or to take or damage their eggs and nests. This provides important protections for farmland birds.

Hedgerows are also protected by standards under cross compliance. As we move away from cross compliance, we have committed to maintaining our high environmental standards. Our new environmental land management schemes will continue to recognise the role and fund the management of hedgerows. The hedgerow standard, part of the new Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme, will pay farmers to plant more hedgerows, leave them uncut or raise the cutting height, and buffer them from agricultural operations.

We will also continue to keep our domestic regulatory standards under review, raising standards sustainably and as needed over time, as new research and evidence emerge.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[82116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what records his Department holds on (a) meetings and (b) correspondence with the hon. Member for Rugby since March 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

No record of meetings with the hon. Member for Rugby is held.

Defra has received 18 items of correspondence from the hon. Member for Rugby since March 2020.

■ **Sewage**

Luke Pollard:

[\[82395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring water companies to review their business plans in the control period to increase investment in reducing raw sewage

Rebecca Pow:

I have been clear that the current level of sewage discharges is unacceptable.

Water companies are committed in the current 5-year business planning period to a significant programme of improvements to monitoring and management of sewer overflows. Water company investment in this area currently totals £3.1 billion, including £1.9 billion of investment in the Thames Tideway Tunnel and £1.2 billion elsewhere delivering over 800 improvement schemes in response to Event Duration Monitoring insights. Water companies must also certify to Ofwat each year that they have the funding, management resources and systems and controls in place to fulfil their regulated activities, including to meet their environmental obligations and should be investing accordingly in order to fulfil their regulatory requirements.

Companies have also already re-opened their business plans as part of our efforts to build back greener from the pandemic. Ofwat approved a draft package of over £2.7 billion and as part of this new package of investment, companies committed an additional £144 million to help eliminate the harm caused by Storm Overflows and trial the creation of two bathing rivers.

The Government has made tackling this 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 Government will take the necessary action to ensure that water companies perform against existing, and new, statutory obligations.

■ **Sewage: Seas and Oceans**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[81926]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the report by Surfers Against Sewage, 2021 Water Quality Report, published on 25 November 2021, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the findings in that report that there has been an increase of 87.6 per cent in sewage discharge notifications over the last 12 months.

Rebecca Pow:

I refer the hon. Member to the answers provided on 1 December 2021 to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam, PQ [82122](#), and to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport, 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.

■ **Trapping**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[83446]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to ban glue traps in England.

Jo Churchill:

In our [Action Plan for Animal Welfare](#), published in May this year, we announced that we would look to restrict the use of glue traps as a means of pest control.

Accordingly, we are supporting the hon. Member for Wolverhampton North East's Glue Traps (Offences) Private Members Bill, which proposes to ban the use of glue traps for catching rodents except in the most exceptional circumstances. The Bill was introduced to Parliament on 16 June, and successfully completed its second reading on 19 November. We will continue to work closely with the hon. Member for Wolverhampton North East over the coming months as the Bill progresses through Parliament.

■ **Walley's Quarry Landfill**

Ruth Jones:

[\[79467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he last discussed Walley's Quarry with the Prime Minister.

Jo Churchill:

Ministers have regular discussions with colleagues in the Prime Minister's Office, as well as the Prime Minister, on a range of issues. Defra officials recently chaired a cross-government meeting to discuss Walleys Quarry.

I visited Walleys Quarry on 2 December 2021, and subsequently met with my honourable Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell), the Environment Agency and representatives from the local community, to further understand the situation and the work underway to resolve this issue.

■ **Walley's Quarry Landfill: Odour Pollution**

Ruth Jones:

[\[79466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to tackle the toxic fumes at Walley's Quarry.

Jo Churchill:

The actions taken by the Environment Agency (EA) at Walleys Quarry have resulted in a significant reduction in the levels of hydrogen sulphide escaping the landfill since March 2021. Its strategy, set out in a revised plan published on 14 October 2021, is to contain, capture, and destroy the gas using a range of complex engineering solutions, with the aim of delivering a long-term solution to the issues caused by the decomposition of previously deposited waste.

Recent actions the EA has instructed the operator to take to tackle the issue include:

- **Additional Capping:** In October, the area of the landfill that is permanently or temporarily capped increased to almost 70% through the application of a material called Posi-shell to the steep flanks of the site. Capping is important as it will contain more of the gas on the site.
- **Improving landfill gas management and collection :** In October, 27 new gas collection wells were installed across the site to capture more of the gas and move it to the gas utilisation plant to be safely destroyed. There are now 82 gas collection wells across the site

- Improving effectiveness of the gas utilisation plant: The EA instructed the operator to increase capacity to destroy hydrogen sulphide. The amount of gas captured and processed on site is now double the amount collected in December 2020.

The EA continues to monitor hydrogen sulphide levels off site using four mobile monitoring facilities stationed around Walleys Quarry. Three of these monitors showed monthly average concentrations below 2 µg/m³ (micro-grams per cubic metre) the long-term (lifetime) health-based guidance values.

I visited Walleys Quarry on 2 December 2021, and subsequently met with my honourable Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell), the Environment Agency and representatives from the local community, to further understand the situation and the work underway to resolve this issue.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Abdul Jalil al-Singace

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[83445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her Bahraini counterpart on the case of Dr Abduljalil AlSingace.

James Cleverly:

We continue to monitor and raise the case of Dr Abduljalil al-Singace and others as necessary, with the Bahraini Government as well as with the oversight bodies.

■ Afghanistan: Humanitarian Aid

Rachael Maskell:

[\[84400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is working with (a) NGOs based in Afghanistan and (b) the UN to deliver food and humanitarian aid in that country.

James Cleverly:

We are supporting life-saving humanitarian assistance through the UN, NGOs and the Red Cross Movement on the ground, who are continuing to ensure vital aid reaches those who need it most. We are working closely with other countries, the World Bank and UN to find urgent solutions for support to health system and other basic services such as education.

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Rachael Maskell:

[\[84398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to support and fund resettlement opportunities in third countries for people fleeing Afghanistan.

James Cleverly:

The UK has doubled aid for Afghanistan to £286 million this year. As part of that, the previous Foreign Secretary announced in September that the UK would allocate up to £30 million for life-saving aid for Afghan refugees in neighbouring countries, which we are disbursing to support refugee preparedness and assistance in Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan and for cross-regional programmes.

Rachael Maskell:[\[84399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her counterparts in (a) Qatar, (b) Uzbekistan, (c) Tajikistan and (d) the UAE on improving safe routes of passage from Afghanistan for refugees.

James Cleverly:

We see regional countries as vital to the overall response, including Pakistan and Iran who host 2.2 million registered Afghan refugees. The Foreign Secretary discussed the situation when she visited India, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Indonesia over the autumn and Lord (Tariq) Ahmad, the Minister of State for South Asia, travelled to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in support of the resettlement process. Lord Ahmad also called on his counterparts in the region to discuss the humanitarian situation and the resettlement process.

Rachael Maskell:[\[84401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has requested consular support from countries near the Afghanistan border to enable people fleeing Afghanistan to apply to seek refuge in the UK.

James Cleverly:

We are in close touch with our allies and regional countries to ensure a coherent international approach. Our Embassies in countries neighbouring Afghanistan are working with host governments to support transit for British nationals and Afghan nationals eligible to travel to the UK, where possible. There are very few safe exit routes available but we will continue to work to take advantage of all opportunities to help those eligible to come to the UK to leave Afghanistan.

■ Belarus: Poland**Hywel Williams:**[\[82268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the tensions at the Poland-Belarus border, what recent discussions she has had with her EU counterpart on (a) the treatment of asylum seekers and (b) ensuring that aid agencies are able to reach people in need.

Wendy Morton:

As the Foreign Secretary wrote on 14 November, the situation at the Polish border marks the latest step by the Lukashenko regime to undermine regional security. He is using desperate migrants as pawns in his bid to create instability and to cling on to

power regardless of the human cost. We have made clear to the Belarusian authorities, including through their Ambassador to the UK, that this harmful, aggressive and exploitative behaviour must stop.

The UK is supporting its humanitarian partners to help alleviate the suffering of migrants at the border, including through our contributions to the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund, organised by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and through our political advocacy. As President of the G7, the UK led on a 18 November Foreign Ministers statement, which called on the Belarusian regime to provide international organisations with immediate and unhindered access to deliver humanitarian assistance. We were also pleased to send a small team of personnel to Poland to assess what engineering support might be needed to ease pressure at the border. The Foreign Secretary discussed the situation with Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau on 17 November and EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi on 19 November.

■ **Botswana: Coronavirus**

Ruth Jones: [\[82375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the covid-19 vaccination rate in Botswana.

Ruth Jones: [\[82376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the covid-19 vaccination rate in South Africa.

Ruth Jones: [\[82377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the covid-19 vaccination rate in Namibia.

Vicky Ford:

Information on the latest vaccination rates for each country is available on the World Health Organisation website <https://covid19.who.int/>. These figures are updated daily. The UK is supporting vaccine roll-outs internationally, and has delivered 16.1 million vaccine doses either bilaterally or through COVAX. A further 5.8 million vaccine doses are with COVAX and in the process of being allocated and delivered, with an additional 9 million to be delivered to COVAX directly from Astra Zeneca in the coming weeks.

■ **Chile: Minority Groups and Females**

Tommy Sheppard: [\[85320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she (a) has had or (b) is scheduled to have with the Government of Chile on the protection of the rights of women and minorities.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government is committed to promoting and defending the human rights of all individuals, including the rights of women and minorities in Chile, and across Latin America. Our embassy in Santiago regularly raises the protection of the rights of women and minorities with the Chilean government. We also work in partnership with Chilean authorities, civil society, and businesses in supporting efforts to strengthen gender equality through UK-Chile commercial trade links, and addressing gender based violence.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Rachael Maskell:****[82361]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will take steps with vaccine manufacturers to enable countries in the Global South to manufacture vaccines developed in the Global North.

Wendy Morton:

The UK provided early support for the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, guaranteeing not-for-profit availability globally, and saving millions of lives. AstraZeneca and its partners, including in low- and middle-income countries, have made over one billion doses available to more than 170 countries.

We continue to foster initiatives to expand vaccine manufacturing, and our support to business cases for vaccine manufacturing in Senegal, South Africa, and Morocco has helped catalyse investment that will see COVID-19 vaccines produced on the African continent in 2022. We are engaging with the new Partnership for African Vaccine Manufacturing to develop their roadmap for African vaccine manufacturing. We welcome the World Health Organisation's approval of new and innovative vaccines from manufacturers across both developed and emerging economies, including through partnerships led by AstraZeneca. These approved vaccines are all contributing to expanding the sustainable global supply, including through COVAX, needed to accelerate equitable access to safe, effective, affordable, and quality vaccines, and to develop innovations that tackle new variants.

■ Gaza: International Assistance**Caroline Lucas:****[81918]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Statutory Instrument The Terrorism Act 2000 (Proscribed Organisations) (Amendment) (No. 3) Order 2021; whether she has made an impact assessment of that Instrument on the delivery of humanitarian or development aid to civilians in Gaza by (a) British charities and (b) FCDO staff; and if she will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

The Government assesses Hamas in its entirety to be concerned in terrorism and therefore, as of 26 November, have proscribed the organisation in full. An information note on operating within counter-terrorism legislation, sanctions, and export control

has been produced at the request of a range of international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The note directs users to the guidance available to support the delivery of humanitarian aid overseas and address their concerns about the risk of prosecution associated with working in areas where terrorist groups operate. This note is openly available on GOV.UK. The FCDO does not provide any assistance to Hamas.

■ Home Office: Amazon

Jamie Stone:

[\[78491\]](#)

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

Elizabeth Truss:

The national security community does not routinely avow details of the technology partnerships it enters into. Avowing details around national security technology can have potential security implications as would be the case in this scenario. However, any procurement process can be fully scrutinised through the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament.

■ Papua: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Alex Sobel:

[\[85364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with her Indonesian counterpart on authorising a visit to West Papua by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Amanda Milling:

The UK fully respects the territorial integrity of Indonesia, including the provinces of Papua and West Papua. The UK Government continues to support the efforts of the Indonesian authorities and civil society to address the needs and aspirations of the Papuan people. We support the proposed visit of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to Papua and encourage both sides to agree on dates for a visit. Former Minister for Asia, Nigel Adams, discussed the proposed visit with UNHCHR in June 2021 and we regularly discuss Papua with our Indonesian counterparts.

■ Qatar: Football

Fleur Anderson:

[\[82118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will support an investigation into how many migrant workers have died as a result of the construction of football stadiums in preparation for the Qatar World Cup 2022.

James Cleverly:

We welcome the steps Qatar has taken to date on workers' rights. The priority now is fully implementing such reforms.

The International Labour Organization has this month released a comprehensive report containing recommendations for improving data collection and analysis on occupational injuries. We continue to engage regularly with the International Labour Organization office in Doha.

■ Religious Freedom: Disinformation

Patricia Gibson:

[\[85315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department plans to take to work with global social media companies on ensuring that those companies are taking effective steps to mitigate the harmful spread of disinformation in countries where religious or belief minorities suffer persecution and discrimination.

Amanda Milling:

The UK Government takes the issue of disinformation very seriously. We are working closely with social media platforms to help them identify and take action to mitigate the harmful spread of disinformation and misinformation online. In addition, we actively support NGOs and other organisations in research to inform technology companies, partner governments and others about the misuse of online platforms for disinformation purposes, and to disrupt advertising revenues from websites.

We do not target our counter-disinformation work specifically related to countries where freedom of religion or belief is threatened.

■ Sultana Khaya

Navendu Mishra:

[\[85396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 19 February 2021 to Question 155443 on Sultana Khaya, if she will instruct HM Ambassador to raise with the Government of Morocco the alleged invasion of Sultana Khaya's house and her sexual abuse by Moroccan authorities on 8 and 15 November 2021.

James Cleverly:

We are aware of reports concerning Sultana Khaya and continue to closely monitor the case. Support for human rights is a priority around the world, and we regularly discuss human rights issues and specific cases with Morocco.

■ Western Sahara: Human Rights

Alan Brown:

[\[82341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 November 2021 to Question 71375 on Western Sahara: Human Rights; what discussions she has had with her Moroccan counterpart on Morocco's lack of facilitation of a visit to Western Sahara by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights since January 2016.

James Cleverly:

We are closely monitoring the situation in Western Sahara. We have regular discussions with the UN, both in New York and in the region, as well as with the parties. The UK has consistently supported language in the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions which encourages the parties to sustain their efforts to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights in Western Sahara and in the Tindouf camps.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**Ambulance Services: Yorkshire and the Humber****Rachael Maskell:**[\[80788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of ambulance waiting times in (a) Yorkshire, (b) North Yorkshire and (c) York in each of the last 12 months.

Rachael Maskell:[\[81052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of ambulance waiting times on access to thrombectomy or thrombolysis treatments by people who have had a stroke.

Edward Argar:

Ambulance waiting times for North Yorkshire and York are not held centrally therefore no estimate has been made.

We recognise the vital role that ambulance services play in the rapid identification of suspected stroke patients. We have provided ambulance services in England with an extra £55 million to recruit the staff and ambulance crews to ensure a timely response to the most seriously ill patients, including those with suspected stroke symptoms.

Antibiotics: Drug Resistance**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[81025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to tackle antibiotic resistance.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 29 November 2021]: In 2019, the Government published the first of four five-year national action plans aimed at tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR). The plan focuses on tackling AMR through:

- reducing the need for and unintentional exposure to antimicrobials;
- optimising the use of antimicrobials; and
- investing in innovation, supply and access to antimicrobials.

We continue to fully implement this plan and maintain progress towards achieving the Government's vision for AMR to be effectively contained and controlled globally by 2040.

■ **Cancer: Screening**

Sir Alan Campbell:

[\[84311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the availability of conditional test tubes for cancer labs; and if the NHS has now restarted all non-urgent cancer testing.

Edward Argar:

The supply of consumables used for cancer tests is constantly monitored. Shortages of blood collection tubes were experienced in August and September 2021 due to increased global demand resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Supply has now been restored and the National Health Service has restarted all non-urgent cancer testing which may have been impacted.

■ **Coronavirus: Drugs**

Henry Smith:

[\[69062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been treated with Ronapreve for covid-19 (a) in each week and (b) in each clinical commissioning group area since that treatment became available; and how many of those recipients had blood cancer.

Maggie Throup:

An interim clinical policy for Ronapreve (casirivimab and imdevimab) was published on 17 September 2021 and updated on 4 November. Since September 2021, over 1,200 patients in England have received this treatment.

NHS England and NHS Improvement collect information from trusts on usage based on the criteria set out in the policy for treatment of patients hospitalised due to COVID-19. The data collection is not designed to identify the number of such patients who have blood cancer. The information on the number of patients treated in each clinical commissioning group area and in each week is not currently available.

■ **Coronavirus: Gibraltar**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[83261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the reason for the surge in covid-19 cases in Gibraltar which has a high vaccination rate.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency has not made an assessment.

■ **Coronavirus: Protective Clothing**

Ian Byrne: [\[85398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the latest guidance is on the wearing of face-coverings in non-legally required settings; and if he will provide clarity for people who are confused by the statement on the gov.uk website which states that in other indoor settings where a face covering is not legally required, you should still continue to wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces where you may come into contact with other people you do not normally meet.

Maggie Throup:

New regulations mean face coverings are now legally required in shops, shopping centres, transport hubs and on public transport, including taxis and private hire vehicles. The Government continues to recommend the wearing of face coverings in crowded, indoor places not covered by the regulations. The scientific evidence shows that face coverings can help to reduce transmission by reducing the amount of virus particles expelled by an infected person wearing a face covering and filtering the air a person wearing a face covering inhales. We will keep these measures under review.

■ **Coronavirus: Quarantine**

Rachael Maskell: [\[83429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he is holding with local authorities on the use of discretionary funds to support people to isolate at home in the event that they cannot afford to do so on current sick payment arrangements.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency engages regularly with the 309 local authorities in England to support them in using the £20 million a month available for discretionary payments under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. This funding enables local authorities to provide financial support for people who are likely to experience financial hardship because of the requirement to self-isolate.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[44305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to recognise covid-19 vaccinations administered outside the UK for use with the NHS Covid Pass.

Stella Creasy: [\[44335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to enable individuals who have received covid-19 vaccinations outside the UK to access the NHS vaccine pass; and what his timetable is for the implementation of this change.

Maggie Throup:

Currently, United Kingdom residents vaccinated in the United States of America, the European Union, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Australia and Canada

with the Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Moderna and Janssen vaccines can be certified using the NHS COVID Pass. A National Immunisation Management Service record is required, which can be obtained by calling 119 and will include attending a regional vaccination centre.

The service currently has seven sites capable of reviewing vaccination evidence with further expansion of the service planned in due course.

Patrick Grady:

[51723]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure UK residents who have taken part in trials of the Valneva covid-19 vaccine are able to demonstrate to healthcare and other authorities that they are adequately vaccinated against covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 23 September 2021]: All clinical trial participants can now gain access to a domestic NHS COVID Pass. Clinical trial participants who received the Valneva vaccine as part of their trial will continue to be able to prove their vaccination status and will be treated as fully vaccinated in domestic settings and at the United Kingdom border.

Kim Johnson:

[54030]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress he has made on negotiations with the EMA to license the AstraZeneca Covishield vaccine 4120Z002.

Maggie Throup:

There have been no such negotiations as the European Medicines Agency is the independent regulatory body which determines the vaccines approved for use in the European Union.

No AstraZeneca vaccine doses branded as Covishield have been administered in the United Kingdom. Batch number 4120Z002 was approved by the UK's regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and branded as the 'COVID-19 vaccine AstraZeneca' which is now known commercially as 'Vaxzevria'. The EU has recently published a list of vaccines it sees as equivalent to those authorised by the EMA, which includes all approved vaccines administered in the UK.

Sarah Champion:

[58884]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what facility is available to allow under 16 year olds to demonstrate their covid-19 vaccination status.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 22 October 2021]: The NHS COVID Pass is currently available to those aged 16 years old and over. Few countries require children's' vaccination status, as testing is generally available or entry on the parent/guardians' status. The Government recognises that a small proportion of children over 12 years old have or will receive a full course of vaccination following the Joint Committee on Vaccination

and Immunisation's advice and the growing requirement abroad for children to demonstrate their status. The international standards for travel require a full course to be recognised as 'fully vaccinated'. We are looking at ways to provide fully vaccinated 12 to 15 year olds with a travel NHS COVID Pass. This will be available shortly, initially via a NHS COVID Pass travel letter. Further information will be available in due course.

Mr Clive Betts:

[R] [\[61107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the recommended time is between patients with compromised immune systems receiving a third dose of covid-19 vaccine and receiving a booster dose of that vaccine.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 27 October 2021]: On 29 November, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advised that severely immunosuppressed individuals who have completed their primary course of three doses should be offered a booster vaccination with a minimum of three months between the third primary and booster dose. Those who have not yet received their third dose may be given the third dose now to avoid further delay. A further booster dose can be given in three months, in line with the clinical advice on optimal timing. The Government has accepted this advice.

Layla Moran:

[\[61198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of street homeless people have received (a) one dose, (b) two doses, (c) three doses and (d) two doses plus a booster of a covid-19 vaccine.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 27 October 2021]: This information is not currently available in the format requested. Data on vaccination uptake of people experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping has not yet been centrally validated. Such data provides a snapshot of homelessness rates and therefore any vaccine uptake data is an estimate which cannot currently be validated.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[62676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timescale is for North East London Health and Care Partnership to be allocated an adequate supply of covid-19 vaccine booster doses for (a) immunosuppressed patients and (b) other patients eligible for a covid-19 vaccine booster dose.

Maggie Throup:

Vaccination sites order the vaccines they require to meet their clinic schedules. There are adequate quantities of vaccine for allocation across England and to date, over 99% of deliveries have been made on time and in full.

There are currently several hundred thousand doses for booster vaccination across the three North and East London integrated care systems - East London Health and Care Partnership, North London Partners in Health and Care and North West London

Health and Care Partnership. This provides sufficient supply for each of the approximately 300 vaccination sites in these areas.

Michael Fabricant:

[68110]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the NHS Covid Travel pass on the NHS App in England will be adapted to show the date of the third and any subsequent booster shots.

Maggie Throup:

From 19 November, the NHS COVID Pass can now be used to demonstrate proof of a booster or third dose for outbound international travel. This record is available through the NHS App and NHS.UK and includes the date of each vaccination. Booster vaccinations are not required for domestic certification in England. In light of recent advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation to extend the booster programme, we will keep the inclusion of boosters for domestic certification under review.

Henry Smith:

[69063]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people (a) in total and (b) with blood cancer have received a third dose of their primary course of the covid-19 vaccination; and if he will publish that data on a daily basis.

Maggie Throup:

The data requested is not available in the format requested. Daily data currently combines the total number of booster vaccinations and third primary doses, which is available at the following link:

<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/vaccinations>

There are currently no plans to publish this data in a daily format. All individuals who have severe immunosuppression, including as a result of blood cancer, are eligible for their third primary dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

Feryal Clark:

[72616]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when 16 and 17 year olds will be able to book their second covid-19 vaccine; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 16 November 2021]: On 15 November, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised that all 16 and 17 year olds should be offered a second dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine 12 weeks after their first dose. The Government accepted this advice. Second vaccination doses for this cohort were made available from 22 November. Any 16 and 17 year olds previously categorised as 'at risk' will continue to be offered a second dose eight weeks after their first dose. For those in this age group who have had previous COVID-19 infection, the second vaccine dose should be given 12 weeks or more following the first vaccine dose, or 12 weeks following a positive COVID-19 test result, whichever is later.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[79302]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to help ensure that under 16 year olds are able to access their vaccine records; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect of under 16 year olds not being able to access those records on families travelling to Europe over Christmas 2021.

Maggie Throup:

The NHS COVID Pass is available to people aged 16 years old and over and can be used to demonstrate vaccination and recovery from COVID-19. We are exploring ways for children aged 12 to 15 years old with two vaccinations to demonstrate their vaccination status for international travel. Each country sets their own requirements for entry and border health measures. Many countries exempt under 18 year olds from proof vaccination status or accept negative test results.

Rachael Maskell:

[82362]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to accelerate the booster programme for covid-19 vaccinations; and what plans he has to extend eligibility for covid-19 vaccine boosters to all people under the age of 40.

Maggie Throup:

Due to the emergence of the Omicron variant of concern, on 29 November we announced that the COVID-19 vaccination booster programme for all adults aged 18 to 39 years old would be introduced with immediate effect, in order of descending age groups. The time between primary course and booster dose has also been reduced to a minimum period of three months.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) aims to publish advice on vaccination of children and young people separately to advice on booster vaccination of adults in the light of the emergence of Omicron. The JCVI continues to review the programme alongside the evolving data on the Omicron variant.

Andrew Percy:

[84329]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the findings of the Com-COV study on the immune response from mixing covid19 vaccines, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing a different type of covid-19 vaccine from a recipient's original dose as a booster.

Maggie Throup:

The Com-CoV vaccine trial is studying the use of different combinations of approved COVID-19 vaccines for the first and second immunisation doses. The COV-BOOST trial is studying combinations of different COVID-19 vaccines for a booster dose following completion of the primary two-dose course. Data from the trial indicates that booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines are generally well tolerated and provide a substantial increase in vaccine-induced immune responses.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has advised that a full dose of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine or a half dose of the Moderna vaccine should be offered as a booster dose, irrespective of the vaccine used for the first two doses.

■ Dental Services: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[85353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on the number of dental practices and dentists.

Maria Caulfield:

No assessment has been made.

■ Dental Services: Dorset

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[79268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of workers providing NHS dental services in Dorset in (a) 2021, (b) 2020 and (c) 2019.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 25 November 2021]: The following table shows the number of dentists providing National Health Service dental services measured by claims submitted to the NHS Business Services Authority for NHS dental activity in Dorset in the financial years 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21. This data is based upon returns of FP17 NHS dental prescription forms.

2018/19	378
2019/20	376
2020/21	354

Source: NHS Digital

Data is not held on other members of the dental workforce.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Contracts

Dan Carden: [\[85363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether contracts between his Department and suppliers make specifications about sub-contracting arrangements.

Edward Argar:

The Department has standard terms and conditions when procuring goods services and works from suppliers, which vary depending on the value of the contract and the items being procured. Most contracts contain specific provisions detailing how contractors select and manage sub-contractors.

■ Diabetes: Drugs

Jim Shannon: [\[76694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the (a) Royal College of Nursing and (b) other relevant stakeholders on emerging drugs to treat diabetes.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department has had no specific discussions with the Royal College of Nursing or other stakeholders. There are well established drugs for the management of diabetes and we continue to engage with stakeholders on this issue. Driving research and innovation in diabetes care remains a key priority.

■ Food: Packaging

Mark Pritchard: [\[83281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will hold discussions with the food industry on ending the use of cartoon and children's book characters on the packaging of high sugar food products.

Maggie Throup:

The Department has ongoing discussions with the food and drink industry on measures to improve diets and reduce obesity including on the marketing and labelling of products high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS). This includes stakeholder engagement to assist businesses in responding to consultations. Businesses are encouraged to consider the health of their customers when directly targeting HFSS products at children.

The National Institute for Health Research Obesity Policy Research Unit, established in 2017 as part of our initial childhood obesity plan, will continue to review the evidence base of the effect of marketing and advertising on children, including the use of brand equity and licensed characters, cartoon characters and celebrities to promote high fat, salt, and sugar products.

■ General Practitioners

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[53878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of GP appointments.

Maria Caulfield:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Sarah Olney MP) on 4 November 2021 to Question [67228](#).

■ General Practitioners: Standards

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[85358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce GP waiting times for (a) telephone and (b) in-person appointments.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[85359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to reduce waiting times for patients wishing to have a GP appointment (a) in person and (b) by telephone.

Maria Caulfield:

On 14 October, we published 'Our plan for improving access for patients and supporting general practice to support general practice'. This included a £250 million Winter Access Fund to improve the capacity of general practitioner (GP) practices and increase the number of face-to-face appointments, while also investing in technology to make it easier for patients to see or speak to their GP. We announced additional funding for NHS England to implement the adoption of cloud-based telephony technology across all practices. We remain committed to creating an extra 50 million appointments a year in general practice by increasing and diversifying the workforce.

■ Health Services: Foreign Nationals

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[83290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report entitled Towards True Universal Care: Reforming the NHS Charging System, published by the Institute for Public Policy Research on 22 November 2021, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing the (a) options for reform on page 38 and (b) recommendations on 39 of that report.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[83291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report entitled Towards True Universal Care: Reforming the NHS Charging System published by the Institute for Public Policy Research on 22 November 2021, what recent assessment he has made of the equity of the NHS charging system.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[83292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to pages 16 to 28 of the report entitled Towards True Universal Care: Reforming the NHS Charging System Report, published by the Institute for Public Policy Research on 22 November 2021, what steps he plans to take to tackle the issues noted in that report.

Edward Argar:

The Government believes that it is right that people who do not live in the United Kingdom on a lawful, settled basis help contribute towards treatment costs.

Therefore, we have implemented a system of charging overseas visitors that is fair and proportionate, working with NHS England and NHS Improvement to ensure that the Charging Regulations are properly applied.

The Department regularly reviews the Charging Regulations, with consideration for their equity and impact on vulnerable groups, using a range of evidence and reports by organisations such as the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR). We are

committed to improving the support, guidance, and advice provided to trusts on the issues raised by the IPPR's report. We are taking steps to further protect vulnerable groups by raising awareness of exemptions from charge and improving guidance and training for the National Health Service on identifying patients who are genuinely without funds.

■ Heart Diseases: Research

Jim Shannon:

[\[80991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will increase funding for research on coronary heart disease.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department funds research on health through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). While it is not usual practice to ring-fence funding for particular topics or conditions, the NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including coronary heart disease. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality. From 2015/16 to 2019/20, the NIHR spent £253.6 million on cardiovascular research, which includes coronary heart disease.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[\[72522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what warning systems are in place for hospitals that are at risk of experiencing rising levels of covid-19 infection admissions.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 16 November 2021]: Individual trusts have systems in place to monitor bed occupancy and manage flow within their hospitals. These systems will indicate when bed occupancy starts to reach heightened levels, by bed type. Hospitals monitor this data continuously.

■ Hospitals: Waiting Lists

Derek Twigg:

[\[85192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer to Question 75821 on Hospitals: Waiting Lists, for what reason no formal assessment has been made of the impact of the additional funding for the NHS on hospital waiting times.

Edward Argar:

No formal assessment has been made due to the significant uncertainty on the demand from people who did not come forward to seek treatment during the pandemic, the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and the consequent effects on waiting lists and waiting times.

■ Infant Mortality: Asians

Carol Monaghan:

[\[84393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will establish an inquiry into the difference in the average incidence of deaths of Asian and Asian British babies each year.

Maria Caulfield:

A confidential enquiry into perinatal deaths of black/black British babies is currently being undertaken by the MBRRACE-UK Maternal, Newborn and Infant Clinical Outcome Review Programme. The Department has no current plans to concurrently establish an inquiry into the rates of stillbirth and neonatal deaths among Asian and Asian British babies.

■ Mechanical Thrombectomy

Mike Amesbury:

[\[83459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of thrombectomy services in (a) Weaver Vale constituency, (b) northwest England and (c) the UK.

Maria Caulfield:

Thrombectomy services for the Weaver Vale constituency are provided by the regional neuroscience centre, The Walton Centre NHS Foundation Trust in Liverpool. This site has provided thrombectomy services 24 hours a day, seven days a week since 11 October 2021. There are three centres providing thrombectomy services in the North West of England at The Walton Centre, Salford Royal Hospital and Royal Preston Hospital. Services at Salford Royal Hospital are being developed to provide 24 hours a day, seven days a weeks services in early 2022. Local commissioners are working with Royal Preston Hospital and the other centres in the North West of England to maximise access to thrombectomy services for Lancashire and South Cumbria

Thrombectomy is available in 24 centres in England and the National Health Service is committed to increasing the delivery of mechanical thrombectomy from 1% to 10%. The latest data shows that 2.3% of patients are receiving a thrombectomy following a stroke. In early 2022, NHS England will undertake a quality review with each of its seven regions to resolve the biggest local barriers to increasing the thrombectomy rate.

■ Members: Correspondence

Mr John Baron:

[\[85197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 8 September, 6 October and 9 November 2021 regarding his constituent with reference JB34044.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 2 December 2021.

Mr John Baron:[\[85198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 31 August, 27 September and 2 November 2021 regarding his constituent with reference JB33909.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 2 December 2021.

■ Midwives: Recruitment**Mike Amesbury:**[\[82373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to recruit additional midwives in England.

Mike Amesbury:[\[82374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he will take to increase the (a) recruitment and (b) training of new midwives.

Edward Argar:

Health Education England (HEE) has been working with stakeholders towards an increase of 3,650 midwifery student training places by the end of 2022/23, with training leading to professional registration. This includes 650 additional training places in 2019/20 and up to 1,000 additional training places per year in the following three years. Against 2018/19 as the baseline for comparison, there was an increase of 626 places in 2019/20 and 1,140 in 2020/21.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have invested an additional £95 million to support the recruitment of a further 1,200 midwives and 100 obstetricians and multi-disciplinary team training. This will allow providers to achieve their recruitment and retention ambitions through a range of initiatives, such as supporting newly qualified midwives, additional pastoral care to aid retention and the recruitment of midwives from overseas.

■ Neurology: Consultants**Luke Pollard:**[\[83468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the number of consultant neurologists in England in comparison to other European nations.

Edward Argar:

The Department has made no such assessment.

■ Neuromuscular Disorders: Health Services

Luke Pollard:

[\[83465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the backlog in (a) neurology and (b) MS services.

Edward Argar:

We have made available £2 billion this year through the elective recovery fund, to tackle the elective care backlog, including for patients waiting for neurology and MS services. In addition we plan to spend more than £8 billion from 2022 to 2025 to deliver the equivalent of approximately nine million checks, scans, and procedures.

■ Nurses: Students

Luke Pollard:

[\[83463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of student nurses who are studying full time for a nursing qualification who have early years-aged children.

Edward Argar:

The Department has made no such estimate.

Luke Pollard:

[\[83464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support he is providing to student nurses to cover childcare costs while training for a nursing qualification.

Edward Argar:

Nursing students may be eligible for a childcare grant which is available to eligible students in higher education undertaking a full-time undergraduate course to help with weekly childcare costs. The amount payable is based on 85% of actual childcare costs, up to a maximum of £179.62 a week for one child or £307.95 a week for students with two or more children.

We also offer a Parents' Learning Allowance for eligible full-time undergraduate students with one or more dependent children. For the academic year 2021/22, students could receive up to £1,821 a year, depending on household income. In addition, the NHS Learning Support Fund provides eligible nursing students with one or more children with a non-means tested, non-repayable parental support payment of £2,000 per student, per academic year of a standard three-year course.

■ Ophthalmic Services: National Clinical Directors

Mr Nicholas Brown:

[\[84310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the answer of 17 November to Question 73745 on Ophthalmic Services: National Clinical Directors, what his timetable is for appointing the National Clinical Director for Eye Care.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 3 December 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement are planning to commence the recruitment process for a National Clinical Director for Eye Care in the new year.

■ Perinatal Mortality: Coronavirus**Mr Gregory Campbell:****[84315]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings of the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch's national review of Intrapartum stillbirths during the COVID-19 pandemic published in September 2021; and what steps he plans to take in response to that report.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 3 December 2021]: The Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch's (HSIB) national review set out that there remains uncertainty among experts as to whether the rate of stillbirths has increased during the pandemic. The stillbirth rate has fallen by 25% since 2010 and we continue work to achieve our ambition to halve the 2010 rates of stillbirths, neonatal and maternal deaths and brain injuries in babies occurring during or soon after birth by 2025.

The HSIB report also recommended that the Department commission a review to improve the reliability of existing assessment tools for fetal growth and fetal heart rate to minimise the risk for babies. The Department is considering this recommendation and will publish an official response in due course.

■ Social Services: Coronavirus**Darren Jones:****[84453]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Workforce Capacity Fund.

Gillian Keegan:

From January to March 2021, we have supported the adult social care sector through the £120 million Workforce Capacity Fund (WCF) to increase capacity to meet critical staffing shortages caused by COVID-19. By 8 October, local authorities reported that over the funding period, a total of 7.3 million additional hours of work and 39,047 new recruits were generated by the WCF. While 75% of the 59 local authority survey respondents agreed that the WCF was either 'somewhat' or 'very' effective in supporting them to strengthen workforce capacity, we also heard that the duration of the fund limited how effectively the sector could utilize the funding.

Learning from the WCF has also informed the design and implementation of the recently launched £162.5 million Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund for winter 2021/2022. The outcomes and findings from the WCF are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/workforce-capacity-fund-for-adult-social-care/workforce-capacity-fund-outcomes-and-findings-october-2021>

■ Social Services: Incentives

Darren Jones:

[\[84452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing a retention bonus to people employed within the social care sector as part of the covid-19 Winter Plan 2021 to 2022.

Gillian Keegan:

No assessment has been made. The vast majority of care workers are employed by private sector providers who ultimately set their pay and remuneration, independent of central Government. Therefore, we have no current plans to issue recruitment and retention payments directly to social care staff.

However, we recognise the challenges that providers and local authorities are currently experiencing in recruiting and retaining social care workers. To provide additional support to the sector over the winter, on 21 October we announced a new £162.5 million Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund. We expect local authorities to work closely with care providers on how this funding is spent, which may include incentive and retention payments.

■ Social Services: Pay

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[82298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he made an assessment of the future additional annual costs to the public purse in the event that the judgment in the Supreme Court case of Royal Mencap Society v Tomlinson-Blake, UKSC 2018/0160, was decided in favour of Tomlinson-Blake.

Gillian Keegan:

In advance of the Supreme Court's decision in Royal Mencap Society v Tomlinson-Blake, UKSC 2018/0160, the Government took steps to consult with affected stakeholders and prepare for various possible outcomes. An assessment of future annual additional costs to the public purse in the event of a judgement in favour of Tomlinson-Blake would have required information about the present and future remuneration of care workers, which is set independently by private sector providers and the degree to which local authorities would reflect any increases in the fees they pay care providers, taking account of local market conditions. This information was not available ahead of the judgement.

■ Strokes: Mechanical Thrombectomy

Mike Amesbury:

[\[83458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of funding mechanical thrombectomy for stroke patients.

Maria Caulfield:

Thrombectomy is a procedure used to treat some ischaemic stroke patients. There is strong evidence that, when used appropriately, thrombectomy significantly reduces

the severity of disability caused by stroke. The expansion of thrombectomy services across England is a multi-year programme within the NHS Long Term Plan. Thrombectomy is currently available in 24 centres in England and two non-neuroscience centres are under development to provide access to thrombectomy.

■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

Matthew Pennycook:

[73934]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 29 October 2021 to Question 56581 on Travel: Coronavirus, when he plans to allow fully vaccinated children aged over 12 years old to acquire NHS Covid Passes to demonstrate their vaccination status for the purposes of travel.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 17 November 2021]: We are looking at ways to provide fully vaccinated 12 to 15 year olds with a travel NHS COVID Pass. This will be available shortly, initially via a NHS COVID Pass travel letter. Further information will be made available in due course. While a few countries require full vaccination for under 16 year olds, others treat under 16 year olds as fully vaccinated, accept testing or recovery as equivalent to full vaccination.

Daisy Cooper:

[85389]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on enabling access to NHS Covid Recovery Certificates for children under 16, who have recovered from covid-19 in the previous 90 days, and require evidence of recovery to travel internationally.

Maggie Throup:

There are no plans to provide certificates for children under 16 years old to show evidence of their recent recovery from COVID-19 for travel purposes. No countries recognise natural immunity as an exclusive qualifier for relaxed border measures. Where natural immunity is recognised, vaccination and/or testing are also accepted. Many countries exempt under 18 year olds from proof of vaccination status or accept test results instead of vaccination.

We are looking at ways for children aged 12 years old and over with two vaccinations to demonstrate their vaccination status for international travel.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Customs: Ports**

Gareth Thomas:

[80902]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many physical inspections to check for contraband goods took place at each port between Bristol and Worthing inclusive (a) by each port and (b) in total in each year since 2015; and if she will make a statement.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 3 December 2021]: Border Force does not routinely publish this level of data, relating to the number of customs interdictions undertaken by government officials in the UK, and at specific geographic locations or ports.

■ Fisheries: Migrant Workers**Claire Hanna:****[83520]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support businesses in the fish processing industry to employ staff on short-term contracts from outside the UK.

Kevin Foster:

The Points Based System provides for some roles within the seafood processing industry. The job of a fish processor, under Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code 5433 (Fishmongers and poultry dressers) is on the eligible occupations list, meets the skills threshold and so it is eligible to be sponsored for a Skilled Worker visa, subject to the other criteria under the Route being met.

Beyond the Points Based System, firms can also engage with the domestic labour market which includes UK workers and non-UK citizens who have general work rights and who do not have to meet the skill, salary or English language requirements of the Points Based System.

We would encourage employers to invest in our domestic workforce for the long term, rather than relying on temporary workers in the short term. Nonetheless short-term contracts can be accommodated on this route as there is no minimum length of sponsorship and those migrants sponsored for less than 6 months do not need to pay the Immigration Skills Charge or the Immigration Health Surcharge.

■ Immigration**Mr Virendra Sharma:****[80935]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of allowing people in the process of regularising their immigration status to be able to (a) register for a National Insurance number, (b) apply for a UK-issued driving licence and (c) apply for a unique taxpayer reference number if self-employed.

Kevin Foster:

In common with other comparable countries, the UK has in place a framework of laws, policies and administrative arrangements to ensure access to work, benefits and services is only permitted for those who are lawfully present in the UK who have the right to access them. This includes restrictions on the ability to obtain a UK driving licence for those without lawful status. The aim of these policies is to deter and prevent immigration offences, including clandestine entry and overstaying.

DWP is responsible for the Adult National Insurance number (NINO) allocation process, which allocates NINOs predominantly for work purposes. Consistent with

immigration policy, proof of a right to work in the UK is a condition in the allocation of a work-related NINO.

■ **Muslim Council of Britain**

Ruth Jones: **[82090]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has met with the Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 3 December 2021]: All official meetings are declared on the Home Secretary's quarterly transparency returns which can be found here Home Office: ministerial gifts, hospitality, travel and meetings - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

■ **NHS: Migrant Workers**

Sarah Owen: **[84492]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she expects her Department to complete the validation of data on the number of refunds to NHS and social care workers of the immigration health surcharge that have been successfully completed.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 3 December 2021]: The work to validate data is ongoing and we aim to complete this early in 2022.

■ **Revenue and Customs: Staff**

Gareth Thomas: **[80901]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many HMRC staff have been based at each coastal port between Bristol and Worthing, inclusive, (a) by each port and (b) in total in each year since 2015; and if she will make a statement.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 3 December 2021]: The Home Office does not routinely publish information relating to the number of staff working in specific locations as this would publicise operational practices which in the wrong hands could be used to attempt to evade controls at the border and compromise Border security.

However, resource and staffing requirements at every port are continually reviewed by Border Force and we work closely with all port operators to try to anticipate demand. Resources are deployed flexibly as and when they are required.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Agriculture: Trade Agreements

Damian Green:

[\[80894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will introduce a rolling review process for future Free Trade Agreements to protect the interests of UK agriculture.

Penny Mordaunt:

We will always consider the effects of any trade agreement we negotiate on the agricultural industry, and we have a range of tools to defend British farming against any unfair trading practices. The Australia and New Zealand Free Trade Agreements both include safeguards for our farmers.

In addition, the independent Trade and Agriculture Commission will scrutinise new free trade agreements once they are signed, providing an additional layer of independent scrutiny.

■ Department for International Trade: York

Rachael Maskell:

[\[81999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, 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.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) intends to grow over 550 roles outside London by 2025 as part of the cross-Government Places for Growth programme. DIT's second major location will be the Darlington Economic Campus, alongside three new trade and investment offices in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. While DIT does not currently have plans for an office location in York, the Darlington Economic Campus will support delivery of the Levelling Up agenda in the across the North of England, including through increased job opportunities and associated economic benefits.

■ Metals: USA

Andrew Percy:

[\[84327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent discussions she has had with her US counterparts on removing US tariffs on UK steel and aluminium.

Andrew Percy:

[\[84328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she has plans to negotiate the removal of US tariffs on UK steel and aluminium.

Penny Mordaunt:

My Rt. Hon Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade has spoken with the US Trade Representative Katherine Tai and Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, most recently on 12 November, to press for a quick resolution to the Section 232

tariffs. The removal of additional US tariffs on steel and aluminium is a key priority for the Government. We are engaging with the US Administration regularly on this issue and continue to push for the start of negotiations and the removal of 232 tariffs as soon as possible.

■ **Political Prisoners: Indonesia**

Alex Sobel:

[\[85365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if the Government will stipulate the release of political prisoners held in Indonesia, such as Victor Yeimo, being a condition for negotiating any future trade agreements with that country.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government is committed to ensuring that our trade policy is consistent with our international obligations. We are clear that more trade need not come at the expense of our values.

The United Kingdom respects the territorial integrity of Indonesia, including the provinces of Papua and West Papua. We recognise challenges in the region and regularly discuss Papua with our Indonesian counterparts.

■ **Religious Freedom: India**

Patricia Gibson:

[\[85314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 18 October to Question 52516 on Human Rights: India, what representations her Department has made to the Government of India on ensuring that freedom of religion or belief protections are enshrined in any future trade agreement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief for all, and promoting respect between different communities. Promoting the right to freedom of religion or belief is one of the United Kingdom's longstanding overseas priorities.

We believe that trade is vital for our economy and future prosperity, but it need not come at the expense of our values. We engage with India on a range of matters, independent of a Free Trade Agreement, as part of our ongoing bilateral relationship. This involves working with Union and State Governments, and with non-governmental organisations, to build capacity and share expertise.

■ **Shipping: Containers**

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[84343\]](#)

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

Mike Freer:

I refer my Hon. Friend for Wycombe to the answer I gave him on the 26th November 2021, UIN: 77444.

JUSTICE**■ Courts: Greater London****Steve Reed:**[\[85280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what funds are currently allocated by his Department to the Nightingale courts at Monument and Aldersgate after March 2022.

James Cartlidge:

Nightingale courts at Monument and Aldersgate, are currently funded to operate until the end of March 2022.

Through the Spending Review the Ministry of Justice secured £477m to tackle the impact that Covid had on the Criminal Justice System and to bring the outstanding caseload in the Crown Court down to pre-pandemic levels as quickly as we can.

The Ministry of Justice and HM Courts and Tribunals Service are working closely together to determine the optimal allocation of the funding secured at the Spending Review, including to support the continuing recovery of court performance following the impact of Covid-19.

The distribution of funding for 2022/23 and beyond is subject to the Department's ongoing internal allocations and the concordat processes. Decisions regarding Nightingale courts at Monument and Aldersgate will be made in due course.

Steve Reed:[\[85281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much of the £477 million announced in the Autumn Budget 2021 to help reduce the court backlog will be allocated to Nightingale court provision in London.

James Cartlidge:

As part of the Spending Review we announced that we will be investing £477 million in the Criminal Justice System over the next three years. This will help reduce the backlog and deliver the swift access to justice that victims deserve.

The Ministry of Justice and HM Courts and Tribunals Service are working together to determine the optimal allocation of the funding secured at the Spending Review for 2022/23 and beyond, including the spend on physical capacity to support the continuing recovery of court performance.

■ Crown Court: Administrative Delays

Steve Reed:

[\[85283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the impact of crown court backlogs on (a) custody time limits and (b) the number of violent offenders at risk of being released due to these limits expiring.

James Cartlidge:

Judges continue to work to prioritise cases involving custody time limits to ensure they are listed at the first available opportunity, as well as prioritising cases involving vulnerable complainants and witnesses (including youth cases), domestic abuse and serious sex cases. Judges have the discretion to extend custody time limits on a case-by-case basis. We continue to monitor volumes of CTL cases closely.

Last year we temporarily increased custody time limits from 6 months to 8 months to ensure dangerous defendants are not free to roam our streets while awaiting trial.

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

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

■ Crown Court: Greater London

Steve Reed:

[\[85282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to reduce the backlog of crown court cases in London; and whether his Department plans to provide funding for additional Nightingale capacity.

James Cartlidge:

Our decisive action in the courts has kept justice moving during the pandemic.

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

To increase capacity in London, 9 Nightingale courtrooms have been opened, as well as 5 additional Crown courtrooms at Hendon Magistrates Courts and the Royal Courts of Justice. Additional staff and salaried judiciary have been recruited and limits on fee-paid judiciary have been increased.

As part of the Spending Review we announced that we will be investing £477 million in the Criminal Justice System over the next three years. This will help to reduce the backlog and deliver the swift access to justice that victims deserve.

The Ministry of Justice and HM Courts and Tribunals Service are working together to determine the optimal allocation of the funding secured at the Spending Review for 2022/23 and beyond, including the spend on physical capacity to support the continuing recovery of court performance.

■ **Duty Solicitors: Coronavirus**

Alex Cunningham: [\[85254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to paragraph 23(b) the Joint Interim Interview Protocol Version 4, how many detainees have agreed to be advised by a duty solicitor working remotely who is confirmed as covid-19 positive.

Alex Cunningham: [\[85255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to paragraph 23(b) of the Joint Interim Interview Protocol Version 4, whether duty solicitors are able work remotely if they have illnesses other than covid-19.

Alex Cunningham: [\[85256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to paragraph 23(b) of the Joint Interim Interview Protocol Version 4, for what reasons covid-19-positive duty solicitors are unable to make alternative arrangements for another representative to attend.

Alex Cunningham: [\[85257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to paragraph 23(b) of the Joint Interim Interview Protocol Version 4, what assurances are given to the suspect that a covid-19-positive duty solicitor is fit and well enough to provide legal advice.

Alex Cunningham: [\[85258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to paragraph 23(b) of the Joint Interim Interview Protocol Version 4, in a situation where a duty solicitor is covid-19-positive and is unable to make alternative arrangements for another representative to attend, whether a suspect has had to make the choice between taking remote advice from a covid-positive representative or not getting legal advice.

James Cartlidge:

The Joint Interim Interview Protocol allows for remote advice in very limited specified circumstances to provide flexibility where it is needed, for example, in a scenario where the detainee is confirmed or believed to be Covid positive. Final decisions about allowing remote advice will be made by an officer not below the rank of Superintendent.

The guidance was developed to assist investigators and prosecutors in deciding whether suspects should be interviewed as part of a police investigation during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, paragraph 23(c) of the Joint Interview Protocol allows for remote legal advice to be provided where some other exceptional reason applies where, in consultation with all relevant parties (legal representative and appropriate adult if required) it is the belief of the Custody Officer, (who is responsible for the

welfare and health and safety for all who attend the custody suite) that due to those exceptional reasons it would not be practical, possible, or desirable for an in person attendance by the legal adviser in that individual case to safely take place, having regard to any relevant health or safety issues arising, or likely to arise.

Furthermore, the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on detention and custody is underpinned by the principles of safer detention. This promotes the safe and decent delivery of custody. [Custody management and planning \(college.police.uk\)](https://college.police.uk/custody-management-and-planning)

Where a solicitor is unable to attend the police station in person due to testing positive for Covid-19, they may make alternative arrangements for another representative to attend. Legal aid contracts allow providers to pass cases back to the Duty Solicitor Call Centre for redeployment to another provider where provider A is unable to continue to act.

The Government does not collect data on how many detainees have agreed to be advised by a duty solicitor working remotely or whether a suspect has had to make the choice between taking remote advice from a covid-positive representative or not getting legal advice.

■ Legal Aid Scheme

Ellie Reeves: [\[82365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the (a) total and (b) per application cost to the public purse of processing exceptional case funding applications across all areas of law that are out of scope for legal aid has been in (i) cash and (ii) real terms in England and Wales in each year since 2012.

Ellie Reeves: [\[82366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the (a) total and (b) per application cost to the public purse of processing exceptional case funding applications for immigration matters has been in (i) cash and (ii) real terms in England and Wales in each year since 2012.

James Cartlidge:

The information requested is not held centrally. The unit cost of processing an application is not specifically tracked or recorded by the Legal Aid Agency, nor is the administrative spend on Exceptional Case Funding (ECF) recorded separately to general legal aid administrative spend.

Details about volumes of ECF applications, broken down by category, for every year since 2013 can be found in legal aid statistics published by the Ministry of Justice: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/legal-aid-statistics> (available up to and including June 2021).

■ Offenders: Females

Ms Lyn Brown:

[81910]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Prison population projections: 2021 to 2026, published on 25 November 2021, page 12, if he will make an assessment of the reasons, apart from the impact of the covid-19 pandemic, that no effect of the Female Offender Strategy on the population of women in prison has been detected; and whether he has made an assessment of the effect on the population of women in prison over the forecast period of that strategy's full implementation.

Victoria Atkins:

"Prison population projections: 2021 to 2026", published on 25 November 2021, noted that the adult female prison population fell from 3,766 at the end of June 2019 to 3,170 at July 2021. However, as also noted in the same publication, no effect of the Female Offender Strategy on the population of women in prison has been detected because "the limited time between the publication of the Female Offender Strategy and the start of the pandemic means it is difficult to disentangle any effects of the strategy. Any future impacts of the Female Offender Strategy have therefore been excluded from the baseline projection."

There are a number of external influencing factors that will result in fluctuations in the adult female population. We will continue to monitor trends and, where possible, look to assess the impact of interventions driven through the Female Offender Strategy.

■ Prisoners: Females

Ms Lyn Brown:

[81906]

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 the adult female prison population projected in (a) 2022, (b) 2023, (c) 2024 and (d) 2025 is lower than that projected in the publication Prison Population Projections: 2020 to 2026, published on 26 November 2020.

Victoria Atkins:

The starting point for the prison population projections published November 2021 (population as at end of July 2021) is lower than previously projected because of the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional lockdowns and extended social distancing measures restricted the courts' ability to process cases which means the criminal justice system has not recovered as quickly as previously forecast. For this reason, the population projections for 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 are not directly comparable between the 2020 and 2021 publications.

The projections published in November 2020 assumed a female population based on historical proportions from the overall population, split by sentence length bands. The latest projections (published in November 2021) were produced with new determinate modelling, which has allowed more gender-specific assumptions around offence types and sentence lengths.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Faith New Deal Pilot Fund

Ian Mearns:

[85241]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when applicants to the Faith New Deal Pilot Fund will find out if their application has been successful.

Kemi Badenoch:

The £1 million Faith New Deal Pilot Fund focuses on strengthening engagement between national government, local government and faith groups. The fund was formally launched on 9 September 2021 and bids closed on 14 October 2021.

We received a large number of applications for the fund which are in the process of being assessed and moderated. The results will be announced in due course.

I encourage applicants to monitor the Government's web pages for further updates: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-levelling-up-housing-and-communities>.

■ Flats: Construction

Dr Julian Lewis:

[85168]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the impact on existing leaseholders in apartment blocks of the (a) level of disturbance to residents, (b) accountability of ad hoc companies set up to carry out construction works and (c) potential for high remedial costs for unsatisfactory work commissioned by freeholders in respect of the 2020 decision to permit the addition of up to two extra storeys to apartment buildings.

Christopher Pincher:

All development, whether allowed through a permitted development right or an application for planning permission, must meet building regulations including fire and other building safety requirements.

The permitted development right for building upwards on detached blocks of flats requires the developer to provide a report on how the impacts of the construction on the occupiers of the existing block of flats and adjoining buildings will be mitigated. This is subject to additional prior approval considerations by the local authority. These include consideration of the impact on the amenity of the existing block of flats, including on leasehold flats within the block, as well as on neighbouring premises. The local planning authority must notify all owners and occupiers of the existing block of flats, including leaseholders, as well as adjoining owners or occupiers of the proposed development.

■ Hate Crime

Feryal Clark:

[84500]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on tackling the recent rise in hate crimes, particularly racially motivated crimes.

Kemi Badenoch:

All forms of hate crime are completely unacceptable. This government has made it clear that victims should be supported and that the cowards who commit these hateful attacks should feel the full force of the law.

The biggest driver for the increase in recorded crime is general improvements in police recording, along with increased victim willingness to come forward. The police are also improving how they identify hate crimes. However, we cannot be complacent and we recognise there is still much we can do to continue to drive hate crime down, support victims and bring perpetrators to justice.

To achieve this my Department is working closely with the Home Office to prepare a new Hate Crime Strategy which will address all forms of hate crime, including racial hate crime.

■ Planning Authorities: Renewable Energy

Dr Luke Evans:

[82380]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of local planning authorities in promoting energy from renewable and low carbon sources in (a) Leicestershire and (b) the UK.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government recognises that local authorities play an essential role in driving local climate action. Our National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that local planning authorities should have a positive strategy in place to promote energy from renewable and low carbon sources, and that local plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change in line with the objectives and provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Finance

Justin Madders:

[82330]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when feedback will be made available to hon. Members and local authorities on unsuccessful Levelling Up fund bids.

Neil O'Brien:

On Wednesday 27 October, the Chancellor announced the outcome of the first round of the Levelling Up Fund, which will see £1.7 billion invested in 105 local infrastructure projects across the UK. Citizens across the UK can expect to see projects getting underway from early 2022.

Those applicants that were unsuccessful in the first round have been contacted. Unsuccessful applicants, who passed the gateway assessment stage, have been offered a feedback session to discuss their application, expected to take place over the next few weeks.

The second round of bidding for the Levelling Up Fund will be opened in spring 2022 and more information on this will be set out in due course.

Justin Madders:

[\[82331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when the Levelling Up fund will open to applications for the next round of funding.

Neil O'Brien:

On Wednesday 27 October, the Chancellor announced the outcome of the first round of the Levelling Up Fund, which will see £1.7 billion invested in 105 local infrastructure projects across the UK. Citizens across the UK can expect to see projects getting underway from early 2022.

Those applicants that were unsuccessful in the first round have been contacted. Unsuccessful applicants, who passed the gateway assessment stage, have been offered a feedback session to discuss their application, expected to take place over the next few weeks.

The second round of bidding for the Levelling Up Fund will be opened in spring 2022 and more information on this will be set out in due course.

■ Religious Hatred: Islam

Ruth Jones:

[\[83478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much the Government spent on supporting Islamophobia Awareness Week 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

We continue to combat islamophobia in all its forms and throughout the year. Islamophobia Awareness Week is an event lead across departments and partners rather than centrally and the data is not available. However, in combatting Islamophobia, we have funded Tell MAMA for over £4 million between 2017 and 2022 to monitor and combat anti-Muslim hate crimes, as well as providing approximately £5 million to the Places of Worship Security Grant over the last five years, which has been used to protect Mosques and other places of worship.

■ Wholesale Trade: Government Assistance

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[85166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to ensure that wholesalers have access to the future Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund; and if he will take steps to include specific reference to wholesalers in the guidance on eligibility to qualify for relief via that fund.

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[85167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to ensure that wholesalers have access to the future (a) Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund and (b) Business Rates Relief Fund for businesses outside of the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors; if he will take steps to include specific reference to wholesalers in the guidance on eligibility to qualify for relief via each of those funds; and if he will list the measures being taken to support local businesses that fall outside of the hospitality, retail and leisure sectors.

Kemi Badenoch:

The COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund is the £1.5 billion business rates relief scheme announced in March to provide business rates support to businesses outside the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. The COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund will be allocated to local authorities based on the stock of properties in the area whose sectors have been affected by COVID-19 and are ineligible for existing support linked to business rates.

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

PRIME MINISTER

■ Judaism: Festivals and Special Occasions

Ruth Jones:

[\[83473\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, how he plans to mark Chanukah 2021.

Boris Johnson:

I hosted a reception at 10 Downing Street to mark Chanukah. I also released a video message wishing a very happy Chanukah to Jewish people in the UK and around the world.

TRANSPORT

■ Aviation

Patricia Gibson:

[\[85312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will bring forward proposals to strengthen the powers of the Civil Aviation Authority in order that it can effectively and efficiently protect consumer rights in that sector.

Patricia Gibson:

[\[85313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will bring forward proposals for a mandatory dispute resolution scheme for the airline industry.

Robert Courts:

The Government remains absolutely committed to ensuring consumers are protected when travelling by air. As announced in both the Global Travel Taskforce report in April, and the announcement by Lord Frost on Regulatory Reforms, we will be consulting on additional, flexible and modern tools to enforce consumer rights, including consumer rights enforcement powers for the Civil Aviation Authority.

■ **Cyprus: Aviation**

Sarah Olney:

[\[84449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he will commit to reviewing the UK's current policy committing travellers to (a) disembarkation and (b) additional screening in Turkey for flights from Northern Cyprus.

Robert Courts:

Under the Chicago Convention, only the Republic of Cyprus may designate Ercan as an international airport and permit flights to operate from within its territory. It has not done so. Therefore, travel from Ercan to Turkey and onwards to the UK is on two distinctly separate flights, a consequence of which is passengers must disembark the first aircraft to board their second flight. International law requires all passengers be appropriately screened before boarding an aircraft.

■ **Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Databases**

Derek Twigg:

[\[85191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2021 to Question 80915 on Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Databases, how many drivers have been fined for not providing their correct address to the DVLA in each year since 2015.

Trudy Harrison:

The data requested is not available. The police are responsible for prosecuting this offence and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency is not routinely notified of convictions as the offence does not attract penalty points on a driving licence.

■ **Driving Licences: British Nationals Abroad**

Damian Green:

[\[83227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress has been made on negotiations for UK drivers resident in Spain to continue to use their existing licences after 31 December 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government is making every effort to reach an understanding with Spain regarding long-term licence exchange arrangements, without the need for a practical test, for UK licence holders resident in Spain, and vice-versa. Updated advice will be published on gov.uk before the expiry of the current arrangements on 31 December 2021.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Iron and Steel**Mick Whitley:****[R] [84486]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has targets for the use of UK steel on the HS2 projects throughout the project's lifetime.

Andrew Stephenson:

There is no formal target for the use of UK steel on HS2. HS2 Ltd are working with the UK steel industry to ensure it is engaged, informed and prepared to seize the contract opportunities that will be generated by the construction of HS2.

■ Leicester Station**Claudia Webbe:****[84524]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the proposed improvements to Leicester station and the accompanying benefits of urban agglomeration.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The regeneration of Leicester Station is a £22.6m project led by Leicester City Council, to be delivered through £17.6m of Government Levelling Up funding and a £5m contribution from the Council. Plans for the Station include transforming the ticket hall, creating a new entrance, and relocating the taxi rank by 2024. This will increase station capacity, drive economic growth and improve passenger experience.

■ Mexico: Coronavirus**Dr Rupa Huq:****[84419]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with his Mexican counterpart on reports that citizens of Mexico are unable to have their covid-19 vaccination status recognised by the UK.

Robert Courts:

The Government is taking a phased approach to the rollout of our inbound vaccination programme and will continue to work with international partners to expand the policy to more countries and territories where it is safe to do so. Vaccine certification between countries and territories varies considerably and the government has published minimum criteria on gov.uk that both digital and paper certificates must meet.

■ Midland Main Railway Line

Claudia Webbe: [\[84516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the extent to which Midland Main Line services will speed up journey times for travellers in Leicester and the East Midlands, as pledged in the Integrated Rail Plan.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Electrification of the Midland Main Line will allow reduction of intercity journey times for the East Midlands by enabling HS2 East services to call at cities on the MML route.

Claudia Webbe: [\[84518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the cost of speeding up the Midland Main Line service for travellers in Leicester and the East Midlands, as pledged in the Integrated Rail Plan; and how much of that cost will be met through new funding.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Journey time improvements for the East Midlands will be delivered through the planned HS2 East Core Network, which has a provision of £12.8bn (2019 prices) within the Integrated Rail Plan. This investment is all newly committed funding, and none of it is reallocated from other departments.

■ Midland Main Railway Line: Carbon Emissions

Claudia Webbe: [\[84514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the Government's timescale is for decarbonising the Midland Main Line service, including Leicester, as pledged in the Integrated Rail Plan.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As stated in the Integrated Rail Plan, decarbonisation of the Midland Main Line service; through electrification of the full line to Leicester, Nottingham and Sheffield; is currently planned for around 2030.

Claudia Webbe: [\[84517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the estimated cost is of decarbonising the Midland Main Line service, including through Leicester, as pledged in the Integrated Rail Plan; and how much of that cost will be met through new funding.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Within the £96 billion set out in the Integrated Rail Plan, £1.4 billion (2019 prices) has been allowed for electrifying the Midland Main Line. This investment is all newly committed funding, and none of it is reallocated from other departments.

■ Midland Main Railway Line: Electrification

Claudia Webbe: [\[84515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the Government's timescale is for electrifying the Midland Main Line service, including Leicester, as pledged in the Integrated Rail Plan.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As stated in the Integrated Rail Plan, electrification of the Midland Main Line to Leicester, Nottingham and Sheffield is currently planned for around 2030.

■ Railways: Leicester

Claudia Webbe: [\[84509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much of the £10 billion investment in the Midlands within the Integrated Rail Plan is reallocated funding from prior commitments.

Claudia Webbe: [\[84510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much of the £10 billion investment in the Midlands within the Integrated Rail Plan is reallocated funding from other departments.

Claudia Webbe: [\[84511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding is committed to Leicester within the Integrated Rail Plan.

Claudia Webbe: [\[84512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much and what proportion of the total amount of funding dedicated to Leicester within the Integrated Rail Plan is new funding.

Claudia Webbe: [\[84513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of the funding dedicated to Leicester within the Integrated Rail Plan is reallocated funding from prior commitments or other departments.

Andrew Stephenson:

Leicester will benefit from the £12.8 billion investment in the HS2 East Core Network which includes a new high-speed line from West Midlands to the East Midlands, Midland Main Line electrification, and upgrades to the East Coast Main Line. This investment is all newly committed funding, and none of it is reallocated from other departments.

■ Railways: Midlands

Claudia Webbe: [\[84519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits for communities and housing supply of delivering Midlands Rail Hub improvements.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail is developing an Outline Business Case for the Midlands Rail Hub. This will consider the contribution of the scheme to the Government's housing growth agenda in communities that will be served by Midlands Rail Hub.

The recently published Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) sets out the long-term plan for rail investment in the North of England and the Midlands, the development of the proposals for the MRH will now need to reflect the recommendations set out in the IRP.

Claudia Webbe:[\[84520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential effect of Midlands Rail Hub on (a) levelling up towns and cities in the Midlands and (b) the economies of (i) the East Midlands, (ii) Leicestershire and (iii) Leicester.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Following release of funding in July 2020, Network Rail is developing an Outline Business Case for the Midlands Rail Hub which will consider the impact of the scheme on the economy and productivity of the region.

The recently published Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) sets out the long-term plan for rail investment in the North of England and the Midlands, the development of the proposals for the MRH will now need to reflect the recommendations set out in the IRP.

Claudia Webbe:[\[84521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with local leaders on the (a) contribution to the economy of building the Midlands Rail Hub and (b) the impact of that matter on local communities.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Secretary of State regularly meets with local leaders to discuss transport issues in their areas.

Claudia Webbe:[\[84522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with local authority leaders in Coventry, Leicester and Nottingham on the potential restoration of a rail link between those cities.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Secretary of State regularly meets with local authority leaders to discuss transport issues in their areas.

Midlands Connect has prepared an Outline Strategic Business Case for the Coventry, Leicester, Nottingham scheme, and I contributed to the launch event for this proposal by video early this year.

The recently published Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) sets out the long-term plan for rail investment in the North of England and the Midlands, the Coventry, Leicester,

Nottingham proposal will need to be considered with reference to the recommendations set out in the IRP.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[84523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits for (a) housing supply and (b) the Government's levelling up agenda of introducing a Coventry, Leicester, Nottingham rail link.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Midlands Connect has developed a strategic outline business case for reinstating direct rail links between Coventry and Leicester/Nottingham. This includes consideration of the benefits regarding housing supply and contribution to the levelling up agenda.

■ **Railways: North of England**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[82355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the comparative economic impact on York's economy of the Integrated Rail Plan compared to HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail proposals.

Andrew Stephenson:

During the development of the Integrated Rail Plan, I had regular discussions with Ministerial colleagues. These included consideration of the economic impacts of the proposed schemes as well as cost and affordability.

■ **Railways: South West**

Chris Loder:

[\[83488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department plans to produce an Integrated Plan for Rail for the South West.

Andrew Stephenson:

There are currently no plans to produce an Integrated Plan for Rail for the South West.

However, the Government continues to support rail in the South West, as seen by the recent reopening of the Dartmoor Line from Exeter to Okehampton, and our investment of £120 million in the South West Rail Resilience Programme.

■ **Railways: Yorkshire and the Humber**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[82357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of (a) Askham Bar and (b) other rail stations on the periphery of York at diverting car drivers headed for that city centre onto rail.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department for Transport has made no assessment of the effectiveness of Askham Bar Park & Ride, or of rail stations on the periphery of York at diverting car drivers headed for that city centre onto rail. We would expect this to be a matter for the relevant local transport authority.

■ Transport for London: Finance**Kate Osamor:**[\[83447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of increasing direct Government funding to Transport for London to levels similar to those for transport networks in Paris and New York.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government currently provides approximately £1 billion per year of funding for capital investment to Transport for London (TfL). This is in addition to the three extraordinary funding and financing agreements since May 2020, worth more than £4 billion. These agreements take steps to place TfL on a financially sustainable footing while offering a fair deal for the taxpayer. In the most recent agreement, of 1 June 2021, the Government has committed to review of options for longer term reform of the funding framework for Transport for London, including governance and oversight. We continue to work with the Mayor and TfL on those options, and it would be inappropriate to comment at this stage.

Kate Osamor:[\[83448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department plans to take to help ensure the stability of Transport for London funding following the economic impact of the covid-19 outbreak.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government has provided Transport for London (TfL) with more than £4 billion of support through three extraordinary funding and financing agreements since May 2020. The Department for Transport continues to work closely with TfL to support it onto a sustainable financial footing while ensuring a fair deal for the taxpayer.

■ Transport: North of England**Rachael Maskell:**[\[82359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the environmental impact of the Department's road building programme across Pennine routes compared with proposals for Northern Powerhouse Rail.

Andrew Stephenson:

All transport schemes are assessed for their environmental impacts in a consistent way and in line with HMT Green Book principles, using DfT Transport Analysis Guidance. Thus, their environmental impacts can be considered alongside other impacts (including costs) at key decision points. Individual schemes are also subject

to relevant environmental impact assessments as part of the process for securing statutory consents.

■ **Transport: Yorkshire and the Humber**

Rachael Maskell:

[82358]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing investment in road transport infrastructure and increasing investment in improving rail routes in Yorkshire.

Andrew Stephenson:

Ensuring our infrastructure remains fit for purpose and adapts to the country's changing needs remains vital for our society and the economy to flourish. Our road and rail networks unlock a host of social and economic benefits, including access to education, jobs, healthcare, retail and leisure. The second Road Investment Strategy is investing £24 billion in the operation, maintenance, renewal and enhancement of England's strategic road network to secure safer and more reliable journeys that have less impact on communities and places. This is a substantial package, which will benefit all strategic roads including those in Yorkshire such as the A63 Castle Street in Hull and the M621 near Leeds.

We are investing more than £35 billion in rail over the current Spending Review period, including rail enhancements and vital renewals to improve passenger journeys and connectivity across the country, focusing on the Midlands and the North. Furthermore, we have recently published our Integrated Rail Plan, a £96 billion programme to transform services in the Midlands and the North and which included £100 million development funding to look at the best way to take HS2 trains to Leeds including capacity at Leeds Station, and to start work on the West Yorkshire Mass Transit System.

We are also providing up to £50,000 each from the third round of the Restoring Your Railways Ideas Fund to develop three early-stage proposals to reinstate passenger rail links between Beverley & York, Stocksbridge & Sheffield Victoria (Don Valley Line) and on the Askern Branch Line; £137 million for the Hope Valley line to deliver more capacity and improve connectivity between Sheffield and Manchester and; a share of £15 million from the New Stations Fund to build new stations at White Rose and Thorpe Park in Leeds.

■ **Travel: Finance**

Robert Halfon:

[83314]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he will announce the next round of successful bids to the Active Travel Fund.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

My Department has been rigorously assessing the bids submitted by local authorities. I will be announcing the 2021/22 active travel capital allocations in due course.

■ West of England Line

Chris Loder: [\[83489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the performance of train services on the Salisbury to Exeter line.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Department officials are challenging South Western Railway (SWR) over the performance of the West of England Line where performance has fallen below the standards required recently. The South Western Railway National Rail Contract contains provisions to incentivise the operator to ensure services are run to the agreed timetable and where this is not the case, actions be taken to rectify any causation factors.

TREASURY

■ Business: Taxation

Bridget Phillipson: [\[82309\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 11 June 2021 Question 10353, on Business: Taxation, if he will publish that information for the 2020-2021 financial year.

Lucy Frazer:

The mean and median duration in months for all enquiries concluded by HMRC's Large Business Directorate was as follows:

YEAR	MEAN	MEDIAN
2014-15	11.2	4
2015-16	11.2	4
2016-17	14.3	5
2017-18	12.9	6
2018-19	14.8	8
2019-20	17.2	7
2020-21	19.6	10

Bridget Phillipson: [\[82310\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 11 June 2021 to Question 10352, on Business: Taxation, if he will publish that information for the 2020-2021 financial year.

Lucy Frazer:

Information has been provided in the table below:

		RISKS CLOSED DURING EACH YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH
2014/15	Crown Dependencies	24
	British Overseas Territories	54
2015/16	Crown Dependencies	25
	British Overseas Territories	50
2016/17	Crown Dependencies	33
	British Overseas Territories	30
2017/18	Crown Dependencies	16
	British Overseas Territories	43
2018/19	Crown Dependencies	28
	British Overseas Territories	31
2019/20	Crown Dependencies	25
	British Overseas Territories	31
2020/21	Crown Dependencies	21
	British Overseas Territories	5

Data in respect of individual dependencies and territories has not been provided to protect customer confidentiality.

Any information that could identify individual taxpayers, including aggregate information concerning a small number of taxpayers, is exempt under Section 18 Commissioners for Revenue and Customs Act 2005:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/11/section/18>

■ **Coronavirus: Government Assistance**

Stephen Farry:**[82392]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has contingency plans in place to provide financial support to Devolved Administrations for assistance to businesses in circumstances where the outbreak of covid-19 requires lockdown measures to be taken.

Mr Simon Clarke:

Public health is a devolved matter and so many of the health measures implemented across the UK in response to COVID-19 fall within the competence of the devolved administrations. COVID-19 has shown how the UK Government can work strategically and collaboratively with the devolved administrations to manage our response to the pandemic across the whole of the UK and it remains committed to continuing to do so.

Businesses in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are able to access UK-wide covid support, including:

- a reduced rate of VAT for tourism and hospitality - businesses in these sectors pay only 12.5% in VAT from 1 October until 31 March 2022, helping to support around 150,000 businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs UK-wide.
- continued access to Government-guaranteed finance for businesses across the UK, thanks to the extension of the Recovery Loan scheme to 30 June 2022.

The devolved administrations have also benefitted from an extra £12.6 billion through the Barnett formula this year – including an extra £1.3 billion confirmed at the recent Autumn Budget - taking total block grant funding in 2021-22 to £77.6 billion. This is enabling the devolved administrations to provide support to individuals, businesses and public services across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in relation to COVID-19.

■ Corporation Tax**Bridget Phillipson:**[\[82311\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 11 June 2021 to Question 10347, on Corporation Tax, if he will publish that information for the 2020-2021 financial year.

Lucy Frazer:

Additional Corporation Tax revenues achieved through Large Business Directorate compliance activity was published in an appendix to HMRC's 2020-21 Annual Report & Accounts.

■ Employment: Bullying**Bridget Phillipson:**[\[82301\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on what date his Department's internal policy on dealing with workplace bullying was last substantially updated.

Helen Whately:

HM Treasury's Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy is part of a wider policy on Dispute Resolution which was last updated in February 2019.

■ Fintech Review

Anthony Browne:

[85395]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress his Department has made in response to the recommendations of the Kalifa Review of UK Fintech.

John Glen:

The Government responded to the Kalifa Review of UK Fintech on 26 April 2021, setting out actions alongside regulators to ensure the UK remains at the global cutting edge of technology and innovation in financial services.

These actions include improved regulatory support for new and growing fintechs; initiatives to supercharge commercial support for UK fintechs seeking to expand internationally; and a new visa 'scale up' stream to attract global talent and boost the fintech workforce.

The Government's full response is available at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-04-26/hcws938>.

On 29 October the Government announced £5 million of seed funding for a new Centre for Finance, Innovation and Technology (CFIT) as part for Spending Review 2021. CFIT was a central recommendation of the Kalifa Review, and it will focus on creating the right conditions for firms to scale, encouraging the mainstream adoption of fintech solutions, and fostering collaboration between growing regional fintech hubs.

■ Food: Supply Chains

Dr Julian Lewis:

[85169]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking to help support the food and drink supply chain.

Helen Whately:

The government recognises the efforts of operators in the food and drink sector in maintaining supplies during the pandemic and the challenges that continue to be felt due to global supply chain issues.

The government closely monitors these issues and, where necessary, takes appropriate fiscal and non-fiscal steps to alleviate temporary pressures. In November the government announced support for the pig industry through the Private Storage Aid scheme, additional support for pork processing, and a pork levy holiday.

The government has also taken steps through the visa system to help address temporary labour shortages among pork butchers and poultry workers, building on the successful Seasonal Agricultural Workers scheme.

Over the longer term, the government will continue to support UK agriculture following EU Exit. The 2021 Spending Review fulfilled the commitment to maintain farm budgets in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland throughout this parliament, worth a total of £3.7 billion a year.

■ Help to Grow Scheme

Kate Green: [\[85249\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, whether it is his policy to provide funding for Help to Grow Management to each region and devolved nation in the UK on a ring-fenced basis.

Helen Whately:

This government is committed to ensuring that all regions and nations in the UK benefit from Help to Grow: Management. The programme will be delivered by business schools across the UK.

HM Treasury has provided ringfenced funding to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy for Help to Grow: Management. Within this allocation, funding has not been ringfenced for each region and devolved nation.

The Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy will determine the funding allocated to each business school – and thereby to each region and devolved nation – in collaboration with its delivery partner, the Chartered Association of Business Schools.

Kate Green: [\[85250\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to line 20, table 2.1, of the March Budget 2021, what level of funding has been allocated to each (a) region of England and (b) devolved nation for Help to Grow Management in (i) 2021-22, (ii) 2022-23 and (iii) 2023-24.

Helen Whately:

Help to Grow: Management will be delivered by business schools across the UK. HM Treasury has provided ringfenced funding to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy for this programme; £62m in 2021-22, £74m in 2022-23, and £87m in 2023-24.

We are committed to ensuring that all regions and nations in the UK benefit from Help to Grow: Management. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will determine the funding that is allocated to each business school – and thereby to each region and devolved nation – in collaboration with its delivery partner, the Chartered Association of Business Schools.

■ National Savings Bonds

Bridget Phillipson: [\[82313\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the launch of Green Savings Bonds by National Savings & Investments.

John Glen:

The Green Savings Bonds were made available to customers via National Savings and Investments on 22 October and will be on sale for a minimum of three months.

The 3-year fixed-term savings product was launched with an interest rate of 0.65% and customers can invest between £100 and £100,000.

This innovative policy, a world-first of its kind launched by a sovereign, provides UK savers with the opportunity to take part in the collective effort to tackle climate change. Since the product launch, savers have continued to invest in this bond, and they will benefit from the UK Government green financing programme's transparent reporting processes which will detail how their savings are helping to address the most pressing environmental issues of the day. The first annual allocation report, due to be published by September 2022, will show exactly how the proceeds raised have been used. The first biennial impact report is due to be published in 2023 and will set out the positive environmental impacts of the expenditures backed by the Green Savings Bonds and green gilts. These will include benefits to the climate and biodiversity as well as, in a first for sovereign issuers, the social co-benefits of green expenditures within the programme.

■ Net Zero Review

Dan Carden:

[\[85362\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress his Department has been made on the implementation of the net zero review; and if he will publish a timeline for the completion of the actions outlined in annex C of that review.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[85414\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress has been made on the implementation of his Department's net zero review; and if he will publish a timeline for the actions outlined in Annex C to be completed.

Helen Whately:

As outlined in the Net Zero Review final report, HM treasury is building its governance, capabilities and processes to support our transition to Net Zero. That includes developing our analytical capability for assessing and reporting on our net zero transition and the impact of policies and projects. For instance, there is an ongoing process of building macroeconomic modelling capability. As set out in Annex C of the Net Zero Review, some activities involved in this work are complete while the majority are ongoing.

■ Revenue and Customs: Remote Working

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[82300\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on what date HMRC's policy on staff working from home was last substantially updated.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC has, like all Government departments, been managing through a complex time to support colleagues to continue to deliver vital services and work in line with Government guidance related to the pandemic.

The policies which apply outside of the circumstances related to the pandemic were last updated substantially as follows:

Balancing Home and Office Working – June 2021

Contractual Home Working – July 2021

The temporary policy to support colleagues to follow Government guidance in response to the pandemic was last substantially updated in August 2021 to take account of changes to the guidance and support colleagues with a gradual and phased return to offices. The policy was last reviewed by the HMRC Executive Committee on 22 November 2021, but no immediate updates to the policy have been made.

■ Revenue and Customs: Staff

Bridget Phillipson: [82305]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of staffing of HMRC.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC resourcing levels are set to deliver business plan commitments. HMRC's latest workforce figures are published in the HMRC annual report and accounts:

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

The latest performance figures are published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrc-quarterly-performance-report-july-to-september-2021>

Bridget Phillipson: [82308]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many staff by (a) full time equivalent and (b) headcount work in each directorate in HMRC.

Lucy Frazer:

A copy of HMRC's breakdown of headcount and Full Time Equivalent (FTE) by Directorate as at 30 November 2021 is provided in the attached document.

■ Social Enterprises: Tax Allowances

Jane Hunt: [85403]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much Social Investment Tax Relief was claimed by investors of Social Impact Bonds in each successive tax year since that relief was introduced.

Lucy Frazer:

The information is not available as investors claiming Social Investment Tax Relief (SITR) are not required to inform HMRC whether they have invested in Social Impact Bonds. HMRC publishes National Statistics annually which break down total investment into SITR companies by tax year, as shown below.

TAX YEAR	AMOUNT RAISED BY SITR ENTERPRISES (£ MILLION)
2014-15	0.5
2015-16	2.3
2016-17	2.5
2017-18	2.5
2018-19 [p]	4.7
2019-20 [p]	3.3
Total	15.8

'p' denotes a provisional estimate HMRC's National Statistics on SITR can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/enterprise-investment-scheme-seed-enterprise-investment-scheme-and-social-investment-tax-relief-may-2021>

■ Treasury: Meetings

Bridget Phillipson:

[82303]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what guidance he has issued to Ministers in his Department on the timeliness and fullness of the publication of their Ministerial meetings and activities.

Bridget Phillipson:

[82304]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the (a) completeness and (b) accuracy of published records of Ministerial meetings and hospitality received by Ministers in his Department.

Helen Whately:

The government is committed to publishing details of ministers' meetings with external organisations, gifts (given and received), hospitality and overseas travel on a quarterly basis. The Treasury fulfils this commitment through its publications on gov.uk.

Guidance for departments on this process is issued by the Cabinet Office.

■ Treasury: Remote Working

Bridget Phillipson:

[82299]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on what date his Department's policy on staff working from home was last substantially updated.

Helen Whately:

HM Treasury’s policy on flexible working, which includes details about staff working from home, was last updated in February 2019.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, in alignment the appropriate Government guidance on workplace safety and availability, as an interim measure, the department suspended the requirement for formal arrangements to be in place in order to allow staff to work from home. Since March 2020, Treasury offices have remained open for all officials to access to meet business and wellbeing needs. The Treasury will continue to be guided by the Government’s Roadmap.

■ **Treasury: Staff**

Bridget Phillipson: [\[82302\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2021 to Question 79347, on Treasury: Staff, what recent assessment he has made of the quality of information provided to Parliament by Ministers in his Department.

Helen Whately:

Treasury Ministers and civil servants take their responsibilities to Parliament seriously and providing accurate information to Parliament is accordingly a high priority.

The Answer to Question 79347 referenced the Answer to Question 73813, which contained an inadvertent error that was corrected as soon as we became aware.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[82307\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many staff by (a) full time equivalent and (b) headcount work in each directorate in his Department.

Helen Whately:

The most recent available 31st October 2021 full time equivalent and headcount of paid staff who work in each directorate within the chancellor’s department are as follows.

DIRECTORATE	FULL TIME EQUIVALENT	HEADCOUNT
Business and International Tax	152.9	157
Corporate Centre	226.5	236
Economics	111.0	115
Enterprise & Growth	227.0	231
Financial Services	185.8	187
Financial Stability	80.4	81
Fiscal	106.3	109
International	184.8	187

DIRECTORATE	FULL TIME EQUIVALENT	HEADCOUNT
Ministerial & Communications	119.2	120
Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation	37.4	38
Office of Tax Simplification	7.7	11
Personal Tax, Welfare & Pensions	144.1	147
Public Services	173.6	176
Public Spending	184.0	187
Strategy, Planning & Budget	98.2	100
HM Treasury	2038.9	2082

■ Valuation Office Agency: Staff

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[82306\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of staffing of the Valuation Office Agency.

Lucy Frazer:

At Spending Review 2021, the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) reviewed its demand forecast and the Government invested over £500 million in the VOA. To meet the challenges of the current Business Rates revaluation alongside other priorities, the VOA is continuing to strengthen its workforce, including undertaking additional external recruitment, and growing its own pipeline of surveyors to meet demand over the longer-term. HM Treasury works closely with HMRC and the VOA to ensure the agency is sufficiently funded to meet its resourcing needs.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Gender Based Violence: Armed Forces

Feryal Clark:

[\[84502\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what recent steps she has taken with the Secretary of State for Defence to tackle gender-based harassment, assault and bullying in the armed forces.

Kemi Badenoch:

Equality Ministers regularly discuss issues with counterparts across government. The Ministry of Defence is working to prevent and tackle all forms of unacceptable behaviour, including on the grounds of sex, sexual harassment and bullying.

Unacceptable behaviour is not tolerated in the Armed Forces, and anyone failing to meet values and standards will be dealt with robustly, including being subject to police investigations and dismissal where appropriate.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Children: Maintenance

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[85344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of not being considered the primary caregiver, where a shared custody agreement is in place, on Child Maintenance payments for subsequent children.

Guy Opperman:

Where a paying parent has overnight care of a child for whom they pay child maintenance, for at least 52 nights a year (i.e. an average of one night per week), their overall liability is reduced to reflect this.

Reductions are made according to bands, reflecting each additional night per week of overnight care.

■ Energy: Billing

Afzal Khan: [\[84473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure vulnerable older residents in (a) Manchester Gorton constituency and (b) the North West are able to keep up with rising energy bills and heat their homes this winter.

Guy Opperman:

We spend over £129bn on benefits for pensioners in GB - 5.7% of GDP. This figure has never been higher. This includes spending on the State Pension which is forecast to be over £105bn in this financial year.

Pension Credit provides invaluable financial support for vulnerable pensioners. Around 1.4 million eligible pensioners across Great Britain receive some £5bn in Pension Credit, which tops up their retirement income and is a passport to other financial help such as support with housing costs, council tax, heating bills and a free TV licence for those over 75.

We will continue to support pensioners by making payments of £200 to those households with someone of state pension age and under 80 and £300 to those households with someone aged 80 or over. This winter we will make over 11m winter fuel payments at a cost of £2bn which represents a significant contribution to winter fuel bills.

Cold Weather Payments are also available and help vulnerable people in receipt of certain income-related benefits to meet additional heating costs, during periods of unseasonably cold weather between 1 November and 31 March. This includes older

people in receipt of Pension Credit. Those eligible will continue to automatically receive £25 when the average temperature has been recorded as, or is forecast to be, 0°C or below over seven consecutive days.

In addition, The Warm Home Discount Scheme operated by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy ensures that those in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit receive a rebate of £140 on their energy bill. There is also the energy price cap which will continue to protect millions of customers this winter. Despite the rising costs of wholesale energy, the cap still saves 15 million households up to £100 a year.

This winter we recognise that some people continue to require extra support, which is why we have introduced a £421 million Household Support Fund to help vulnerable people in England with essential household costs over the winter as the economy recovers. The Barnett Formula will apply in the usual way, with the devolved administrations receiving £79 million (£41m for the Scottish Government, £25m for the Welsh Government and £14m for the NI Executive), for a total of £500 million.

■ **Job Centres: Finance**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[82385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the trends in levels of funding for individual job centres since 2019.

Mims Davies:

We do not assess funding at individual Jobcentre level. We use forecasts to determine what level of funding is required to meet demand nationally and in districts based on forecast workloads.

There has been an increase in resources dedicated to Jobcentres across all four Nations reflecting the change in the economic environment and increased caseloads since 2019 including recruiting over an additional 13500 Work Coaches.

■ **Job Centres: Staff**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[82387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure adequate staffing of job centres.

Mims Davies:

Jobcentre caseload sizes are closely monitored at both a national and sub national level to allow DWP to plan workforce numbers required. This information is then used to assess the size of the workforce needed in each Jobcentre, which then helps to inform the recruitment activity and ensure adequate staffing levels in each Jobcentre site.

■ Job Centres: Standards

Fleur Anderson:

[\[82386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that job centres run efficiently.

Mims Davies:

Our Jobcentre teams are committed to delivering a quality service to ensure all claimants receive the best possible support to meet their individual circumstance. We operate a service delivery framework which sets out the service expectations for our Jobcentre network and the requirements for how they deliver their services efficiently. It provides information on why these expectations are set, and ways that Jobcentre leaders and Work Coaches should implement the expectations.

Jobcentre staff undergo a comprehensive learning journey designed to equip them with the tools, skills and behaviours required to provide a high quality, efficient service to all claimants. They receive on-going learning in their roles and have access to guidance which is refreshed at regular intervals. Jobcentre Team Leaders are responsible for monitoring and assuring the quality and efficiency of services provided to individual claimants. Through a combination of observation of interviews, feedback, coaching and appraisal.

■ Poverty: Disability

Fleur Anderson:

[\[82111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is taking to reduce the number of disabled people living in poverty in the UK.

Chloe Smith:

Spending on benefits for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions is currently the highest it has ever been. In 2021/22 we are forecast to spend £59 billion. Latest statistics (2019/20) show that rates of absolute poverty, both before and after housing costs for individuals living in disabled families are down since 2009/10.

We are working to make sure that money spent on supporting disabled people and people with health conditions has a positive impact on their lives and we want to go further to support and empower disabled people and people with health conditions. *Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper*, published earlier this year, is one key way we are seeking to do this. The Green Paper seeks to ensure the welfare system is an enabler to work through improving our strong and effective package of employment support. Alongside the Green Paper, the National Disability Strategy and the Health Is Everyone's Business consultation response form part of a holistic approach to enable disabled people and people with health conditions to live independent lives.

Whilst the consultation period for this publication has now closed, we are working through over 4,500 responses from individuals, charities, and organisations to analyse responses and improve health and disability policies. We continue to engage

with stakeholders, particularly on the broader aspects of the paper that focus on future reform and remain committed to responding to this Green Paper consultation with a White Paper in mid-2022.

■ **Sick Pay: Devolved Matters**

Ruth Jones:

[\[83471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the devolved Administration on the adequacy of statutory sick pay.

Chloe Smith:

SSP is a reserved policy within Great Britain. There is a well-established working relationship between the Department for Work and Pensions and the Welsh Government, ensuring that we work together on devolved and reserved areas effectively.

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) provides a minimum level of income for employees when they are sick or incapable of work. It is paid by employers at £96.35 per week for up to 28 weeks in any one period of entitlement. Some employers may also decide to pay more, and for longer, through Occupational Sick Pay.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Guardianship and Parents**

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[85342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of parents or guardians with joint custody of their children were not considered the primary care giver in relation to receiving benefits in each year since 2016.

David Rutley:

The information requested is not held. DWP does not hold information on custody arrangements between all parents claiming benefits so cannot provide the information requested.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations**

Alex Sobel:

[\[84465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that staff conducting benefit assessments with people suffering from ME and long covid patients are aware of the harmful impact of inappropriate exercise, over-exertion and exposure to light, sound, touch and new environments on those people.

Chloe Smith:

We have interpreted your question to mean what steps her department is taking to ensure that staff conducting health and disability benefit assessments with people suffering from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) / Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) and Long Covid patients are aware of the harmful impact of inappropriate exercise, over-exertion and exposure to light, sound, touch and new environments on those people.

All Health Professionals (HPs) carrying out health and disability assessments are clinically qualified practitioners. They are subject to a rigorous recruitment process followed by a comprehensive training programme in disability assessment.

CFS / ME and Long Covid are medically recognised conditions associated with a range of disabling effects which depend upon the severity of the condition. HPs who undertake assessments on behalf of the department are trained to assess the disabling effects of these conditions, and have access to learning material on both Long Covid and CFS / ME. They do not advise on treatment or management of conditions.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessment provider, Capita, developed a Condition Insight Report on Long Covid, which was released to HPs on 17 May 2021, and is utilising Long Covid in scenarios embedded into various training programmes and modules as they are being updated.

PIP assessment provider, Independent Assessment Services (IAS), has a training module on coronaviruses and has also sent out a shortened clinical bulletin to their HPs in March 21.

All Centre for Health and Disability Assessments (CHDA) Healthcare Professionals (HCPs), who carry out the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) and assessments for Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB), were issued with a distance learning module on Long Covid in June 2021.

■ Social Security Benefits: Separated People

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[85343]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect on receipt of benefits for people with joint custody of their children but who are not considered the primary parent in the years (a) 2015, (b) 2016, (c) 2017, (d) 2018, (e) 2019 and (f) 2020.

David Rutley:

No assessment has been made. DWP does not hold information on custody arrangements between all parents claiming benefits and therefore would be unable to make an assessment of the effect on the parent who is not the primary carer.

■ Universal Credit

Helen Hayes:

[85328]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact of reductions in universal credit entitlement for working claimants who are paid by their employers on a (a) weekly, (b) fortnightly and (c) four-weekly basis.

Helen Hayes:

[85329]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that working claimants who are paid by their employers (a) weekly, (b) fortnightly and (c)

every four weeks do not see their universal credit entitlement disrupted if they are paid twice during a given assessment period.

Helen Hayes:

[85330]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of assessing universal credit entitlement for working claimants who are paid by their employers (a) weekly, (b) fortnightly and (c) every four weeks based on a monthly equivalent of their earnings to prevent their entitlement being reduced if they receive more than one pay cheque in an assessment period.

David Rutley:

Universal Credit is designed to top-up earnings from employment, adapting to changes in the amount of earnings received each month. The amount of Universal Credit paid each month will reflect, as closely as possible, the actual circumstances of a household in that assessment period, including any earnings reported by the employer. As Universal Credit is paid monthly, those who are also paid their earnings on a monthly basis will normally get one payment in each assessment period. For those who are paid differently, such as four weekly, the frequency of their pay will impact on the amount of Universal Credit they will receive.

The Department has no plans to change either Universal Credit assessment periods or payment structures. They are fundamental parts of the design, reflecting payment patterns in the world of work where the majority of people are paid monthly. Ensuring similarities between paid employment and receiving benefits eliminates an important barrier which could prevent claimants from adjusting to paid employment.

Those who are paid four-weekly will normally get one payment in each assessment period and their Universal Credit will reflect the four weekly amount they are paid. For one assessment period a year, they will receive two four-weekly payments. This is because there are 12 assessment periods a year and those who are paid four-weekly will receive 13 payments a year. As their income rises in that assessment period, Universal Credit is reduced and this is in line with the long standing general principle of means-tested benefits. However, where the Universal Credit amount reduces in the assessment period where the household has received two payments of four-weekly earnings, they will still have the benefit of the higher income from their earnings .

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Transforming Public Procurement

Paymaster General (Michael Ellis):

[\[HCWS444\]](#)

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

Public procurement accounts for around a third of all public expenditure. Now that we have left the EU we have a huge opportunity to reform how this money is spent so that it better meets the needs of this country. We can create a new, simpler procurement regime that will reduce costs for business and the public sector by reducing bureaucracy and improving commercial outcomes. Such a huge amount of government spending must be leveraged to play its part in the UK's economic recovery from the pandemic and unleash opportunities for small businesses and social enterprises to innovate in public service delivery.

This Government intends to put in place a new regime that will ensure we remain compliant with our international obligations. This includes the World Trade Organisation's Agreement on Government Procurement which gives British businesses access to £1.3 trillion in public procurement opportunities overseas. This two-way street allows us to maximise value for money for UK taxpayers, whilst ensuring that UK companies are able to compete abroad.

In December 2020 we published the Green Paper on Transforming Public Procurement which set out the proposed new regime. We received over 600 responses with feedback from procurement professionals in central and local government, the education and health sectors, small, medium and large businesses, the charity and social enterprise sectors, academics and procurement lawyers. This, in addition to feedback from a series of workshops attended by almost 1000 stakeholders, provided us with a range of views and insight from contracting authorities, suppliers to the public sector and other interested parties.

The analysis of feedback has been completed and I am now announcing the publication of a detailed document that summarises responses received to the consultation and provides the Government's response to each individual question. We have considered carefully all of the comments received. Overall, levels of support for the proposed reforms were high and many responses recognised the ambition and breadth of the package of proposals. The majority of answers to individual questions were positive. In many instances, there is no change to the proposals set out in the Green Paper, however in others the Cabinet Office has clarified or amended the proposals based on the consultation feedback. I am grateful for all those who took the time to respond.

In summary the proposals will:

- simplify and consolidate the current legislation as far as possible into a single, uniform regulatory framework, which will remove duplication and make procurement more agile and flexible;
- provide a number of sector-specific features where necessary, including tailored rules to better suit defence and security procurement in order to protect our national interests;
- ensure that procurement supports local and national priorities, allowing public sector buyers to give more weight to bids that create jobs and opportunities for communities, and support action on climate change;
- strengthen the approach to the exclusion of suppliers from procurements, making it simpler, clearer and more focused on suppliers who pose an unacceptable risk;
- give much greater transparency throughout the procurement lifecycle;
- give new rights for subcontractors experiencing payment delays in public sector supply chains;
- put in place a new Procurement Review Unit to oversee the integrity of the public procurement system.

We are working closely with all the devolved administrations on the development of the new regime. On 18 August 2021, the Welsh Government published a written statement confirming that provision for Welsh contracting authorities is to be made within the UK Government's Bill.

The publication of the consultation response is a key milestone in delivering the ambition to create a procurement regime that better meets the needs of our country. We are currently finalising the Bill to implement these proposals and intend to introduce it as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

■ Vetting Policy Update

Paymaster General (Michael Ellis):

[[HCWS443](#)]

My noble Friend, the Minister of State in the Cabinet Office (Lord True CBE), has today made the following written statement:

I am pleased to announce the introduction of a new level of National Security Vetting on 1 January 2022.

The Accreditation Check, which will be applicable to certain roles within the civil aviation industry, will help mitigate the threat from insiders at airports whose access can be exploited to harm national security. An updated Statement of the HMG Personnel Security and National Security Vetting Policy, which details the Accreditation Check, will be published within the Personnel Security Controls on [GOV.UK](#) from 1 January 2022. A copy of the Personnel Security Controls will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

HOME OFFICE**■ The Government's Ten-Year Drugs Strategy**

The Minister of State for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): [\[HCWS445\]](#)

I am pleased to announce that today we are publishing the Government's new ten-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives.

Illegal drugs can have devastating effects on individuals, families and neighbourhoods, as well as costing society nearly £20 billion a year in England alone. The number of deaths from drug misuse are at the highest levels recorded, and drugs drive nearly half of all homicides and acquisitive crimes such as robberies, burglaries and thefts. The county lines model of drug distribution has also brought new levels of violence and exploitation to neighbourhoods across the country.

In 2019, the Government commissioned Professor Dame Carol Black to undertake an independent review of drugs to set out what more can be done to tackle drug harms. The second part of this review was published in July of this year. We are pleased to have accepted all of Dame Carol's key recommendations, and the strategy we are publishing today sets out our response in full.

We are clear that these problems cannot be addressed by any one department alone. This task requires a whole-of-Government approach, which is why our ambitious strategy focuses on three core strategic priorities:

- Breaking drug supply chains;
- Delivering a world-class treatment and recovery system; and
- Achieving a significant reduction in demand for illegal drugs over the next generation.

The strategy is backed by nearly £900 million of additional funding over the next three years. This record level of investment will bring our total spending on drug enforcement, treatment, recovery and prevention to more than £3 billion over the next three years.

An oral statement that will be given in the House of Commons later today will provide further detail on the commitments and investment we are making in relation to each of our three strategic priorities and the new frameworks for national and local accountability that underpin this.

The strategy will be available on gov.uk, and will be placed in the libraries of both Houses.