

Daily Report

Wednesday, 5 January 2022

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 5 January 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:33 P.M., 05 January 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Trials

Emily Thornberry:

[\[92849\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, whether (a) she or (b) the Crown Prosecution Service have set a maximum limit on the number of criminal cases awaiting trial, to act as a target for capping and reducing the current backlog of cases.

Alex Chalk:

Neither the Attorney General nor the Crown Prosecution Service set maximum limits for the amount of time a criminal case should await trial.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Carers: Leave

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[93062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when a statutory entitlement to carer's leave will be introduced.

Paul Scully:

The Government response to the consultation on carer's leave, published in September 2021, confirmed the Government's intention to deliver on the manifesto commitment to introduce a new entitlement to one week of leave for unpaid carers.

This will be a day 1 right, available to all employees who are providing care for a dependant with a long-term care need. Eligible employees will be entitled to 5 days of unpaid leave per year, which will be available to take flexibly in individual or half days.

Legislation to introduce carer's leave will be brought forward when parliamentary time allows.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Chi Onwurah:

[\[94368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will bring forward proposals to waive Intellectual Property rights for covid-19 vaccines.

George Freeman:

The Government remains open to all initiatives that will have a demonstrable positive impact on vaccine production and distribution. We do not intend to waive intellectual property rights as we believe this would have precisely the opposite effect.

Our robust international intellectual property framework protects the ability of the world's leading scientists to come up with new ideas and innovations. This has been

critical in underpinning innovators’ confidence to form over 300 vaccine manufacturing partnerships. It will allow us to continue to develop vaccines and treatments at unprecedented pace and meet our ultimate goal of saving lives, throughout the pandemic. There is no evidence that waiving intellectual property rights would help us to meet this goal. Waiving intellectual property rights would dismantle the very framework that helped to produce COVID-19 vaccines at the pace and scale now seen.

While we must continue to ensure vaccine production needs are met globally, the WHO news release of 7 October made it clear that: “With global vaccine production now at nearly 1.5 billion doses per month, there is sufficient vaccine from a supply perspective to achieve global vaccination targets”. We must therefore also focus on issues of distribution and delivery, in order to successfully vaccinate the globe and ensure we are all safe.

■ **Dementia: Research**

Chi Onwurah: [\[94366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much the Government has invested in dementia research (a) since 2018, (b) in the financial year ended 5th April 2021, and (c) in the current financial year.

George Freeman:
Government spending on dementia

£M	2018-19	2019-2020
National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)	£31.6	£29
Medical Research Council (MRC)	£45.2.	£42.1
Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)	£6.1	£4.6
Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBBSRC) on neuroscience	£30	£29
Total	£112.9	£104.7

Figures for the current financial year 2021/22 not yet available.

■ Horizon Europe

Chi Onwurah:

[\[94365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he had with EU counterparts on securing the UK's participation in the Horizon Europe programme.

George Freeman:

The UK stands ready to formalise our participation in Horizon Europe and other Union programmes, but disappointingly there have been persistent delays from the EU. Our participation in these programmes should be a "win-win" for everyone and further delays will benefit neither the UK nor EU.

Most recently, this issue was discussed at a meeting of the joint Specialised Committee on Participation in Union Programmes on Tuesday 21st December 2021.

It was important that this Specialised Committee meet to discuss the major outstanding issue of UK association and the treatment of UK participants in the meantime. We were pleased to meet but are disappointed that delays persist, and the Commission has still not provided clarity on when this will be resolved. We will continue to press on this.

We have always been clear that our priority is to support the UK's research and development sector and we will continue to do this in all future scenarios.

■ Innovation: European Union

Chi Onwurah:

[\[94377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the Regional Innovation Deals as proposed by the European Union.

George Freeman:

As the EU proposes new approaches, it will be important for the UK to respond appropriately, using our increased adaptability and freedoms as we capitalise on the opportunities of EU Exit. I look forward to scrutinising the EU's proposal in due course.

The UK is incredibly well placed in this space, through well-established feedback mechanisms between regulated businesses, regulators and policy makers and broader work currently underway reviewing the existing regulatory framework and the important regard already paid to innovation friendly regulation in the UK Innovation Strategy's commitments.

■ Mineworkers' Pension Scheme

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[93012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many miners were recipients of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme in November 2021.

Greg Hands:

As of November 2021, there are 127,876 Mineworkers' Pension Scheme members, of whom 118,154 are in receipt of their pension.

Stephanie Peacock:[\[93013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many miners were recipients of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme in (a) May 2020, (b) November 2020 and (c) May 2021.

Greg Hands:

In May 2020, there were 136,886 Mineworkers' Pension Scheme members of whom 125,355 were in receipt of pension. Equivalent numbers in November 2020 were 134,391 and 123,516 and in May 2021, 131,534 and 121,262.

■ Offshore Structures: Decommissioning**Kenny MacAskil:**[\[94539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department plans to take to help ensure that sites in the UK are used for oil and gas installation decommissioning.

Greg Hands:

The North Sea Transition Deal includes a commitment from industry for 50% of decommissioning spend to be within the UK. The Supply Chain and Exports Taskforce, that reports to the North Sea Transition Forum, is currently working to ensure all necessary support and guidance is in place to enable this commitment to be met.

■ Research: Finance**Chi Onwurah:**[\[94375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions his Department has had with relevant stakeholders on the replacement funding for the R&D funding from the European Regional Development Fund.

George Freeman:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a domestic successor to the EU Structural Fund programme, worth over £2.6 billion. The UKSPF will help people access opportunity in places in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people in disadvantaged groups across the UK.

The Government values the insights of stakeholders from different sectors and areas across the UK, which supports the development and delivery of the fund. Since the publication of the UKSPF Heads of Terms at Spending Review 2020, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) officials have engaged widely on the UKSPF and DLUHC will continue to engage stakeholders as the fund is developed.

Furthermore, the Government's Innovation Strategy, published in July, outlines our emerging thinking on how to ensure that research and innovation benefits the economy and society across the UK as part of Government's objectives to level up the UK economy. The 2021 Spending Review sees record levels of investment in the UK's world-leading research base. Government investment in research and development (R&D) will increase by £5 billion to £20 billion p.a. by 2024-25. This will not only allow the UK to build on our core strengths, but will also provide opportunities to grow research and innovation across the entire country.

The forthcoming Levelling Up White Paper will also play a critical role in setting out how R&D together with skills, infrastructure, business support and regeneration can improve living standards, grow the private sector, and increase and spread opportunity across the UK.

■ **Royal Mail: Standards**

Barbara Keeley:

[\[94311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with Ofcom on Royal Mail's current service standards for the delivery of letters in response to reports to Citizens Advice of increased postal delays.

Paul Scully:

The Department has regular discussions with Ofcom on a wide range of issues, including its duty to ensure the provision of a financially sustainable and efficient universal postal service.

Ofcom monitors Royal Mail's performance and has powers to investigate and take enforcement action if Royal Mail fails to achieve its service delivery targets.

■ **Tidal Power**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[92996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what legislative steps he is taking to promote tidal energy.

Greg Hands:

The Government announced in November that the fourth Contracts for Difference allocation round will feature a £20m annual ringfenced budget for tidal stream energy. This builds on a long history of government support for the sector. The Government has no plans at present to introduce legislation relating to tidal energy.

■ **Torness Power Station: Closures**

Alan Brown:

[\[93787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with EDF on the operation of Torness nuclear power station; and what the latest estimated shutdown date is.

Greg Hands:

The decision taken by EDF regarding the end of generation/closure dates for Torness nuclear power stations is a matter for EDF in consultation with the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR).

The UK's Advanced Gas Cooled Reactor (AGR) Fleet has performed beyond original expectations providing extra years of generation. The original expected closure date for Torness was 2023, in 2016 this was extended to 2030. Following a recent review, the extended date has been revised to 2028.

Vaccine Manufacturing and Innovation Centre: Shareholders**Chi Onwurah:**[\[94362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what shares in the Vaccine Manufacture and Innovation Centre currently belong to (a) the Government, (b) Imperial College London, (c) Oxford University, (d) the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and (e) private companies; and if he will publish the names of those private companies.

George Freeman:

The Vaccine Manufacture and Innovation Centre (VMIC) is a private company, limited by guarantee without share capital, and as such the UK Government does not exercise any ownership rights. Questions regarding VMIC'S ownership shares should be directed to VMIC.

Wind Power: Seas and Oceans**Kenny MacAskil:**[\[94540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that workers' rights are protected as the North Sea transitions from oil and gas to renewables.

Kenny MacAskil:[\[94541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what requirements are placed on operators to ensure that workers in the offshore wind sector are subject to UK employment law and rights.

Kenny MacAskil:[\[94542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what information his Department holds on which body monitors wage rates in the offshore wind sector; and whether data is recorded on that matter.

Paul Scully:

All workers in UK territorial seas are entitled to employment rights, including the minimum wage. In 2020 the Government extended minimum wage entitlement also to seafarers on domestic voyages. The Government expects that all employers will comply with UK employment law.

The Government uses the Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings (ASHE) to estimate minimum wage underpayment by sector. Offshore renewables workers are not well defined by any single standard industry classification (SIC) code and may come under several sectors, e.g. manufacturing or electricity generation. The Low Pay Commission does not define offshore renewables workers as a low-paying sector and therefore we do not expect there to be a large number of low paid workers within the sector.

CABINET OFFICE

■ 10 Downing Street

Rachel Hopkins: [\[89701\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what events took place within 10 Downing Street on (a) 18 December 2020, (b) 27 November 2020 and (b) 13 November 2020.

Michael Ellis:

Official receptions in Downing Street are published each quarter as part of the Government's transparency returns.

■ 10 Downing Street: Catering

Angela Rayner: [\[89590\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what supplies of (a) wine and (b) cheese were provided or funded from the public purse for events in 10 Downing Street during (i) November and (ii) December 2020.

Michael Ellis:

I refer the Rt. Hon Member to my response to [PQ89702](#).

■ Cabinet Office: Written Questions

Angela Rayner: [\[93767\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to answer Question 88733, tabled by the hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne on 7 December 2021, before the House rises on 16 December 2021.

Michael Ellis:

I responded to the Rt. Hon Member's Parliamentary Question, 88733, regarding the letter from Lord Pickles, on 16 December.

■ Members: Allowances

Kenny MacAskil: [\[93905\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish (a) arrangements for reimbursement of expenses and (b) the financial terms of the retiral of the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government.

Michael Ellis:

Upon her retirement from the Civil Service, the outgoing permanent secretary will receive payments under the terms of the Civil Service Pension Scheme. Details of all relevant payments will be published by the Scottish Government in their 2021-22 annual accounts in due course.

■ **Parents: Coronavirus**

Margaret Greenwood: [\[94410\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the number of children aged (a) under five and (b) five to 18 who have lost a parent or a main carer to covid-19 in (i) England, (ii) the UK and (iii) Wirral; and what estimate he has made of the number of children who have lost more than one parent or main carer to covid-19.

Michael Ellis:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSA response [UKSA_response_PQ94410.pdf]

■ **Prime Minister**

Angela Rayner: [\[90881\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what records are kept of the Prime Minister's WhatsApp messages in his official capacity.

Michael Ellis:

The Cabinet Office follows the Code of Practice on the Management of Records issued under section 46 the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

■ **Taxation**

Jon Trickett: [\[94285\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to take steps to require the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and UK Statistics Authority to disaggregate taxation revenue from income on (a) earnings and (b) dividend payments in the tax revenues published annually by the ONS as part of the Country and Regional Public Sector Finances.

Michael Ellis:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSA response [UKSA Final response to PQ94285.pdf]

COP26**■ Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[92995\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of signing Unicef's Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action.

Alok Sharma:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to [PQ 73892](#) on 22 November 2021.

DEFENCE**■ Afghanistan: Refugees****John Healey:**[\[93701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules, HC 913, published on 14 December 2021, how many successful Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme applicants now in the UK would have been (a) successful and (b) unsuccessful under the new eligibility criteria for the ARAP scheme.

James Heappey:

The amendments to the immigration rules, as laid by the Home Secretary, are intended to ensure that the ARAP policy is correctly reflected in those rules and to ensure greater clarity and consistency for potential applicants. The amended eligibility criteria will not apply retrospectively, and as such only applicants that have not yet undergone eligibility assessments will be assessed under the new criteria.

John Healey:[\[93705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Afghans with confirmed eligibility for assistance through the ARAP scheme remain in Afghanistan.

James Heappey:

As at 16 December 2021, of the 311 ARAP-eligible principals who we were not able to evacuate before the end of OP PITTING; 165 are currently known to be in Afghanistan. The ARAP scheme is not time limited, and we continue to receive and approve applications to the scheme. All those who worked for Her Majesty's Government (HMG) in qualifying roles remain eligible. In addition, those who worked in meaningful enabling roles alongside HMG in extraordinary and unconventional contexts will also be considered. Efforts to support all eligible Afghans and to help them to come to the UK are continuing.

Brendan O'Hara:[\[94404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of applications to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy received since that scheme was established had, as at 16 December 2021, received an individual follow up email to

indicate that (a) they were eligible, (b) that their case was being further investigated to assess eligibility, (c) that they were not considered eligible to apply, (d) that their application was incomplete or (e) that it was a duplicate application which would not be further considered.

James Heappey:

The ARAP Scheme has been one of the most generous in the world, under which circa.1,300 Locally Employed Staff (LES) have been relocated to the UK since April; and Casework continues seven days a week to process circa. 99,000 applications.

All applications receive an email confirming receipt; and further correspondence, including the issuing of an application reference number is triggered once the team begin initial triaging of an application. Where applications are found to be incomplete, applicants are contacted by caseworkers; however, this is an ongoing dialogue with applicants for which instances are not tracked. A large number of applications are sifted out at an early stage of the process, for example because they are duplicates or incomplete. Therefore, the Department does not keep records of every application that is ruled out.

■ **Agnes Wanjiru**

John Healey:

[\[92810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has provided data on armed forces personnel to Kenyan authorities in relation to the investigation into the death of Agnes Wanjiru.

Leo Docherty:

It would be inappropriate to comment on the details of an ongoing police investigation in another jurisdiction. The Ministry of Defence continues to support the Kenyan authorities in respect of their inquiries into the death of Ms Wanjiru.

■ **Ajax Vehicles: Noise**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[93720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to statement by the Defence Procurement Minister on 15 December 2020 on the AJAX programme; when it was established that noise and vibration issues in AJAX vehicles were above the statutory limit; and what the legal basis for that limit is.

Jeremy Quin:

As detailed in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) HS&EP Noise and Vibration Review report dated November 2021 (paragraph 35) the legal basis for noise and vibration limits on Ajax is the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 and the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005.

The MOD HS&EP review found that General Dynamics had issued an internal safety notice for external noise on a prototype vehicle in 2014 (paragraph 37). The first MOD safety notice, which related to vibration on the ARES vehicle, was issued in

December 2018 (paragraph 39). These safety notices aimed to maintain a safe system of operation.

The Institute of Naval Medicine investigated noise and vibration levels on the vehicle and in its report, received in December 2020, stated that noise and vibration exposure of crew inside the ARES vehicles is likely to exceed the exposure action values for noise and vibration, as specified in the regulations. It therefore recommended further measures to reduce risk.

■ **Ajax Vehicles: Procurement**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[93725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the scope of the parent company guarantee from General Dynamics for the delivery of AJAX includes reimbursement in the event that the vehicle is unable to reach IOC.

Jeremy Quin:

Yes, provided liability for breach is established.

■ **Armed Forces: Disciplinary Proceedings**

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[93728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what disciplinary processes are in place for those honorary officers of the (a) armed or (b) cadet forces accused of criminal offences.

Leo Docherty:

Honorary appointments with the Armed Forces or the Cadet Forces are purely honorary representational roles only and those holding such appointments are not formally part of the Armed Forces or the Ministry of Defence (MOD). They are, therefore, not subject to Service Law nor to any MOD disciplinary processes.

Where an honorary member of the Armed Forces or Cadet Forces is accused of a criminal offence, it would fall to the relevant civilian authorities to investigate. In the event of a conviction, the MOD would review an honorary appointment to determine whether it was appropriate for that individual to retain their appointment.

■ **Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Decommissioning**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[92831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what will replace Bulldog in the armoured role on 14 Signal Regiment (Electronic Warfare).

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the right hon. Member to Question 92830 answered on 20 December 2021.

Attachments:

1. 92830 -Armoured Fighting Vehicles; Decommissioning [92830 - Armoured Fighting Vehicles Decommissioning.docx]

■ Defence Equipment: Testing**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[93726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will widen the planned review of poor departmental practice with regards to safety measures in testing environments, to include other programmes besides AJAX.

Jeremy Quin:

The follow-on review into Ajax will ensure that lessons are identified for the Department to learn. The scope of the review will be finalised once a senior legal figure has been appointed to lead it.

■ Germany: Army**John Healey:**[\[92811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 10 December 2021 to Question 88654, what specific costs were entailed in the £2.1 billion spent removing the British Army's footprint from Germany.

James Heappey:

The drawdown of troops permanently based in Germany since 2010 has cost £2.1 billion and has returned 20,000 service personnel and their families as well as civil servants, contractors and support teams to the UK. The Ministry of Defence considers that this drawdown continues to support the most advantageous basing laydown of our personnel.

The rebasing of personnel from Germany should not be confused with the decision in the Integrated Review to maintain a stock of equipment in Germany to allow more rapid deployment of land forces into the European theatre if necessary. This forward basing of equipment was largely already in place to support the training facility in Sennelager that was retained during the drawdown of the garrison. Support to this facility will require, on current plans, an additional 19 troops to be based in Germany from April 2022.

The breakdown of the £2.1 billion is as follows:

- £1.8 billion under the Army Basing Programme (ABP). This represents the cost of providing new or refurbished living and technical accommodation for units that returned from Germany, along with the associated moving costs. This included the provision of c.1,400 new family homes and thousands of new single living bed spaces as well as investment in local infrastructure.
- £293 million under the BORONA Programme. This represents the cost of initial unit moves which took place between 2010-2015, including the move of HQ ARRC from Rhine Garrison to the UK.

John Healey:[\[92814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 10 December 2021 to Question 88654 on Germany: Army and with reference to page 158 of his

Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2013-14, whether the £1.5 billion loss from impairment charges for land and buildings resulting from the early withdrawal of Forces from Germany is included in the £2.1 billion spent removing the British Army's footprint from Germany.

Jeremy Quin:

Any loss from impairment charges for land and buildings is not included in the £2.1 billion spent in relocating British Army units from Germany.

■ **Germany: Military Bases**

John Healey:

[\[92812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the establishment of the new Land Regional Hub in Germany will require purchasing of land in Germany.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence has no current plans to purchase land in Germany.

John Healey:

[\[92813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many troops will be deployed in Germany as part of the new Land Regional Hub.

James Heappey:

We are planning for 19 additional troops to be deployed to Germany from April 2022 to deliver the forward basing of armoured vehicles and exercising troops as a part of the Land Regional Hub.

■ **Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft: Repairs and Maintenance**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[93719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether Lockheed Martin has access to information on the maintenance status of the UK F-35B fleet before the (a) Royal Navy and (b) Royal Air Force.

Jeremy Quin:

The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force upload information about F-35 aircraft status onto the Autonomic Logistics Information System (ALIS) system. This system can be then accessed by the F-35 Hybrid Product Support Integration (HPSI) office, which is a joint Lockheed Martin and US Department of Defence (DoD) body, with the goal of supporting F-35 readiness and maximising maintainability.

The data cannot be accessed until seven days after it is uploaded.

■ **Military Aircraft: Procurement**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[93718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether, in the process of discussions for buying the (a) P-8 and (b) Apache A-64 US systems, the Government was mandated to purchase associated US-made armaments.

Jeremy Quin:

No. While the Poseidon (P-8A) and AH-64E Apache will use US made weapons initially, this was not mandated in any procurement agreements.

Ministry of Defence: Annual Reports**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[93717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to publish the MOD Annual Report and Accounts for 2020-21 by the end of the calendar year.

Jeremy Quin:

The Annual Report and Accounts for 2020-21 are currently being staffed for final approval within the Department and will be published as soon as this activity has completed. This will be before the 31 January 2022 statutory deadline for publication of Departmental 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts.

RAF College Cranwell: Heating**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[93929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of when heating will be restored at College Hall, RAF College Cranwell.

Jeremy Quin:

Work to repair the pipework and re-pressurise the heating system was undertaken on 24 December 2021 and the heating was restored.

Veterans: Immigration**Dan Jarvis:**[\[92945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2021 to Question 583952 on Veterans: Immigration, when her Department plans to publish its response to the Immigration Costs for Armed Forces Personnel Consultation.

Leo Docherty:

The Government's response to the public consultation on Immigration Costs for Armed Forces Personnel will be published as soon as we have collective agreement for the policy.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**Channel Four Television****Sir Peter Bottomley:**[\[94271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many responses to the Channel 4 consultation have been received as of 16 December 2021; how many have been considered; and whether those responses are affecting the Government's position on the comparative merits of (a) maintaining the present ownership of Channel 4 and (b) alternatives.

Julia Lopez:

The Government has consulted on the best ownership model to support Channel 4 for years to come. Our public consultation closed on 14 September. We have received around 60,000 responses, and we are carefully considering all the views and evidence we have received to inform the government's policy-making and final decision.

■ Gambling: Advertising**Mary Kelly Foy:****[94537]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans the Government has to regulate gambling advertising on (a) television, (b) online and (c) sports shirt sponsorship.

Chris Philp:

All gambling advertising, wherever it appears, is already subject to strict controls on content and placement. Gambling operators and their affiliates must abide by the advertising codes issued by the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP) and the Committees of Advertising Practice (CAP). Breaches of the code can result in the Gambling Commission taking enforcement action. The CAP has recently consulted on strengthening the advertising codes for gambling for the greater protection of children and vulnerable adults. New measures to protect vulnerable adults are already in force and a full consultation outcome, including new protections for children, is expected shortly.

In addition, the gambling industry has its own gambling advertising code – The Gambling Industry Code for Socially Responsible Advertising which includes additional requirements, for example, a 9pm television advertising watershed for most forms of gambling and ensuring advertising is targeted only at those over 25 years old on social media.

As with advertising, sponsorship arrangements must be socially responsible and must never be targeted at children. If a gambling sponsorship is socially irresponsible or otherwise violates licence conditions, the Gambling Commission can take action against both the operator and the partner organisation.

The Government is reviewing the Gambling Act 2005 to ensure it remains fit for the digital age. As part of its broad scope, the review called for evidence on the benefits or harms of allowing operators to advertise and engage in sponsorship arrangements. We are considering the evidence carefully and will publish a White Paper outlining conclusions and next steps in due course. We are also looking more broadly at how online advertising is regulated through the Online Advertising Programme, which will be launching a public consultation in the coming months.

■ Internet: Abuse

Kirsten Oswald:

[93771]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made a recent assessment of the economic impact over the course of a person's life associated with online abuse for (a) women and (b) men.

Chris Philp:

Assessing the prevalence and economic impact of online abuse is difficult, even more so in the context of a single individual over their lifetime. While data on online abuse is limited, the government did assess the economic and social cost of a number of online harms in its [impact assessment](#) published in May 2021 to support the draft Online Safety Bill. The full methodology used to quantify the economic cost of online harms can be found from Page 70 of the impact assessment. The Government is currently working on a final stage impact assessment for the Online Safety Bill which will provide updated estimates of the economic cost of online harms.

The Government is committed to addressing data limitations in this area. This year, we have partnered with the Alan Turing Institute to launch an Online Harms Observatory with a particular focus on online hate. It will provide real-time insights into the scope, prevalence and dynamics of harmful online content using a mix of large-scale data analysis, AI and survey data. In addition, the government and Ofcom are continuing to conduct research looking at the prevalence and impact of online harms. The prevalence and impact of online abuse in a variety of contexts will be a key focus.

Online abuse can have significant and wide-ranging impacts on victims. This is unacceptable, and under the Online Safety Bill companies in scope will need to protect users from illegal abuse. Major platforms will also need to address manifestations of online abuse which may be legal but are still harmful to adults. Priority categories of legal but harmful content for adults will be set out in secondary legislation and these are likely to include some forms of online abuse.

■ Internet: Antisemitism

John Howell:

[92857]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to tackle antisemitism online, including on social media.

Chris Philp:

Services in scope of the draft Online Safety Bill will need to protect users from illegal abuse, including illegal antisemitic abuse. Services in scope which are likely to be accessed by children will need to protect them from harmful or inappropriate content.

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.

The draft Bill has been subject to pre-legislative scrutiny by a Joint Committee which reported its recommendations on 14 December. We are considering the Committee's report and will introduce the Bill as soon as possible.

EDUCATION

■ Academies: Curriculum

Justin Tomlinson:

[92918]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to ensure that regional school commissioners encourage multi-academy trusts to follow the national curriculum.

Mr Robin Walker:

Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based, which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental, and physical development of pupils, and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

Academies and free schools have greater freedom and autonomy in how they operate for areas such as the curriculum. They are expected to teach a curriculum that is comparable in breadth and ambition to the national curriculum, and many choose to teach the full national curriculum to achieve this.

The curriculum at an academy or free school is the responsibility of the academy trust. The curriculum provided in each academy to pupils up to the age of 16 is set out in their academy and free school funding agreement, which provides the framework for an academy or free school to operate in. This is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-and-free-school-funding-agreements>.

If autonomous academies or multi academy trusts wish to deliver the national curriculum in their schools, they can do so. Academies may use their freedoms to develop their own curricula, tailored to meet the particular needs of their pupils, local area, or the particular ethos of the school.

■ Adult Education: Finance

Mr Toby Perkins:

[92877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason there has been a delay in confirming the outcomes of appeals against the adult education budget clawback.

Alex Burghart:

A comprehensive review of each business case received was undertaken to ensure that our decisions were correct. We originally committed to confirming outcomes to eligible providers by 15 November 2021. There was a short delay, until 24 November 2021 whilst those outcomes were finalised and agreed.

Where a provider's business case was not fully supported, they have a right of appeal. The deadline for appeals was 1 December 2021 and we expect to be able to confirm the outcome of those appeals in early January 2022.

■ Apprentices

Mr Toby Perkins:

[92873]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of higher apprenticeships available to 18-25 year olds as of 13 December 2021; and what recent assessment he has made of the quality of outcomes in terms of apprentices (a) completing their apprenticeships successfully and (b) securing permanent employment.

Alex Burghart:

Apprenticeships provide young people with the opportunity to earn and learn the skills needed to start an exciting career in a wide range of industries, everything from artificial intelligence, archaeology, data science, business management, and banking. We want more young people across the country to benefit from high-quality apprenticeships.

In the 2020/21 academic year, over 28,200 under 25 year olds started higher level apprenticeships (at level 4 and above), an increase from 27,100 in 2019/20 and 24,400 in 2018/19. Employers decide which apprenticeships they offer and when in order to address their skills needs.

We are supporting employers to offer more apprenticeships to young people through encouraging more flexible training models such as front-loaded training, accelerated apprenticeships, and flexi-job apprenticeships. In addition, we continue to encourage more young people to consider apprenticeships through our Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge programme which reached over 600,000 students across England in the last academic year. Latest published figures show 1,500 higher level vacancies on the Find an Apprenticeship website which individuals of all ages can apply for. Employers can also choose to recruit apprentices through their own channels.

We know that achieving an apprenticeship leads to positive outcomes. Upon completion, 91% of apprentices go into work or further training with 89% in sustained employment and many apprentices remain with the same employer following their apprenticeship. Apprenticeships also offer good wage returns; median earnings for an apprentice completing at level 4 were £19,230 one year on, rising to £29,180 five years on.

In 2019/20, the overall apprenticeship achievement rate was 64% and we are taking action to improve achievement rates and ensure all apprentices receive a high-quality apprenticeship experience. This includes investing in a comprehensive package of professional development available to all apprenticeship providers and their workforces; extending Ofsted's remit to inspect apprenticeships at all levels; and introducing a new risk-based accountability approach, comprising a wider set of quality measures to support provider improvement and more timely intervention.

■ Apprentices: Finance

Mr Toby Perkins:

[92874]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to increase the level of apprenticeships funding for people aged 18 to 25.

Alex Burghart:

Funding for apprenticeships in England will grow to £2.7 billion by the 2024-25 financial year to support apprenticeships in all employers, including employers that do not pay the levy who will continue to be able to reserve funding for 95% of apprenticeship training and assessment costs. In the 2020-21 financial year we have spent £835 million on new and continuing apprentices for people aged between 18 and 25.

Employers take the decisions about who they recruit as an apprentice, and which type and level of apprenticeship they offer. We will continue to provide additional funding to employers and training providers to support them to take on young apprentices. We offer employers and training providers an additional £1,000 so they can deliver effective support to each 16 to 18 year old apprentice they take on, or 19 to 24 year old apprentices who either have an education, health and care plan or have been in the care of their local authority. We also make it more attractive for the smallest employers (those with fewer than 50 staff) across the country to employ an apprentice by paying 100% of apprenticeship training and assessment costs.

Alongside this, we are encouraging all employers to create new apprenticeship opportunities through the £3,000 employer incentive for hiring any new apprentices. This incentive payment has been extended until the end of January 2022.

■ Children: Social Services

Helen Hayes:

[93822]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the spread of the omicron variant of covid-19, what (a) assessment he has made of trends in the level of staff sickness in children's social care and (b) steps is he taking to support those providers.

Will Quince:

Supporting local authorities to ensure that vulnerable children remain protected is a top priority for the government. The department collects regular data about local authority children's services staff and residential care workers in relation to staff sickness. The most recent data is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vulnerable-children-and-young-people-survey>.

The department does not yet have workforce data covering the period in which the Omicron variant became established in the country. The department is currently collecting this data.

In addition to data collection and direct communication with local authorities and residential providers, we are in regular contact with the Association of Directors of

Children's Services and other stakeholders to monitor workforce risks, including trends in the level of staff sickness, and discuss what support the department can provide.

We recognise that the Omicron variant could put the workforce under pressure for a short time. While Ofsted will continue inspection of local authority children's services and local area special educational needs or disabilities provision, local authorities are able to request a deferral for the small number of inspections scheduled to take place in January.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has written to all local authority chief executives and directors of children's services to reiterate the department's commitment to supporting children's services, including using our communications channels to encourage qualified social workers and other professionals who are currently out of the profession to sign up with agencies in their local areas in order to boost supply capacity.

■ **Children's Centres and Youth Centres: Coronavirus**

Helen Hayes:

[93824]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) assessment he has made of the potential impact of the omicron variant on (i) children's centres and (ii) youth clubs, and (b) steps he is taking to help ensure holiday provision can remain safely open during the Christmas holidays.

Will Quince:

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, announced on 8 December 2021 that England will move to Plan B following the rapid spread of the Omicron variant in the UK. Urgent work has been ongoing to understand the impact of the new variant with regards to vaccines, treatments and transmissibility. Further information on Plan B can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-confirms-move-to-plan-b-in-england>.

Ensuring parents can continue to access childcare remains a priority for the government. The department recognises the important role childcare, such as Holiday Activity clubs, play in providing additional childcare options to parents and carers, as well as providing enriching activities and promoting the wellbeing of children. We have prioritised that these settings can remain open, and continue to encourage schools to ensure they are offering this provision, if they have it in place.

The government also recognises the significant impact of COVID-19 on young people, particularly the most vulnerable, and the important role of youth work in supporting their development and wellbeing. We are engaging regularly with key youth organisations and colleagues in other government departments to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the provision of vital services for young people and options for addressing this.

We have updated protective measures guidance for the sector, to ensure they can offer this provision as safely as possible, which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

Public health advice in this guidance includes UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)-endorsed control measures, which build on the hierarchy of protective measures that were in use throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. When implemented in line with a revised risk assessment, these measures create an environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced for children and staff.

Additionally, specific youth sector COVID-19 guidance has been developed by the National Youth Agency, in line with guidance published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, other youth sector organisations, union representatives and health and safety experts. Youth workers continue to be classified as key workers delivering frontline services, and currently all young people are able to attend indoor or outdoor youth provision.

The government continues to manage the risk of serious illness from the spread of the virus. COVID-19 continues to be a virus that we learn to live with, and the imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's education and wellbeing remains.

We will continue to look closely at all the emerging data of the omicron variant but vaccines remain our best line of defence and it is now more vital than ever that those who are unvaccinated come forward, and those eligible for their boosters book when called.

■ Department for Education: Bullying

Bridget Phillipson: [92904]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department's internal anti-bullying policy was (a) first introduced, (b) last revised.

Bridget Phillipson: [92906]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department's internal policy on sexual harassment was last revised; and if he will place a copy of that policy in the Library.

Michelle Donelan:

The department's internal policy on bullying, harassment and discrimination has been in place since at least 2009 and was last revised in June 2020. A copy will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Department for Education: Corruption

Bridget Phillipson: [92905]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department's internal anti-bribery policy was (a) first introduced, (b) last revised.

Michelle Donelan:

The department's anti-bribery and corruption policy was introduced in 2018 and last revised in June 2021.

■ Department for Education: Official Hospitality**Alex Davies-Jones:**[\[90961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether any social events took place between three or more people within the Department for Education buildings between (a) 5 November 2020 and 1 December 2020 and (b) 16 December 2020 and 22 February 2021.

Michelle Donelan:

This information is not collected. At the time, staff were expected to work from home and undertake meetings remotely, wherever possible. Some people did need to work from the office and, if so, they had to comply with relevant requirements. The Cabinet Office investigation will establish the facts surrounding a work-related gathering at the Department for Education on 10 December 2020, which the Department has publicly acknowledged.

■ Department for Education: Telephone Services**Bridget Phillipson:**[\[92912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in respect of his Department's coronavirus helpline 0800 046 8687, what the average (a) waiting time was before the call was answered and (b) call duration was, in each of the last eighteen months.

Bridget Phillipson:[\[92914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's coronavirus helpline, advertised as at 0800 046 8687, how many calls have been (a) made to that number, (b) answered, (c) answered within five minutes, (d) answered within ten minutes, (v) abandoned by the caller before being answered, in each of the last 18 months.

Michelle Donelan:

The average wait times for the COVID-19 helpline for each month of the last eighteen months are contained in the attached table (row 7).

The average call duration for the COVID-19 helpline for each month of the last eighteen months are contained in the attached table (row 8).

The number of calls made to the COVID-19 helpline are contained in the attached table (row 4, calls offered). The number of calls answered are contained (row 5), as well as the number of calls abandoned (row 6).

It is not possible to provide the number of calls answered within five and ten minutes as this is not a reporting requirement of the contract, the average wait times are included, all of which are under five minutes, with the longest being just under three minutes in September 2020.

Attachments:

1. 92912 92914 table [92912_92914_Covid_helpline_call_volumes.xls]

Bridget Phillipson:**[92913]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in respect of his Department's general helpline 0370 000 2288, what the average (a) waiting time for callers was before the call was answered and (ii) call duration was, in each of the last eighteen months.

Michelle Donelan:

Table A details the average wait times for the department for the 0370 000 2288 helpline. Table B details the average call duration.

We are only able to provide this data for the last 12 months as the system data retention policy deletes data older than 1 year.

TABLE A: AVERAGE WAITING TIME FOR CALLERS BEFORE CALL ANSWERED

Month	Average waiting time for callers before call answered (seconds)
November 2020	115.93
December 2020	79.75
January 2021	88.43
February 2021	92.26
March 2021	72.64
April 2021	54.5
May 2021	73.95
June 2021	91.56
July 2021	61.08
August 2021	49.55
September 2021	112.6
October 2021	143.79
November 2021	101.69
December 2021	100.2

TABLE B: AVERAGE CALL DURATION FOR INBOUND CALLS

Month	Average call duration for inbound calls (seconds)
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TABLE B: AVERAGE CALL DURATION FOR INBOUND CALLS

November 2020	481.05
December 2020	466.55
January 2021	403.76
February 2021	484.29
March 2021	491.8
April 2021	485.68
May 2021	522.83
June 2021	526.29
July 2021	488.79
August 2021	444.82
September 2021	564.77
October 2021	642.04
November 2021	579.38
December 2021	596.73

Bridget Phillipson:[\[92915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's general helpline, 0370 000 2288, how many calls have been (a) made to that number, (b) answered (c) answered within (i) five and (ii) 10 minutes and (d) abandoned by the caller before being answered, in each of the last 48 months.

Michelle Donelan:

The number of calls made (presented) to the department's national helpline from December 2017 to November 2021 are contained in the attached file in Table A, along with the number of calls answered (handled) and the number of calls abandoned.

Table B contains the number of calls answered within (i) 5 and (ii) 10 minutes.

We are only able to provide this data for the last 12 months as the system data retention policy deletes data older than 1 year.

Attachments:

1. 92915_table [92915_table_showing _number_of_calls_to_helpline.xls]

■ Free School Meals

Robert Halfon:

[94335]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils were in receipt of free school meals in the 12 months from June (a) 2011 and (b) 2021.

Will Quince:

The department does not hold monthly pupil data of who is in receipt of free school meals. The answer provided is based off the annual School Census. In 2011, 1,246,435 children were eligible for free school meals, 16.8% of the school population. In 2021, 1,737,600 were eligible for free school meals, 20.8% of the school population.

■ Further Education and Schools: Ventilation

Mr Toby Perkins:

[92876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason schools and colleges will be required to fund improvements to ventilation and air purification systems necessitated by the covid-19 outbreak from existing budgets.

Mr Robin Walker:

Following the rollout of around 300,000 CO₂ monitors to schools during the autumn term, over 350,000 monitors have been delivered to over 99% of eligible maintained schools, further education colleges, and the majority of nurseries. Schools are finding the monitors helpful to manage ventilation and, in the majority of schools, colleges, and nurseries, existing ventilation measures are sufficient.

The department also announced on 2 January that it would make up to 7000 air cleaning units available for poorly ventilated teaching spaces in state-funded education schools, colleges and nurseries where quick fixes to improve ventilation are not possible. All state funded schools (primary and secondary), further education colleges and nurseries can apply. This is in addition to the 1,000 department-funded air cleaning units that we announced on 18 November for special educational needs and disabilities and alternative provision providers. The deadline for applications is 9am on 17 January and units will be delivered from February 2022.

For education providers that are not eligible for a department-funded air cleaning unit, the department has launched a marketplace which provides all state funded education providers a route to purchasing air cleaning units directly from suppliers at a suitable specification and competitive price. The marketplace is available for all state funded schools (primary and secondary), further education colleges and nurseries.

Maintaining adequate ventilation remains the responsibility of individual providers. The department expects the majority of solutions to poor ventilation to be relatively minor. Day to day maintenance and minor repairs, including those to improve ventilation, should typically be funded from general maintenance budgets from revenue allocations.

Where issues are identified, providers are expected to plan and prioritise any necessary works within existing budgets. Schools and sixth form colleges also receive an annual Devolved Formula Capital Allocation to spend on small capital projects or capital purchases, while further education colleges have benefited from a Capital Transformation Fund allocation in financial year 2020-21 for addressing condition need. For more substantial capital works, education providers and those responsible for buildings have access to funding to improve the condition of buildings through different routes depending on their size and type.

■ Further Education: Expenditure

Mr Toby Perkins:

[92875]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of his Department's spending on further education for (a) people aged 16 to 18, (b) people aged 18 to 25 and (c) people aged over 18 in each financial year since 2010-11.

Michelle Donelan:

Spend by the Department for Education (and previously the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) on further education, is reported through publication of the Annual Report and Accounts. These are available for each financial year since 2010-11.

The Department for Education reports are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dfe-annual-reports>.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills reports are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/bis-annual-reports-and-accounts>.

The government has recently announced very significant increases in spending on further education. The October Spending Review explained that total spending on skills will increase over the Parliament by £3.8 billion by the 2024-25 financial year, equivalent to a cash increase of 42%, compared to 2019-20.

In December we announced specific details of increased investment. There will be an increase of £615 million in funding for 16-19 education in the 2022-23 financial year which will be used to lift funding rates and pay for an extra 40 hours of education per student. A further 9 Institutes of Technology were announced, specialising in delivering higher technical education in areas across England. The T Level Capital Fund is now offering £150 million for colleges, schools, and other providers to bid on from the fourth wave of the T Level roll out.

■ Higher Education

Bridget Phillipson:

[92900]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many items of guidance have been issued by his Department to vice chancellors and principals of higher education institutions, excluding such guidance as relates only to particular individual institutions, in each of the last 36 months.

Michelle Donelan:

A database of publications by category can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/search/guidance-and-regulation?parent=department-for-education&level_one_taxon=c58fdadd-7743-46d6-9629-90bb3ccc4ef0&level_two_taxon=dd767840-363e-43ad-8835-c9ab516633de&organisations%5B%5D=department-for-education&public_timestamp%5Bfrom%5D=16/12/2018&order=updated-newest. This database can be interrogated to identify specific guidance aimed at specific audiences, including higher education providers.

The database contains guidance which may have been updated on multiple for instance, the guidance document 'Higher education COVID-19 operational guidance' has been updated 38 times since it was first published in June 2020. It is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>.

Each document will include a published date, last updated date and option to show all updates: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses#full-history>.

■ Higher Education: Finance**Bridget Phillipson:****[94340]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the change in the level of financial reserves for UK universities and other Higher Education institutions between 1 March 2020 and 31 December 2021.

Michelle Donelan:

The Office for Students (OfS) are responsible for monitoring provider financial sustainability of the higher education sector in England.

I and my officials work closely with the OfS and various parties including a variety of universities across the sector, mission groups and other government departments to understand the ongoing impacts and changing landscape of financial sustainability in the sector.

In December 2021 the OfS published the 'English higher education 2021: The Office for Students annual review report' which shows that despite the many operational and financial challenges arising from the COVID-19 outbreak, the overall financial position of universities, colleges and other providers registered with the OfS across the higher education sector has remained sound over the course of the last year, with generally reasonable financial resilience.

Providers were able to manage COVID-19 impacts better than originally expected, with student numbers holding up, and through careful management of cash and costs. Government support measures have served to help universities navigate those challenges.

The OfS continuously monitors provider financial sustainability, engaging more closely with those where it considers there to be increased financial risk.

Universities are autonomous businesses and continue to remain responsible for the decisions they make in regard to their business model and sustainability.

■ Languages: Curriculum

Emma Hardy: [\[93036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of including Malayalam in the curriculum.

Mr Robin Walker:

The government is committed to increasing the number of pupils studying languages at GCSE, including languages that are reflected in modern Britain. That is why the teaching of languages is in the national curriculum for pupils from age 7 to 14, and why GCSE languages were included as part of the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects in 2010.

It is ultimately for schools to decide which languages they wish to teach, and the department does not specify which languages should be taught or how to teach them. Schools can therefore teach Malayalam if they wish.

■ Literacy: Teaching Methods

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[92893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much additional financial resource his Department allocated to the teaching of the systematic synthetic phonics programmes in England.

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[92894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how his Department plans to quantify the results of the systematic synthetic phonics programmes.

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[92895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has published for headteachers to decide which systematic synthetic phonics programmes are appropriate for their school.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department is continuing to deliver year on year, real terms per pupil increases, investing a further £4.7 billion by the 2024-25 financial year for the core schools budget, over and above the Spending Review 2019 settlement for schools in the 2022-23 financial year. Since 2010, the government has prioritised the effective teaching of phonics by placing it at the heart of the curriculum and providing £23.7 million of matched funding for resources and training for 14,000 schools between 2011 and 2013. In 2018, we launched a £26.3 million English hubs programme dedicated to improving the teaching of reading. We have since invested a further £17

million in this school-to-school improvement programme, which focusses on systematic synthetic phonics (SSP), early language, and reading for pleasure.

For the academic year 2021/22, the department has launched the Accelerator Fund, which is providing funding to scale up existing effective programmes in schools to support education recovery. As part of the Accelerator Fund, £5 million has been allocated to the English hubs programme to allow hubs to fund eligible schools to purchase complete SSP programmes from the department's validated list, including their associated training and resources.

Monitoring and assessment is key to effective teaching of early reading, particularly for pupils with reading difficulties. The department's validation of SSP programmes is a mechanism to support schools to be able to select a high-quality SSP programme. Programmes featured on the validated list have been assessed by an independent panel and are judged to have a sufficiently robust system for the effective monitoring and assessment of pupil progress, and for ensuring all children keep up.

The department mandates a national screening test at the end of year one. This is the phonics screening check which was introduced in 2012 to check how many children are on track with decoding.

Schools can use their phonics screening check data to measure the impact of their chosen SSP programme.

In July 2021, the department published 'The reading framework: teaching the foundations of literacy'. This is non-statutory guidance for teachers and school leaders, aimed at improving the teaching of the foundations of reading in primary schools by defining best practice. It aims to support schools to meet existing expectations on early reading, as set out in the national curriculum, the early years foundation stage statutory framework and the Ofsted education inspection framework. The reading framework articulates how SSP is an essential element of the teaching of reading and includes guidance for choosing a phonics programme.

The department published an update to its list of high-quality phonics programmes on 16 December 2021. Programmes on this list meet all the department's criteria for an effective SSP. Schools and headteachers are encouraged to consider the full range of validated SSP programmes before deciding what will best support their children's rapid progress in reading.

English hubs can offer impartial support with choosing an SSP programme to eligible schools.

■ Pre-school Education: Absenteeism

Helen Hayes:

[92992]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in the context of the spread of the Omicron variant of covid-19, what assessment he has made of the level of absences from (a) nurseries and (b) early years childcare providers; and what steps he is taking to support those providers that may be experiencing a significant loss of income.

Will Quince:

The government has provided enhanced support to nurseries during the COVID-19 outbreak given the direct and acute impacts of non-pharmaceutical interventions on nursery attendance. Nurseries that pay business rates are able to claim up to 66% relief on business rates this financial year, until 31 March 2022.

Eligible early years providers may also access the new Recovery Loans as set out by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on 3 March 2021. The Recovery Loan Scheme is currently open to small and medium enterprises to support them to access loans and other kinds of finance so they can recover after the COVID-19 outbreak and transition period. Further details regarding this loan scheme can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/recovery-loan-scheme>.

On 21 December, an additional £100 million was announced as part of a discretionary grant to local authorities. The intention is that this will support local businesses that may potentially be impacted financially because of the COVID-19 outbreak. Use of this funding is at the individual local authority's discretion but is intended to support businesses who are impacted by COVID-19 but may not be eligible for the hospitality, leisure, and culture grants, as announced on 21 December.

The Statutory Sick Pay Rebate Scheme is also returning from mid-January 2022 for COVID-related sickness absences for up to 2 weeks per employee occurring from 21 December 2021 onwards. This 2 week limit will be reset so an employer will be able to claim regardless of whether they have claimed under the previous scheme for that employee. More guidance is to be published shortly.

More information on both schemes can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-economic-support-package>.

At the Spending Review 2021 the government announced that we are investing additional funding for the early years entitlements worth £160 million in the 2022-23 financial year, £180 million in the 2023-24 financial year and £170 million in the 2024-25 financial year compared to the current year. This is for local authorities to increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers for the government's free childcare entitlement offers and reflects cost pressures, as well as anticipated changes in the number of eligible children.

All early years settings on the Ofsted register must report to Ofsted any confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the setting. Reporting is a legal requirement as set out in paragraph 3.52 of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework. The notification data is published on a fortnightly basis here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reported-coronavirus-covid-19-cases-by-registered-early-years-and-childcare-settings>. The department will continue to monitor the number of COVID-19 notifications in line with the trajectory of cases in the wider population.

Department officials also continue to monitor the sufficiency of childcare places and delivery of the entitlements with all local authority early years teams in England on a regular basis.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes: [\[92990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has issued to (a) nurseries and (b) early years childcare providers on implementing measures to prevent the transmission of covid-19 in the context of the spread of the Omicron variant.

Helen Hayes: [\[92991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in the context of the spread of the Omicron variant of covid-19, what assessment has he made of the adequacy of the (a) resourcing of and (b) support provided to (i) nurseries and (ii) early years childcare providers for improving ventilation and taking other mitigating steps against the spread of covid-19.

Helen Hayes: [\[92993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in the context of the spread of the Omicron variant of covid-19, what assessment he has made of levels of staff sickness in the nurseries and early years childcare sector; and what steps he is taking to support providers to keep services open.

Helen Hayes: [\[93823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the spread of the omicron variant of covid-19, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of (a) resourcing and (b) support provided to (i) nurseries and (ii) early years childcare providers on the provision of (A) improved ventilation and (B) other covid-19 mitigation measures in those settings.

Helen Hayes: [\[93826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the spread of the omicron variant of covid-19, whether he has issued updated guidance to (a) nurseries and (b) early years providers on mitigating measures to prevent the spread of covid-19.

Will Quince:

We continue to publish comprehensive guidance to help the early years sector provide a safe and secure environment for children and staff.

This guidance explains the control measures that settings should take to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This includes maintaining good hygiene and appropriate cleaning regimes, keeping spaces well-ventilated, and following public health advice on testing, self-isolation, wearing face coverings and managing confirmed cases.

These UK Health Security Agency-endorsed control measures create an environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. The guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>. This has been updated in the light of the emergence of the Omicron variant, although the ways to help control COVID-19 remain the same.

To help keep spaces well ventilated, all nurseries, and childminders operating on domestic premises in groups of 4 or more, receiving state-funding, were included in the carbon dioxide monitor roll out which took place last term. The new monitors will enable staff to identify areas where ventilation needs to be improved and provide reassurance that existing ventilation measures are working, helping balance the need for good ventilation with keeping rooms warm. We are also providing an additional 7,000 air cleaning units for early years settings, schools and colleges. This will improve ventilation in settings and help to minimise disruption to face-to-face education and care.

We continue to monitor the early years sector for staffing issues, including through engagement with local authorities. We have provided significant support to protect education and childcare providers from the impact of COVID-19. We remain committed to doing everything possible to protect face-to-face education and care, and keeping early years settings open for all children.

■ Primary Education: Headteachers

Bridget Phillipson: [92896]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many items of guidance have been issued by his Department to headteachers of primary schools, excluding guidance that relates only to particular individual schools, individual local authorities, or individual multi-academy trusts, in each of the last 36 months.

Bridget Phillipson: [92897]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many items of guidance have been issued by his Department to headteachers of secondary schools, excluding such guidance as relates only to particular individual schools, individual local authorities, or individual multi-academy trusts, in each of the last 36 months.

Stephen Morgan: [93876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many guidance updates for schools his Department has published in each of the last five years.

Mr Robin Walker:

A database of publications by category can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/search/all?level_one_taxon=c58fdadd-7743-46d6-9629-90bb3ccc4ef0&order=most-viewed.

This database can be interrogated to identify specific guidance aimed at specific audiences, including education and training providers.

The database contains guidance that may have been updated on multiple occasions, for instance the guidance document 'Actions for Schools during the coronavirus outbreak' has been updated 42 times since it was first published in July 2020:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

■ Schools: Air Conditioning

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[94337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will set out the procurement and selection processes used to approve products for the classroom filtration device marketplace.

Mr Robin Walker:

To procure air filtration devices the department ran a competitive process on the Crown Commercial Services Framework RM6157 Lot 3. The bids submitted by suppliers were evaluated and moderated anonymously. The bids were evaluated on price, quality, and social value to give a supplier an overall score. The suppliers that met the department's requirements had their products made available on the marketplace.

The selection process to add products to the marketplace was based on the department's technical specification created by leading industry experts, including the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), and multiple iterations to ensure relevance to schools.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[94338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether there was a (a) high priority lane or (b) recommended supplier scheme giving (i) preferential or (ii) more rapid access to approval for inclusion in the classroom filtration device marketplace to which schools have been directed.

Mr Robin Walker:

There was no high priority lane or recommended supplier scheme giving preferential or rapid access to any suppliers during the procurement of air filtration devices for the marketplace. The procurement was carried out following the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Department for Education's procurement processes.

■ Schools: Buildings

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[92901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the total number of school classrooms in regular use in schools; and what proportion of those classrooms he estimates to be in (a) primary schools, (b) secondary schools, (c) sixth form colleges in (i) independent and (ii) state schools.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Department for Education does not hold information on the number of classrooms in regular use in schools and sixth form colleges in either the state or independent sector.

Investment in the school estate is a priority for the government. £23 billion was invested in the school estate from the financial years 2016-17 to 2020-21 to deliver

new school places, rebuild or refurbish buildings in the worst condition and deliver thousands of condition projects across the school estate.

The department is investing a total of £5.6 billion of capital funding to support the education sector in the 2021-22 financial year, including £1.8 billion to help maintain and improve the condition of school buildings, £300 million in 2021-22 to invest in new high needs places, and £750 million for new school places needed by 2022.

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, announced a new School Rebuilding Programme last year, which will replace poor condition buildings with modern designs that will be net zero carbon in operation. We have announced the first 100 schools, as part of a commitment to 500 rebuilding projects over the next decade - transforming education for thousands of pupils.

The 2021 Spending Review recently announced a total of £19.4 billion of capital funding to support the education sector between the financial years 2022-23 and 2024-25. We have announced nearly £500 million of this for new mainstream primary and secondary school places needed by 2023. £2.6 billion will be invested between 2022 and 2025 to deliver new places and improve existing provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities or who require alternative provision.

■ Schools: Finance

Bridget Phillipson:

[94339]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made on trends in the level of school financial reserves between 1 March 2020 and 31 December 2021, for (a) primary schools, (b) secondary schools; and (i) academies, (ii) all other forms of school governance.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department trust schools to manage their own budgets. The majority of schools are operating with a cumulative surplus, with only a small percentage having a deficit. The latest published figures show that the percentage of both academy trusts and local authority maintained schools in surplus or breaking even increased compared to the previous reporting year.

Local authority maintained schools report their finances on a financial year basis, and the latest available data is from the end of March 2021 (covering the 2020/21 financial year). Academy trusts report their finances on an academic year basis, and the latest available data is from the end of August 2020 (covering the 2019/20 academic year).

At the end of 2020/21 financial year 92% of local authority maintained schools were in cumulative surplus or breaking even, compared to 88% the previous year. Of primary maintained schools, 93% were in surplus or breaking even, compared to 90% the previous year. Of secondary maintained schools, 81% were in surplus or breaking even, compared to 73% the previous year.

It is important to note that a large majority of secondary schools are academies. At the end of the 2019/20 academic year 96% of academy trusts were in surplus or breaking even, compared to 94% the previous year. Academy trusts may contain both primary and secondary provision, so there is no breakdown between primaries and secondaries in relation to academies.

The latest published figures show 2,604 academy trusts and 11,600 maintained schools in cumulative surplus or breaking even, compared to 112 academy trusts and 1,055 maintained schools in deficit, with an overall cumulative surplus of £5.4 billion, compared to a cumulative deficit of £280 million.

■ Schools: Inspections

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[92902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) primary, (b) secondary schools in each parliamentary constituency in England are rated by Ofsted as (i) Outstanding, (ii) Good, (iii) Requires improvement, and (iv) Inadequate; and how many schools do not have, for whatever reason, a published Ofsted assessment.

Mr Robin Walker:

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

■ Special Educational Needs

Darren Jones:

[\[94491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made on the adequacy of funding provided to local authorities to support the provision of support services to SEND students.

Will Quince:

High needs funding for children and young people with complex needs is increasing in the next financial year 2022-23 by £1 billion to over £9.1 billion. This unprecedented year-on-year increase of 13% comes on top of the £1.5 billion increase over the last 2 years, and will continue to support local authorities and schools with the increasing costs they are facing.

As well as substantial increases in high needs funding for all local authorities, of at least 12% per head, the department are also targeting extra support for those authorities in the most financial difficulty and reviewing the overall system of support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes:

[92994]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in the context of the emergence of the Omicron variant of covid-19, what guidance his Department has issued to special schools regarding mitigating measures to help prevent the spread of covid-19.

Will Quince:

The government continues to manage the risk of serious illness from the spread of COVID-19. Following the announcement from my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, on 8 December 2021 regarding the Omicron variant, the department updated on 14 December the operational guidance for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and specialist settings to reflect the most recent advice on self-isolation, tracing close contacts, clinically extremely vulnerable children and adults and daily rapid testing. The guidance was further updated on the 2 January 2022 to reflect the recommendation that from 4 January 2022 pupils and students in year 7 and above should wear face coverings in classrooms where they are able to do so. The latest version of the guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>.

The department works closely with the Department of Health and Social Care and the UK Health Security Agency on guidance, which remains subject to change as the situation develops, the imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's education remains. It is our priority that specialist settings deliver face to face, high-quality education to their pupils and students.

Helen Hayes:

[93818]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the spread of the omicron variant of covid-19, what assessment has he made of the adequacy of the current (a) resourcing of and (b) support provided to special schools for (a) improving ventilation in schools and (b) implement other covid-19 mitigation measures.

Mr Robin Walker:

Following our rollout of around 300,000 CO₂ monitors to schools during the autumn term – with over 350,000 monitors delivered to over 99% of eligible maintained schools, further education colleges, and the majority of nurseries – schools are finding the monitors helpful to manage ventilation and, in the majority of education providers, existing ventilation measures are sufficient. Feedback suggests that the monitors are acting as a helpful tool to manage ventilation, sitting alongside the other protective measures in place to manage transmission, such as regular testing, vaccinations and increased hygiene.

In November, the department announced that it was providing additional funding for 1,000 air cleaning units for poorly ventilated spaces in special educational needs and disability (SEND) and alternative provision providers. This includes SEND units in mainstream schools, where quick fixes to improve ventilation are not possible. These

schools were prioritised given the higher-than-average number of vulnerable pupils in attendance. These units are being delivered from January 2022.

In addition, the department also announced on 2 January that it would make up to an additional 7,000 air cleaning units available for poorly ventilated teaching spaces in state-funded education providers, where quick fixes to improve ventilation are not possible. All state funded schools (primary and secondary), further education colleges and nurseries can apply. Special and alternative provision providers that were not successful or did not apply in the first round are also eligible to apply in this round. The deadline for applications is 9am on 17 January and the additional units will be delivered from February 2022.

Any that are not eligible for a department funded unit have access to an online 'marketplace', which provides a route to purchasing air cleaning units of a suitable specification and competitive price.

All nurseries, out-of-school settings, schools and colleges, including all special schools, are continuing to put in place a combination of measures to help minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19. These include handwashing, enhancing cleaning, ventilation and managing confirmed cases. Further information on this can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

Settings should continue to conduct risk assessments for their particular circumstances and take appropriate action in line with our guidance, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>. There is also our guidance for special schools and other specialist settings which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>.

This provides additional information specifically targeted at special schools and other specialist settings to support the implementation of other COVID-19 mitigation measures.

■ Students: Loans

Duncan Baker:

[92098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the evidential basis is to set the eligibility for student loans below 60 years old for students undertaking a master's degree; and what assessment he has made of the effect of setting the eligibility of student loans for master's degrees above 60 on (a) older people seeking to pursue their further education and (b) those retraining later in their careers.

Michelle Donelan:

In settling on the current postgraduate master's loan eligibility criteria, the department consulted widely on the proposed terms of the new loan and considered its duty under the Equality Act 2010.

The upper age limit of 60 years old was put in place to ensure that the overall scheme remains affordable to the taxpayer and offers value for money. The age limit is also designed to restrict eligibility to those statistically most likely to continue in long-term employment and be able to repay the loan.

The department is closely monitoring take up of the loan and the response by students, the sector and employers. However, at present there are no plans to amend the loan eligibility criteria.

Mr Toby Perkins: **[93737]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential effect of the lifelong loan entitlement subsuming the Student Loans Company processes on current account holders with that company.

Mr Toby Perkins: **[93738]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the (a) likelihood and (b) potential effect of lifelong loan entitlement subsuming the Student Loans company.

Michelle Donelan:

Officials in the Department for Education are working closely and collaboratively with colleagues in the Student Loans Company (SLC) on the introduction of Lifelong Loan Entitlement from 2025.

The SLC is undertaking significant reform through its Evolve transformational programme which will provide a more efficient and user-friendly service. We are working closely with representatives from across the education sector, as well as key delivery bodies such as the SLC, to scope and design the necessary system changes to ensure it is ready to deliver the Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE). As flagged in the Skills Bill Impact Assessment, this includes using SLC data, such as monitoring metrics about the kind and rate of uptake for new student finance products, to centre users in our LLE design plans.

SLC has a successful history of delivering policy changes for Ministers and stakeholders. Changes of any scale are only implemented after considerable planning and testing to ensure that SLC's systems possess the required robustness and resilience to ensure successful introduction.

We are committed to delivering at pace in order to introduce the LLE from 2025 and aware that delivering our vision will require extensive changes to the student finance system and the types of courses available. The legislation and regulation process may be complex, and must be informed by consultation, including detailed implementation work with the SLC.

The Evolve programme, and SLC's ongoing transformation programme, will stabilise SLC's existing technology base and IT infrastructure, which will enable the digitisation of the customer journey and remove existing manual processes. This will support the introduction of future system changes such as those which are required to deliver LLE.

■ Teachers: Training

Matt Western:

[93022]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has issued to teacher training providers on the criteria they must fulfil as part of the reaccreditation process to provide an evidence-based curriculum.

Mr Robin Walker:

The government response to the review accepted the recommendation that all initial teacher training (ITT) courses that lead to qualified teacher status should be centred on an evidence-based trainee curriculum, delivering as a minimum all aspects of the core content framework. However, it is the responsibility of providers to determine the shape of their training curriculum to suit their local circumstances and the needs of their trainees, such as subject-specific knowledge.

The response sets out new quality requirements, including a section focused on curriculum, which will become part of the ITT criteria from academic year 2024/25.

Alongside the response, the government has also published documentation for current providers wishing to apply for reaccreditation and new organisations wishing to become accredited ITT providers from the academic year 2024/25, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-itt-market-review/initial-teacher-training-itt-market-review-overview>. This consists of updated ITT criteria 2024/25, 'How to Apply' guidance, an Expression of Interest form, assessment questions and marking criteria, and FAQs.

Matt Western:

[93024]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that teacher training providers will be given clear explanations as to why their re-accreditation application was rejected.

Mr Robin Walker:

We are holding two application rounds in 2022 for organisations seeking accreditation to deliver initial teacher training (ITT) from the 2024/25 academic year. Following assessment, moderation and, where necessary, due diligence checks of all applications submitted in the first round, applicants will be informed in writing of the outcome of their accreditation application. This will include some feedback about the application. If unsuccessful, feedback will outline how the applicant has not met the required standard for accreditation. If an organisation is unsuccessful in the first round, they can reapply in the second, or alternatively decide to join a partnership with a successful provider. We reserve the right to run additional accreditation rounds if this is needed.

■ T-levels**Bridget Phillipson:****[92911]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the breakdown was by sex for each subject for which students were enrolled on T-level courses in (a) September 2020 and (b) September 2021.

Alex Burghart:

We expect to publish data on the breakdown of T Level students by sex and ethnicity in spring 2022 – as part of an addendum to the 2021 T Level action plan (published on 17 December 2021). This will be end-year data and will relate only to students enrolled for the 2020/21 academic year.

Mr Toby Perkins:**[94323]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many of the students that began T level courses in 2020-21 left the course before the end of the 2021 academic year, by institution and subject.

Alex Burghart:

We have published the numbers of students recorded as enrolling on T Levels in 2020 (around 1,300) in the 2020 Action Plan:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/t-level-action-plan>.

This figure was based on early data, we do not yet have the final official data for the 2020 to 2021 academic year. We are looking at what other data we might publish, as an addendum to the 2021 T Level Action Plan, in Spring 2022.

Mr Toby Perkins:**[94325]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many days of work experience 2020-21 T level students (a) did in the 2020-21 academic year, by institution and subject and (b) have left to do in the 2021-22 academic year in order to meet the requirement of the qualification, by institution and subject.

Alex Burghart:

We are aware that sourcing industry placements has been very challenging for the first cohort of T Level students due to COVID-19 restrictions and the residual economic challenges. We have been working closely with all of our T Level providers to ensure they have the support they need to source placement opportunities.

T Level providers monitor the completion of the required placement hours, so this specific data is not information we have at this point. However, the vast majority of students have either completed their placement, or they are in progress. We have introduced a number of temporary flexibilities to enable providers to deliver placement opportunities. We continue to monitor the situation to determine what further support is needed to ensure that all students can succeed on their T Level despite the impact of COVID-19.

■ Training

Mr Toby Perkins:

[93735]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of professional training available within companies for existing staff seeking to upskill within their current role.

Mr Toby Perkins:

[93736]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support employers with the provision of (a) training and (b) continuing professional development for existing staff.

Alex Burghart:

Whilst the professional development and training of employees is a matter for individual employers, we are committed to supporting employers to equip staff with the skills they need.

Through apprenticeships, the government is supporting employers of all sizes to equip their staff with the skills they need now and in the future.

Apprenticeships funding will grow to £2.7 billion by the 2024-25 financial year, the first increase to apprenticeships funding since 2019-20, as we continue to support businesses to recruit the right people and develop the skills they need.

Apprenticeships are a great way for employers in all sectors to upskill or retrain existing employees at all levels of their organisations, and to support new employees, including those starting out in their careers. We are making apprenticeships more flexible so employers can choose the apprenticeship training that works for them, and even more people can benefit. For example, accelerated apprenticeships are supporting those with industry experience to achieve occupational competence more quickly by using their prior learning and tailoring the apprenticeship to meet their needs.

Skills Bootcamps offer free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer. For employers wanting to train their own employees through Skills Bootcamps, the government funds 70% of the cost.

Complementing this, the Free Courses for Jobs offer, which was launched in April 2021, gives eligible adults the chance to access their first level 3 qualifications for free. Employers can encourage their staff to take up courses available under this offer to upskill and access new opportunities in their current place of work.

In addition, from April 2022, any adult in England earning under the National Living Wage annually or unemployed, will also be able to access these qualifications for free, regardless of their prior qualification level.

■ Vocational Education

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[94324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students began a (a) BTEC level 3, (b) NCFE CACHE diploma and (c) any other level 3 course in (i) the 2020/21 academic year and (ii) the 2021-22 academic year, by institution and subject.

Alex Burghart:

The attached file contains learning aim enrolments in the 2020/21 academic year by provider and aim title for:

(a) learning aims at level 3 with BTEC in the title.

(b) learning aims at level 3 where NCFE is the awarding organisation, and diploma in the title (Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education (CACHE) aims cannot be specifically identified).

(c) all learning aims.

Figures are split into learners aged 16-18 and 19+.

Figures for the 2021/22 academic year will not be available until the first data are published in January 2022.

Attachments:

1. 94324_table [94324_learning_aim_enrolments_by_provider_2021.xls]

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Air Pollution

Geraint Davies: [\[93690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has prepared a National Air Pollution Control Programme to ensure that the UK's national emission reduction commitments will be met in accordance with Regulation 9(1) of the National Emission Ceilings Regulations 2018.

Jo Churchill:

We published a National Air Pollution Control Programme (NAPCP) for the UK on 1 April 2019. We are currently preparing a revised NAPCP, which we will consult on in 2022.

■ Ammonia

Geraint Davies: [\[93691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which measures he has implemented from the National Air Pollution Control Programme, dated March 2019 and published on 1 April 2019, to reduce ammonia emissions.

Jo Churchill:

The measures to reduce ammonia emissions from agriculture implemented to date include:

- Publication of a Code of Good Agricultural Practice (COGAP) for reducing ammonia emissions, 2018, in collaboration with the farming industry.
- Delivery of financial support through Countryside Stewardship and Countryside Productivity schemes to enable and encourage investment in the farm infrastructure and equipment.
- Delivery of a programme of advice, demonstration and case-studies on reducing ammonia emissions through the Catchment Sensitive Farming partnership.
- A Consultation on policy options to reduce ammonia emissions from urea fertilisers. A Government response will be published shortly.
- The Environment Agency is working with the farming industry to develop Best Available Techniques that will underpin an extension of Environmental Permitting to the dairy and intensive beef sectors.

■ Dogs: Imports**Alex Davies-Jones:**[\[93920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Commercial and Non Commercial movement of pets into Great Britain consultation, when the Government plans to increase the minimum age at which dogs can be brought into Great Britain.

Jo Churchill:

The Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill was introduced in Parliament on 8 June and completed committee on the 18 November. The Bill allows us to protect the welfare of pets by introducing restrictions to crack down on the low welfare movements of pets into Great Britain and includes powers to introduce new restrictions on pet travel and the commercial import of pets on welfare grounds, via secondary legislation.

In August 2021, the Government launched an eight-week consultation on our proposed restrictions to the commercial and non-commercial movement of pets, including rescue pets, into Great Britain. This included proposals to ban the commercial and non-commercial movement into Great Britain of puppies under the age of six months, heavily pregnant dogs and dogs which have been subjected to low welfare practices such as ear cropping or tail docking. We are currently analysing the responses to the consultation and will publish a summary response in due course. This will allow us to take onboard the views of the public and interested groups on puppy smuggling and low welfare imports in order to shape our future policy.

■ Firewood

Geraint Davies: [93677]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his latest estimate of the proportion of domestic wood burning in total emissions of fine particulate matter is closer to 10 or 40 per cent.

Jo Churchill:

Emissions data for PM2.5 are publicly available through the following URL: <https://naei.beis.gov.uk/data/>. Data for 2019 were reported on 15 February 2021.

Geraint Davies: [93680]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish a list of the research studies the Government has commissioned in the last five years to estimate the contribution of domestic wood burning to primary emissions of fine particulate matter.

Jo Churchill:

Defra has no plans to publish such a list of research.

Geraint Davies: [93681]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether estimates of emissions from bonfires, fire pits and pizza ovens are included in the National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory.

Jo Churchill:

Estimates of emissions from bonfires, fire pits and pizza ovens are not included in the National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory.

■ Glass: Recycling

Neil Coyle: [93768]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the Environment Agency on the cause of the recent increase in glass Packaging Recycling Notes.

Neil Coyle: [94402]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the statistics published in Packaging News on 9 December 2021, what assessment his Department has made of the factors that have led to the price increase from £9.75 in December 2020 to £190.00 in December 2021 of Glass Remelt Packaging Recycling Notes.

Neil Coyle: [94403]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to support obligated businesses that have experienced a significant rise in costs for packaging recycling notes in the final quarter of 2021.

Jo Churchill:

We know recent price increases for glass remelt PRNs have caused challenges for some businesses and have had discussions with both industry and regulators, including the Environment Agency, to understand the causes behind them.

In the past year, as a result of closures related to the pandemic, we have seen less glass collection from hospitality businesses, which is usually higher quality because it is collected separately. Instead, there have been higher collections from households, which often requires additional sorting to make it suitable for remelt, incurring additional cost.

These restrictions on supply will inherently raise the cost of the PRNs under the UK's market-based system, alongside the end of year compliance pressures.

The Government cannot intervene in the market, but we will continue to monitor the situation and have asked the regulator to keep us informed.

■ Lighting: Pollution**Dr Rupa Huq:****[92997]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to reduce light pollution at night in cities.

Jo Churchill:

The Government recognises that light pollution may have an impact on people, affecting their health and wellbeing, as well as the environment. Through the 25 Year Environment Plan, we have committed to reducing all forms of pollution, including light pollution. My department works with colleagues across government whose policy areas affect the use of artificial light.

The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that planning policies and decisions should limit the impact of light pollution on local amenity, dark landscapes and nature conservation. This is supported by guidance which emphasises the importance of getting the right light in the right place at the right time, which helps local planners and developers to design in ways that avoid glare and intrusion.

The Government has put in place a range of measures to ensure that light pollution is effectively managed through the statutory nuisance regime which means that, under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, local authorities have a duty to investigate complaints about light emitted from premises which could constitute a nuisance or be harmful to health and have powers to take action where there is a problem.

The management of street lighting in England is the responsibility of local highway authorities. Local highway authorities have a duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the public highways in their charge, including street lighting. The Department for Transport encourages all local authorities to replace their street lighting with LED lighting where it is economically feasible to do so. Importantly some of these new, modern luminaires can also reduce the amount of glare emitted,

reducing light pollution as a result. Advice is also available from the UK Lighting Board and the Institute of Lighting Professionals.

■ **Pets: Imports**

Alex Davies-Jones:

[93919]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Government plans to bring forward legislative proposals contained in the recent Commercial and Non Commercial movement of pets into Great Britain consultation.

Jo Churchill:

The Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill was introduced in Parliament on 8 June and completed committee on the 18 November. The Bill allows us to protect the welfare of pets by introducing restrictions to crack down on the low welfare movements of pets into Great Britain and includes powers to introduce new restrictions on pet travel and the commercial import of pets on welfare grounds, via secondary legislation.

In August 2021, the Government launched an eight-week consultation on our proposed restrictions to the commercial and non-commercial movement of pets, including rescue pets, into Great Britain. This included proposals to ban the commercial and non-commercial movement into Great Britain of puppies under the age of six months, heavily pregnant dogs and dogs which have been subjected to low welfare practices such as ear cropping or tail docking. We are currently analysing the responses to the consultation and will publish a summary response in due course. This will allow us to take onboard the views of the public and interested groups on puppy smuggling and low welfare imports in order to shape our future policy.

■ **Solid Fuels**

Geraint Davies:

[93678]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether it remains his policy to implement the ecodesign regulations for solid fuel heating appliances on 1 January 2022.

Jo Churchill:

The Ecodesign regulations for solid fuel heating appliances came into force on 1 January 2022.

Geraint Davies:

[93679]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the level of reduction the new Ecodesign Regulations for solid fuel burning appliances in domestic premises will have on (a) regulated air pollutants and (b) greenhouse gases.

Jo Churchill:

The new Ecodesign Regulations for solid fuel burning appliances will ensure that the worst-performing and most polluting products are phased out of the market.

Therefore, the Regulations will have a positive effect on the average energy efficiency of these appliances on the UK market now that they have come into force.

At the time the new Ecodesign Regulations were agreed, the EU calculated that by 2030 they, along with the associated Energy Labelling Regulations for solid fuel appliances, would result in an estimated reduction in greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to 400,000 tonnes of CO₂, which corresponds to 50,000 tonnes of CO₂ when scaled to the UK only.

In addition to this the National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory published in March 2021 accounts for the projected impact of the Ecodesign Regulations on regulated air pollutants, specifically PM_{2.5}. These projections only partially account for the regulations as the emissions factor data at the time of publishing was limited.

Geraint Davies:

[93930]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to promote consumer awareness of the new Ecodesign Regulations for solid fuel heating appliances that are due to be implemented on 1 January 2022.

Jo Churchill:

Defra has worked with industry supporting the Ecodesign-ready scheme since 2017. A communication campaign initiative was launched in 2020 to encourage solid fuel users to use better quality fuels, get their chimney swept or upgrade their appliances.

■ **Veterinary Medicine: Labour Turnover and Recruitment**

Sir Greg Knight:

[92828]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to (a) increase the number of and (b) encourage recruitment and retention of farm animal vets; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

Since 2019 four new veterinary schools have opened in the UK at Harper Adams University, Scottish Rural College, the University of Central Lancashire, and the University of Aberystwyth in conjunction with the Royal Veterinary College. This will potentially increase the number of students entering veterinary education to around 1600 per year across all schools, an increase of 45% since 2014. This will help boost the number of UK graduates in the long term. These new schools at the Scottish Rural College and Aberystwyth in particular, have a syllabus with specific focus on agriculture to help produce farm vets. We are consulting with veterinary stakeholders, which include the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and the British Veterinary Association on their work to improve the recruitment and retention across the profession.

■ Wood-burning Stoves: Urban Areas

Geraint Davies:

[\[93682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of banning (a) the sale and (b) the use of domestic wood burning appliances in urban areas to help reduce air pollution.

Jo Churchill:

We have no current plans to introduce a ban on the sale or use of wood burning appliances in urban areas. We have already taken action to ensure that wood burning appliances on the market adhere to high air quality standards.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Abduljalil AlSingace

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[92955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what recent dates the Government has raised the case of Dr Abduljalil AlSingace with authorities in Bahrain regarding (a) Dr AlSingace's ongoing hunger strike and his demands for his confiscated research to be given to his family and (b) his immediate and unconditional release from prison.

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[92956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what recent dates the Government has raised the case of Hassan Mushaima with authorities in Bahrain.

James Cleverly:

We continue to monitor and raise the cases of Dr Abduljalil al-Singace, Hassan Mushaima and others as necessary, with the Bahraini Government as well as with the independent oversight bodies. We encourage those with concerns about their detention to raise them with the oversight bodies.

■ Abduljalil AlSingace and Hassan Mushaima

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[92954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if Ministers in her Department will meet with Ali Mushaima, who is on hunger strike outside the Bahraini Embassy in London, to discuss his request for the immediate release of (a) Hassan Mushaima and (b) Dr Abduljalil AlSingace from prison in Bahrain.

James Cleverly:

There are no plans to meet with Mr Ali Mushaima. We continue to monitor and raise the cases of Dr Abduljalil al-Singace, Hassan Mushaima and others as necessary, with the Bahraini Government as well as with relevant oversight bodies.

■ Afghanistan: Homicide

Catherine West:

[\[94453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of reports of extra-judicial killings in Afghanistan, including of former Afghan National Security Forces linked to the British military.

James Cleverly:

We are closely tracking allegations that the Taliban have engaged in the targeted killing of former members of the Afghan security forces. On 5 December, the UK, along with the EU and 20 countries, joined a US-led statement condemning the alleged killings and calling on the Taliban to honour their commitment to offer amnesty to former security forces and government officials. In our contacts with the Taliban, we have pressed them to take action against anyone engaging in reprisals. We will continue to work with international partners to hold the Taliban accountable for their actions, including through the appointment of a UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Afghanistan.

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[94405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many and what proportion of locally employed staff from (a) the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, (b) the former Foreign and Commonwealth Office, (c) the former Department for International Development (who worked in Kabul, in the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team or elsewhere in Afghanistan) who applied to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme since that scheme was established have been (i) considered eligible, (ii) rejected as not meeting the criteria and (iii) asked to reapply; and how many of those applications are still being processed.

James Cleverly:

The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme offers resettlement for eligible Afghan staff who have assisted the UK Government, and their families and others who have worked with the Government in exceptional circumstances. Any current or former Locally Employed Staff directly employed by HMG assessed to be at serious risk of threat to life are eligible to apply for ARAP regardless of their employment status, rank or role, or length of time served. The ARAP scheme launched on 1 April 2021 and will continue to remain open. Since the launch, over 8,500 Afghans who worked for us have been evacuated and are being resettled, including interpreters and their immediate families, enabling them to build new lives in the UK. The Ministry of Defence, who lead on ARAP, has received over 90,000 applications to the ARAP Scheme and continues to receive new applications daily.

■ Afghanistan: Repatriation

Catherine West:

[93840]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations she has made to her counterparts in countries neighbouring Afghanistan to support the continued evacuation of eligible at-risk Afghans from Afghanistan.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government continues to push the Taliban to allow free passage out of the country for foreign passport holders and eligible Afghans who wish to leave. Since the end of the military evacuation, we have facilitated the departure of British nationals and eligible family members on flights organised by the Qatari Government, and their onward journeys to the UK. We have also helped British nationals and eligible Afghans when they have crossed into third countries, from where our diplomatic missions have been able to support their onward travel to the UK. We will continue to work to take advantage of all opportunities to help those eligible to come to the UK to leave Afghanistan. The Foreign Secretary has discussed Afghanistan with a range of international partners, including on her visits to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, India and Indonesia in October, as well as at meetings of the G20 in October and the G7 in December.

■ Association of Southeast Asian Nations: Diplomatic Relations

Catherine West:

[94452]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department has taken to further British diplomatic engagement with ASEAN countries.

Amanda Milling:

On 5 August the UK became a Dialogue Partner of ASEAN. This new partnership, the first ASEAN has agreed in 25 years, will lead to closer cooperation on issues like trade, science and technology, and education. We are pioneering high tech frontiers with a new Digital Innovation Partnership with ASEAN, underpinned by our Digital Trade Network. The UK is already a top 10 investor in ASEAN, supporting jobs across the region and providing room for UK companies to increase their presence. Our defence partnerships across the region are broad and longstanding, including British Forces Brunei and our membership of the Five Powers Defence Arrangements alongside Malaysia and Singapore. In addition to the COVID-19 vaccine doses bought with UK financing of COVAX, the UK has donated over 4.3 million doses directly to ASEAN members and seen 5.2 million of the doses donated through COVAX arrive in member states. At COP26, the UK announced £110 million to support clean infrastructure in ASEAN; this will help the region build back better from COVID-19.

ASEAN attended the G7 Foreign and Development Ministerial Meeting on 12 December at the UK's invitation. In November the Foreign Secretary visited Malaysia,

Thailand and Indonesia to upgrade our economic and security ties. On 11 November, she met with the ASEAN Secretary General, and on 2 November she spoke to ASEAN Chair and Brunei Foreign Minister Erywan. In October I visited Singapore and the Philippines and engaged a range of interlocutors.

■ **China: Olympic Games**

Layla Moran:

[94507]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 15 December to Question 90938 on China: Olympic Games, whether UK diplomatic representatives will attend the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics.

Amanda Milling:

As the Prime Minister has made clear, no officials or ministers will represent the UK Government at the Beijing Winter Olympics or Paralympics. This includes diplomats from the British Embassy in Beijing.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[93007]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many covid-19 vaccine doses were donated to other countries between 1 November 2021 and 14 December 2021.

Amanda Milling:

The UK has now fulfilled its pledge to donate 30 million coronavirus vaccine doses by the end of 2021, marking the 1-year anniversary of the UK becoming the first country to approve the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines. Doses donated by the UK have reached four continents and provided vital protection from COVID-19 in over 30 countries including Angola, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Malawi, Nepal, and Rwanda.

COVAX accepted 10 million doses from the UK on 26 October, and another 10 million on 12 November.

Doses are delivered to COVAX directly from the manufacturer as soon as they are ready. Of these doses, 10.4 million were delivered to recipient countries between 1 November and 14 December. In addition, a further 235,000 doses were delivered to recipient countries on a bilateral basis from the UK in this time period.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[93008]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate she has made of the number of covid-19 vaccine doses that will have been donated to other countries between 1 June 2021 and 1 January 2022.

Amanda Milling:

The UK has now fulfilled its pledge to donate 30 million coronavirus vaccine doses by the end of 2021, marking the 1-year anniversary of the UK becoming the first country to approve the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines. Doses donated by the UK have

reached four continents and provided vital protection from COVID-19 in over 30 countries including Angola, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Malawi, Nepal, and Rwanda.

At the G7 Leaders' summit at Carbis Bay, leaders announced that they will donate at least 870 million COVID-19 vaccine doses. Since then, G7 members have collectively pledged a further 1.2 billion doses. In 2021 G7 members have reported donations of 770 million doses, with the remainder to follow in 2022. Delivery will remain subject to demand, manufacturers' ability to supply the vaccines, and the emergence of new variants. Beyond this, President Xi of China has said that China will donate 600 million doses in 2022, and we expect other countries to also continue donating.

Patrick Grady:

[\[94416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the announcement by the CEO of Serum Institute in India, Adar Poonawalla, that it will halve production of covid-19 vaccines.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is committed to help bring the acute phase of the pandemic to an end as soon as possible and strongly supports the COVAX Facility as a key mechanism to deliver this. As of 17 December, over 738 million have been delivered by COVAX to 144 participants. COVAX continues to actively work to diversify supply bases and finalise new deals to manage ongoing risks and uncertainty. India, along with several other countries, will continue play a vital role in helping to meet international targets for global equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines in 2022.

Patrick Grady:

[\[94417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the statement by the CEO of Serum Institute in India, Adar Poonawalla, that the company has a stockpile of approximately 500,000 covid-19 vaccines.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is committed to equitable, global access to COVID-19 vaccines and is one of the largest donors to COVAX. To date, COVAX has delivered over 738 million safe and effective vaccines to 144 participants. India, as the 'pharmacy of the world', will play a vital role in helping to meet international targets for global equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines in 2022. The UK and India will continue to work together as a Global Force for Good in health, as exemplified by the collaboration between Oxford University, AstraZeneca and the Serum Institute to develop COVID-19 vaccines at scale.

Patrick Grady:

[\[94418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps her Department has taken to support the (a) delivery, (b) transport and (c) deployment of covid-19 vaccines in the developing world.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is committed to ending the acute phase of the pandemic as soon as possible, and strongly supports the COVAX Facility as a key mechanism to deliver this. UK support for delivering vaccinations has been channelled through our investments in multilateral partners. The UK is one of the largest donors to the COVAX's Advance Market Commitment (AMC). Our £548 million commitment will support the COVAX AMC to deliver up to 1.8 billion doses for up to 92 low and middle-income countries. The COVAX Facility is a multilateral mechanism that pools resources to accelerate the development, manufacture, and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines. COVAX and its Alliance partners work closely with governments to ensure robust and transparent distribution, and reporting plans are in place to ensure priority groups are reached.

Health system capacity, demand, and vaccine hesitancy are key factors in effective vaccine roll outs. Through the FCDO's Africa Vaccine Confidence Campaign, the UK is working with experts at Wits University in South Africa to build vaccine confidence. Along with COVAX partners, the UK is also working with countries to help health systems be better prepared in delivering vaccines. This includes engaging with communities and their leaders to build trust, provide correct information, and encourage uptake.

Ethiopia: Armed Conflict**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[92853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations she has made to the UN Security Council on putting the conflict in Ethiopia on that organisation's formal agenda.

Vicky Ford:

There have been regular discussions of Ethiopia by the UN Security Council. The UK has consistently and fully supported every discussion of Ethiopia by the Council, including the most recent discussion on 20 December, and will continue to do so at every opportunity.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[92854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking, in advance of the special session of the UN Human Rights Council planned for 17 December 2021, to secure support among members of that council for resolutions on (a) humanitarian access throughout Ethiopia, (b) independent and robust investigations into human rights abuses during the conflict in that country and (c) ceasefires and a negotiated end to the conflict in that country.

Vicky Ford:

On 17 December, a special session of the UN Human Rights Council agreed a resolution that: urges all parties to stop targeting humanitarian workers and allow humanitarian aid to resume; established an International Commission of Human Rights Experts in Ethiopia to investigate and collect evidence from the conflict, and; reiterates firm support for the ongoing mediation efforts of the African Union High

Representative for the Horn of Africa Region to find the urgently needed political, non-military solution. The UK supported the special session and the resolution.

■ Financial Services: Crime

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[92968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to her Department's newsletter for parliamentarians circulated by email on 14 December 2021, how clean finance is defined; and what recent discussions she has held with Cabinet colleagues on the role of entities registered in the UK and its overseas territories and dependencies on global financial crime.

Amanda Milling:

The UK's work to promote honest investment in low income and emerging economies will be characterised by high environmental, social and governance standards, including anti-bribery and high transparency standards. It will also support the UK's Clean Green Initiative, including to support energy transition in high emitting economies. All UK Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) will be aligned with the Paris agreement and a high proportion will contribute to the UK's International Climate Finance (ICF) commitment.

The Foreign Secretary's Department is in close contact with relevant other Government Departments on tackling global financial crime. The Government's public-private Economic Crime Plan, published in 2019, guides Government Departments' work to crack down on dirty money. One strand of the Plan is focused on improving transparency of ownership of corporate structures. Although the Overseas Territories (OTs) and the Crown Dependencies (CDs) already share confidential information on company beneficial ownership and tax information with UK law enforcement bodies under the Exchange of Notes Arrangements, they have also agreed to introduce publicly accessible registers of beneficial ownership. This is a major step forward and will further strengthen the valuable cooperation between the UK and the OTs and CDs.

More recently at the first US-hosted Summit for Democracy, the Prime Minister confirmed that the UK would focus attention on increasing transparency over the purchase of real estate by overseas legal entities to tackle the exploitation of UK corporate vehicles by criminals.

■ Hong Kong: Protest

Catherine West:

[\[92998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the convictions in Hong Kong of attendees of Tiananmen Square vigils.

Amanda Milling:

The right to peaceful protest is fundamental to Hong Kong's way of life - protected in both the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law - and it should be upheld. The Hong

Kong authorities' decision to target leading pro-democracy figures for prosecution is unacceptable. As set out in the latest Six-Monthly Report published on the 14 December, the UK will continue to work with international partners to hold China to its legally binding obligations on Hong Kong. Upholding the promises it entered into freely is in the best interests of Hong Kong's stability and prosperity.

■ International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

Karen Bradley:

[R] [\[93758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has held with her US counterpart on the establishment of an International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace.

James Cleverly:

UK officials remain in close contact with the US Government regarding the Middle East Partnership for Peace Act (MEPPA) and we look forward to hearing more about their objectives and the projects it will support. Once more information is available, we will consider options for collaboration.

We are also in contact with the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP) organisation regarding their concept of an International Fund. I spoke at ALLMEP's Annual Gala on 13 December and reiterated the UK's support for increasing understanding and dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians.

■ Iran: Nuclear Power

John Howell:

[\[92856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of Iran's compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

James Cleverly:

Iran has been in non-compliance with its Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) commitments since July 2019. Iran has taken steps that have permanently upgraded its nuclear capabilities, including by producing Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU), which is unprecedented for a state without a nuclear weapons programme. Since February 2021, Iran has also curtailed monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The longer that the Agency's access is reduced, the greater the opportunity for Iran to divert resources from declared activities and the less the international community knows about the status of the Iranian programme.

We have consistently demonstrated our commitment to the JCPOA, and to restoring the deal. Our priority is to see the US return to the deal and Iran return to compliance with its commitments. If a deal to return to the JCPOA is not swiftly concluded in Vienna and Iran continues its nuclear escalation, Iran will be responsible for missing the opportunity to restore the JCPOA and for bringing about the collapse of the deal.

Robert Jenrick:

[\[93766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the IAEA Director General reportedly stating that the JCPOA nuclear deal signed in 2015 is no longer applicable to the current state of Iran's nuclear programme.

James Cleverly:

Iran has been in non-compliance with its Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) commitments since 2019 and its nuclear programme is more advanced now than it has ever been.

We strongly urge Iran to halt all activities in violation of the JCPOA without delay and to seize the opportunity in front of them in the current JCPOA Vienna negotiations to restore the nuclear deal. The JCPOA is not perfect but it currently represents the only framework for monitoring and constraining Iran's nuclear programme. The diplomatic door is firmly open to Iran to conclude a deal, and there is a fair and comprehensive offer on the table which would benefit the Iranian people and economy. Iran's nuclear escalation means we have weeks, not months, to restore the deal before the JCPOA's core non-proliferation benefits are lost and the deal collapses.

■ Iran: Nuclear Power and Terrorism

Robert Jenrick:

[\[93764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her counterparts in (a) Bahrain, (b) Saudi Arabia and (c) United Arab Emirates on the strategic challenges posed by Iran's (a) nuclear programme and (b) support for terror groups.

Robert Jenrick:

[\[93765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the potential (a) global and (b) regional effects of Iran's activities in (a) Iraq, (b) Lebanon, (c) Syria and (d) Yemen.

James Cleverly:

The government regularly assesses the impact of Iran's continued destabilising activity throughout the region, including its political, financial and military support to several militant and proscribed groups, including Hizballah in Lebanon and Syria, militias in Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen. Such activity compromises the region's security, its ability to prosper and escalates already high tensions, with consequences for the international community. The UK regularly engages with partners in the region on Iran, including Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and UAE. Most recently, on 20 December the Foreign Secretary hosted representatives from the Gulf Co-operation Council, including those three states, at Chevening. Iran's nuclear programme and its destabilising regional activity were discussed.

We regularly discuss our concerns at Iran's nuclear escalation with our partners. Iran's nuclear programme is more advanced than it has ever been and is

undermining regional and international security. We are clear that Iran should halt all activities in violation of the JCPoA without delay and to seize the opportunity in front of them in current JCPoA Vienna negotiations to restore the nuclear deal. If a deal is not swiftly concluded, Iran will be responsible for missing the opportunity to restore the JCPoA and for bringing about the collapse of the deal. In this scenario, we would carefully consider all the options in partnership with our allies.

■ Myanmar: Arms Trade

Catherine West:

[\[94454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 December 2021 to Question 87793, what steps the Government is taking to ensure the 119 signatories of the UN General Assembly Resolution are fulfilling their commitments.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is a longstanding supporter of an arms embargo on Myanmar, and we have had a comprehensive arms embargo in place for many years. Since the coup, we have intensified efforts to stem the flow of weapons and dual-use goods reaching the military. The UK worked to secure the unprecedented UN General Assembly Resolution, signed up to by 119 countries, which committed to preventing the flow of arms to Myanmar. Since then we have been working with partners to ensure signatories follow up on their commitments, this includes raising the Resolution with ASEAN partners during the G7 meeting earlier this month. On 26 November, in coordination with partners, we released a further statement which committed to preventing the flow of arms, dual-use goods and technical assistance reaching the military. We also have extensive targeted sanctions on the military and its business interests, including on multiple institutions responsible for procuring weapons from abroad. The UK is currently funding open source evidence gathering to track countries that continue to sell arms to Myanmar, and will continue to work with partners to exert pressure on those responsible.

■ Nuclear Weapons: Proliferation

John Healey:

[\[92815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 14 December 2021 to Question 90329 on Nuclear Weapons: Proliferation, which recommendations in the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament her Department does not support.

James Cleverly:

The UK supports the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament and agrees with the principles behind its recommendations. The UK has made significant progress in fulfilling certain recommendations including in reducing our nuclear arsenal to the minimum credible level and reducing the role of nuclear weapons in our security policies. However, the Integrated Review set out the current deteriorating strategic security environment which limits further unilateral action from the UK at this time. In

this context, the UK cannot further reduce our arsenal or the role our nuclear weapons play in our policies and doctrine, nor can we tighten our negative security assurances. Our NPT national report highlights the UK's continued commitment to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons and our work to facilitate progress towards nuclear disarmament.

■ Uighurs

Fiona Bruce:

[92878]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to support Uyghurs.

Amanda Milling:

The UK government had led international efforts to hold China to account for its human rights violations in Xinjiang. We led the first two statements on Xinjiang at the UN and have utilised our diplomatic network to raise the issue up the international agenda. On 21 October, a global diplomatic effort by the FCDO helped to secure the support of 43 countries for a joint statement at the UN Third Committee that underlined our serious concerns about the human rights violations occurring in Xinjiang. On 29 October, the Prime Minister raised the situation in Xinjiang in a telephone call with President Xi, as did the Foreign Secretary in her introductory call with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on 22 October. Furthermore, the UK has imposed sanctions on senior Chinese government officials and one entity responsible for human rights violations in Xinjiang, and announced measures to help ensure no UK organisations are complicit in these violations through their supply chains. We will continue to work with our partners to increase the pressure on China to change its behaviour.

Fiona Bruce:

[92879]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking towards imposing sanctions on individuals responsible for oppressing the Uyghur people.

Amanda Milling:

On 22 March, the Government announced that, under the UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime, the UK has imposed asset freezes and travel bans against four senior Chinese government officials and an asset freeze on one entity. These measures were taken alongside the US, Canada and the EU, and sent a clear message to the Chinese Government that the international community will not turn a blind eye to such serious and systematic violations of basic human rights. Sanctions are just one tool at our disposal, and the UK will continue to work closely with our partners in holding China to account for the egregious human rights situation in Xinjiang, including at the United Nations.

■ Uyghur Tribunal

Fiona Bruce:

[\[92880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for its policies of the findings of the judgment of the Uyghur Tribunal, chaired by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, published on 9 December 2021.

Amanda Milling:

The Government notes the findings of the Uyghur Tribunal, and welcomes its contribution to building international awareness and understanding of the human rights violations occurring in Xinjiang. The UK has led international efforts to hold China to account at the UN, imposed sanctions on senior Chinese government officials, and announced measures to help ensure no UK organisations are complicit in human rights violations through their supply chains. The policy of successive UK governments is that any determination of genocide or crimes against humanity is a matter for a competent court.

■ Western Sahara: Politics and Government

Grahame Morris:

[\[93744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make representations to the (a) government of Morocco and (b) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on Morocco's inclusion of projects in occupied Western Sahara in relation to that country's National Determined Contribution.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government worked closely with Morocco to raise global climate ambition ahead of this year's COP26. Morocco hosted COP22 and are considered one of Africa's leaders on climate change, especially on renewables. The UK supports the World Bank's work with Morocco on coal reduction, through the Energy Sector Management Assistance Programme (ESMAP). The UK has no plans to raise the territorial application of Morocco's National Determined Contribution.

■ Yemen: Peace Negotiations

Ian Murray:

[\[94326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent progress has been made by the UN special envoy, Martin Griffiths, on helping to restore the peace process in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

The UK supports fully the efforts of UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg, appointed on 6 August, to drive forward the political process in Yemen. We urge the parties to engage constructively in negotiations to end the conflict and alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis.

A record and summary of the Special Envoy's latest briefing on 14 December to an open session of the UN Security Council can be found at

<https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1c/k1cjfioqd5>

and <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14735.doc.htm>

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Breast Cancer: Screening**

Fleur Anderson:

[94558]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the evidence base is for the policy of offering mammograms at three year intervals on the NHS, and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of offering those tests more frequently.

Maria Caulfield:

The UK National Screening Committee's recommendation to routinely offer women in the United Kingdom breast screening at three yearly intervals was adopted following the Swedish Two-County Trial. This showed a substantial reduction in the numbers of women dying of breast cancer with an interval of just under three years in women 50 years of age and over. A UK Frequency Trial on breast screening also showed little benefit in terms of lives saved from offering more regular screening.

Screening intervals are kept under regular review. A proposal to change the current screening interval from three yearly would be for the UK National Screening Committee to consider through its programme modification proposal process.

■ **Continuing Care: Fees and Charges**

Mary Kelly Foy:

[94536]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the care fees that NHS Continuing Health Care would ordinarily pay to a care provider can instead be paid to a family carer if they are unable to find CHC registered carers who can meet the care needs of the person requiring care.

Gillian Keegan:

As set out in the in National Framework for NHS Continuing Healthcare and NHS-funded Nursing Care, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) should operate a person-centred approach to all aspects of NHS Continuing Healthcare. This can include delivering NHS Continuing Healthcare through a personal health budget, where appropriate.

A personal health budget supports a person's health and wellbeing needs planned and agreed with them or their representative and the local National Health Service team. A budget can be used to pay an individual living in the same household, a close family member or a friend if the CCG is satisfied that this is necessary to meet the continuing health care needs of the person for whom the personal health budget has been agreed. CCGs should make these judgements on a case-by-case basis.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Robert Halfon:

[\[94336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on tackling the omicron variant of covid-19.

Edward Argar:

There have been no recent discussions on Omicron between the Health Secretary Sajid Javid and the Israeli Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz.

■ **Coronavirus: Drugs**

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[93742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to allow monoclonal antibodies to be used as a treatment for (a) immunosuppressed patients and (b) the general population.

Maggie Throup:

Neutralising monoclonal antibodies are now being used for the treatment of COVID-19. Since September, Ronapreve (casirivimab and imdevimab) has been used to treat patients hospitalised with COVID-19 at high risk of progression and without their own antibodies, which would include immunosuppressed patients. Since 4 November this interim National Health Service (NHS) clinical policy was expanded to allow access to a wider group of patients with hospital-onset COVID-19 and from 20 December this policy included Xevudy (sotrovimab).

From December 16, a new NHS clinical policy makes monoclonal antibody therapies available for non-hospitalised patients who test positive on a Polymerase chain reaction test, developed symptoms within five days, are aged 12 or above and are considered highest risk of progression to severe disease, hospitalisation or death, including immunosuppressed patients. Xevudy has been available under this policy since 20 December.

Ronapreve may also be used in areas where local prevalence of the Omicron variant remains below 50%.

■ **Coronavirus: Medical Treatments**

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[93743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to (a) commission and (b) fund research into further treatments for covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

Through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), the Department has funded and continues to commission and fund research into prospective treatments for COVID-19. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) has also funded, some jointly with NIHR, a number of projects to identify targets and develop new treatments for people infected with COVID-19 and continues to provide support to research in this area.

The Department's Antivirals Taskforce and Therapeutics Taskforce have established a horizon scanning function to develop a pipeline of treatments to be considered for United Kingdom research and procurement if proven to be effective.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Angela Rayner:

[81017]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the surgical gowns provided by PPE Medpro for £122 million in 2020 were used by the NHS during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 29 November 2021]: We are unable to provide the information requested as it is commercially sensitive.

Naz Shah:

[94414]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to encourage supermarkets to ask customers to wear face masks in their stores during the covid-19 outbreak.

Maggie Throup:

There is a legal requirement for in-scope businesses, including shops, to display signage to inform the public that face coverings are mandated in their premises, unless they are exempt from wearing them or have a reasonable excuse. Staff should remind people of the requirement to wear a face covering, but this should not result in anyone having to prove that they have an exemption or reasonable excuse. If necessary, police and police community support officers can issue a fixed penalty notice to anyone who does not comply without a valid exemption or reasonable excuse.

Naz Shah:

[94415]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take in response to retail spaces that are not enforcing the wearing of face masks.

Maggie Throup:

There is a legal requirement for in-scope businesses including shops, to display signage to inform the public that face coverings are mandated in their premises, unless they are exempt from wearing them or have a reasonable excuse.

The Regulations already provide for local authority enforcement officers to be able to use their enforcement powers against businesses for contravening the requirement relating to signage and information through issuing fixed penalty notices.

Staff in retail spaces and other places can remind people of the requirement to wear a face covering, but this should not result in anyone having to prove that they have an exemption or reasonable excuse.

If necessary, the police and community support officers can issue a fixed penalty notice to anyone who does not comply with this law without a valid exemption or reasonable excuse.

The Government will keep this policy under review.

■ **Coronavirus: Quarantine**

Stephanie Peacock:

[94464]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether additional support is available for people in receipt of statutory sick pay who cannot afford to self-isolate.

Maggie Throup:

Those in receipt of statutory sick pay may also qualify for a £500 Test and Trace Support Payment (TTSP). This payment is for people on low incomes who have to self-isolate because they have tested positive for COVID-19; or if they are a close contact of a positive case but are not themselves exempt from self-isolation. Further details of the scheme are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support>.

Local authorities can make discretionary payments under the TTSP scheme to individuals who are not on means-tested benefits but who will face hardship as a result of self-isolating.

Help with everyday tasks from a National Health Service volunteer responder, such as collecting shopping, medicines or prescriptions, can be requested by calling 0808 196 3646.

Stephanie Peacock:

[94465]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that all workers can afford to self-isolate in the event that they are required to do as a result of the transmission of the Omicron covid-19 variant.

Maggie Throup:

A range of measures are in place to support those who have to self-isolate:

- The Test and Trace Support Payment, which provides a payment of £500 to eligible individuals,
- Statutory Sick Pay is available from the first day of self-isolation and eligible individuals are entitled to £96.35 per week,
- Help with everyday tasks from a National Health Service volunteer responder, such as collecting shopping, medicines or prescriptions, can be requested by calling 0808 196 3646.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[93724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether members of the public who purchased antigen tests from previously Government-accredited companies, who are no longer accredited, will receive a refund for tests purchased.

Maggie Throup:

The Government does not accredit private providers. Those on the GOV.UK list have demonstrated compliance with the Government's minimum standards and may be removed on a precautionary basis pending investigation if they breach these standards. Consumers requiring a refund from a private test provider should contact the provider in the first instance.

Helen Hayes: [\[94445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the provision of covid-19 lateral flow testing kits in (a) Lambeth and (b) Southwark.

Maggie Throup:

There is no shortage of lateral flow tests and the Government will continue to procure enough stock to meet ongoing demand, including in the Lambeth and Southwark areas, through our national and local delivery channels.

In the light of the current exceptionally high demand for COVID-19 lateral flow tests, we have significantly increased distribution capacity, to make sure we can meet demand for polymerase chain reaction tests as well as lateral flow tests to be sent to people's homes. Lateral flow devices can also be collected from local pharmacies and some community sites.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Daisy Cooper: [\[65516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the NHS plans to update NHS Covid Passes to reflect where patients have received a booster covid-19 vaccination.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 2 November 2021]: There are currently no plans to record booster vaccinations in the NHS COVID Pass. The existing NHS COVID Pass for travel includes country of vaccination and administering centre data fields.

Rachael Maskell: [\[83426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what alternatives preparations are available for people who are allergic to the contents of a covid-19 vaccine.

Maggie Throup:

Chapter 14A of the UK Security Health Agency's Green Book contains guidance on COVID-19 vaccines for health professionals. It states that anyone with a history of

allergic reaction to an ingredient in a COVID-19 vaccine should not receive that vaccine, except with expert advice and should be offered an alternative if appropriate. If an individual has an allergic reaction to a first dose of vaccine, the British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology has advised that these individuals may be able to receive a second dose of vaccine. Many individuals have tolerated subsequent doses of the same vaccine and this is preferred as it avoids an individual being wrongly labelled as allergic for life.

For the very small number of people who are unable to receive any of the COVID-19 vaccines deployed in the United Kingdom due to allergies, there are currently no alternative immunisations available at this time. However, there are an increasing number of non-vaccine treatments now available, which lessen the impact of infection. This includes therapeutic and antiviral treatments such as Molnupiravir, Paxlovid, Ronapreve, Dexamethasone, Tocilizumab and Sarilumab.

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[92798]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to enable persons vaccinated abroad to have their vaccinated status authenticated locally.

Maggie Throup:

English residents are now able to book a face-to-face appointment to visit a vaccination centre to update their vaccination record in the National Immunisation Management System. Bookings can be made online using the National Booking Service or via 119. A number of vaccination centres are offering this service in England and the list of sites will be expanded in due course.

Sir Christopher Chope:

[92802]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the shortest time is in which an unvaccinated person can receive two covid-19 vaccinations and a booster so that they are protected to the maximum extent from the omicron variant; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

The shortest time for an individual aged 18 or over who is not severely immunosuppressed to receive two primary dose COVID-19 vaccinations and a booster would be approximately five months.

The dose interval between a booster dose and second dose was changed from six months to a minimum of three months at that point, to enable maximum protection from the Omicron variant.

Catherine West:

[93000]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to reduce covid-19 vaccine hesitancy.

Maggie Throup:

The United Kingdom COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake Plan aims to improve uptake across all communities. The plan sets out the Government's approach to making sure

everyone has the opportunity to get vaccinated and have the information they need to make an informed decision.

The National Health Service (NHS) is working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector, local authorities, staff and patients to ensure that views are built into the programme and used to inform and improve communications and delivery.

The Department, the NHS and the UK Health Security Agency are providing advice and information at every possible opportunity to support those getting the vaccine and to anyone who might have questions about the vaccination process. Our communications include information and advice via TV, radio and social media.

Vaccine confidence has increased across the population, especially in particularly hesitant groups such as ethnic minorities. Office of National Statistics have produced vaccine hesitancy data which can be found at the following link:

[Coronavirus and vaccine hesitancy, Great Britain - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/coronavirus/articles/vaccinehesitancy).

The latest data is to July 2021 and shows vaccine hesitancy in Great Britain amongst Ethnic Minority Groups to be 9% - having reduced from 22% in February 2021.

Daisy Cooper: **[93066]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he will update guidance to vaccination centres and GP surgeries, so that those who have received a third covid-19 vaccination dose and were eligible because of a condition or medication that suppressed their immune system, can receive a fourth dose as a booster dose after 12 weeks.

Maggie Throup:

On 3 December updated guidance was sent to all general practitioner surgeries and vaccination sites. This sets out that severely immunosuppressed individuals who have received their primary vaccination course of three doses should be offered a fourth dose as a booster, with a minimum of three months between these doses. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/jcvi-advice-in-response-to-the-emergence-of-the-b-1-1-529-omicron-variant-next-steps-for-deployment/>

Daisy Cooper: **[93067]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will update the NHS App and vaccination databases to ensure that third covid-19 vaccinations for those whose immune system is suppressed are recorded separately to booster vaccinations.

Maggie Throup:

A third primary vaccination dose for patients defined as severely immunosuppressed is recorded in the Point of Care system, and appears on the NHS App, as a booster, with the booster (fourth dose) recorded as a second booster. The classification of a third dose in the NHS App does not preclude a patient from receiving a booster, nor will it impede access to any subsequent vaccinations they might require. Eligibility is

based upon the patient being identified as severely immunosuppressed rather than on the number of vaccinations they have received. If a patient has been identified by a clinician as being eligible for a third primary dose or a booster dose, the Point of Care system will not be a barrier to vaccination.

Daisy Cooper:

[93068]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December 2021 to Question 84490 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, what assessment he has made of the amount of resource being expended by GP practices in handling enquiries from patients who require a referral to the Vaccine Data Resolution Service and call handlers from the 119 service have directed patients back to their GP practice instead of onto the national service.

Maggie Throup:

No assessment has been made.

Hilary Benn:

[93706]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what professional advice he has received on the extent to which vaccination against covid-19 reduces transmission of the virus by the person vaccinated to other people.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) provides scientific advice to the Government based on the available evidence. The UKHSA's weekly COVID-19 Vaccine Surveillance Report provides regular updates on vaccine effectiveness against person-to-person transmission. This information updated regularly as new evidence emerges and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccine-weekly-surveillance-reports>

Recent data suggests vaccine effectiveness against infection through person-to-person transmission is lower for the Omicron variant. However, high levels of protection against symptomatic disease were seen shortly after a booster dose. Further evidence is needed to understand the effect of the Omicron variant on the duration of protection and vaccine effectiveness against severe disease.

Mr Toby Perkins:

[93741]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department will take to ensure that adequate provision is made for people who do not have smart phones and require physical covid-19 vaccination certificates.

Maggie Throup:

The NHS COVID Pass has been developed to be inclusive to ensure that those without access to a computer or smartphone can demonstrate their vaccination status. The domestic or travel NHS COVID Pass letter can be requested by contacting 119.

Rachael Maskell:**[93794]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, by what date does he expect all eligible age groups to receive a booster covid-19 vaccination, including those not yet invited to receive one.

Maggie Throup:

No formal date has been determined. The National Health Service has been asked to offer every eligible adult over the age of 18 years old a booster vaccination by 31 December.

Catherine West:**[93841]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure pregnant women are (a) in their last trimester and (b) in other stages of pregnancy are prioritised for covid-19 vaccinations.

Maggie Throup:

Vaccine toolkits for local services, stakeholders, partners and employers address concerns around pregnancy, breastfeeding and fertility. Additionally, we have shared case stories in the media of women of childbearing age who have received the COVID-19 vaccine before, during or after pregnancy to reassure women with concerns. Locally, we have supported webinars and engagement sessions focused on women's concerns and tailored to demographic groups. We have also introduced new communications through social media focused on younger women.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with regional teams and providers to ensure that advice on vaccination in pregnancy, including the risks and benefits, is being offered antenatally and that information materials are available across antenatal and primary care settings. NHS England and NHS Improvement have asked maternity and primary care services to support all general practitioners, practice nurses, midwives and obstetricians to give objective, evidence-based advice to women on vaccination in pregnancy at every antenatal contact.

Local systems are encouraged to implement best practice on vaccinating pregnant women opportunistically during maternity appointments wherever possible. All National Health Service regions have pathways with maternity providers in place, to facilitate antenatal vaccination through mobile or pop-up clinics, those at maternity sites or local or national vaccination centres. We are currently considering a targeted approach for the identification and invitation of pregnant women under the age of 18 years old.

Catherine West:**[93842]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure unvaccinated pregnant women are aware of the risks of covid-19.

Maria Caulfield:

On 4 December, the Government released a video which features unvaccinated mothers who suffered COVID-19 during their pregnancies urging pregnant women to get the vaccine. The video can be found at the following link:

<https://vimeo.com/652051805/e1d8993ac8>

On 16 December, the Government, together with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), called all pregnant women to receive the vaccine as soon as possible in a press release, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pregnant-women-urged-to-come-forward-for-covid-19-vaccination>).

Both of these recent appeals to unvaccinated pregnant women point out that COVID-19 can cause severe illness in pregnant women and currently there are a disproportionate number of unvaccinated pregnant women in intensive care.

On 16 December, the JCVI made pregnant women a priority group for vaccination, following research showing they are vulnerable to more serious illness and pregnancy complications if they are infected with COVID-19.

Mr Toby Perkins:

[94318]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy not to enact the requirement to have a booster jab in order to be exempted from the requirement to take a lateral flow test before attending major events until the paper version of the covid-19 pass is able to record that a person has had their booster jab.

Maggie Throup:

Visitors to settings in scope of mandatory certification are not required to complete testing if they have received two doses of an approved vaccine, one of the single-dose Janssen vaccine or are exempt from requirement to be vaccinated. We intend to change this requirement to include a booster dose once all adults have had an opportunity receive it.

The Travel NHS COVID Pass letter includes details of an individual's COVID-19 vaccinations, including booster doses. Booster vaccinations are not currently required for the Domestic NHS COVID Pass letter.

Catherine West:

[94455]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that accurate information and guidance on the safety of covid-19 vaccines for pregnant women is provided on leaflets at vaccine centres.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has developed a range of publications aimed at pregnant women which include clear COVID-19 vaccine safety information. This includes videos, digital media for social media and websites, paper leaflets and posters to support decision-making about the COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy. The UKHSA continue to promote these resources to health care providers in all health settings.

In addition, information leaflets on COVID-19 vaccination for women of childbearing age, including those currently pregnant or breastfeeding, are available to the public. All women of childbearing age must read this leaflet before they go for vaccination.

The information is provided online and is available in an easy-read version for people with a learning disability and their carers, British Sign Language videos and a Braille version.

Paper copies of this leaflet and all translations (including Easy Read translations for lower non-native literacy) are available to order for free or download in 27 languages.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[94473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's timescale is for clarification the eligibility of the clinically vulnerable and immunosuppressed for covid-19 booster vaccinations.

Maggie Throup:

On 29 November, the Government accepted advice from the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) to expand the COVID-19 vaccine booster programme to include all adults over the age of 18 years old. This included advice 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 these doses. Those who have not yet received their third dose may be given the third dose immediately.

Alex Sobel: [\[94510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that people who only wish to have the AstraZeneca covid-19 vaccination as a booster have the ability to do so.

Maggie Throup:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that those eligible for the COVID-19 booster vaccine should be offered a booster dose of either the Pfizer vaccine or the Moderna vaccine. Where mRNA vaccines cannot be offered, vaccination with the AstraZeneca vaccine may be considered for those who received AstraZeneca vaccine in the primary course.

There are currently no plans to allow patients to request the type of COVID-19 vaccination they receive. People will be offered the vaccine type most appropriate to them, following the JCVI's advice and any allergies to particular vaccine ingredients. They will then be directed to a vaccine site with the appropriate vaccine available.

Elliot Colburn: [\[94544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential role that the community pharmacy sector could play in helping to deliver covid-19 vaccinations in the event that regular boosters are required.

Elliot Colburn: [\[94546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to make further use of the community pharmacy network during the roll out of the covid-19 vaccination booster.

Maggie Throup:

NHS England and NHS Improvement is currently running a further expression of interest exercise for community pharmacy, in areas where there are gaps in the provision of booster vaccination. All community pharmacy sites are supported to extend their opening hours and ensure they can deliver at their maximum capacity. Community pharmacy vaccination sites have also been supported through a wide range of other measures including increased fees for the service and flexible opening hours to allow the sites to focus on the vaccination service.

No assessment has yet been made on the potential role that the community pharmacy sector could play in helping to deliver COVID-19 vaccinations, in the event that regular boosters are required. At present, the need for and frequency of any potential recurrent boosters' programme is not known. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation will maintain close review of available data related to durability of protection against severe COVID-19 in all age groups and will develop further advice in due course.

Elliot Colburn:[\[94545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential increased pressures that community pharmacies will experience as primary care providers focus on the covid-19 vaccination booster programme.

Maria Caulfield:

The impact has been discussed with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee. As a result, it has been agreed that all community pharmacies will benefit from contractual easements, to reduce pressure and to increase capacity. The deadline for meeting the requirements of the Pharmacy Quality Scheme will be extended and the requirements to complete the Community Pharmacy Patient Questionnaire for 2021/2022 and both a national and local multidisciplinary clinical audits have been waived.

Community pharmacy led vaccination sites will be able to amend their opening hours to focus on the vaccination service. To support patients during these closures, vaccination sites will be able to deliver urgent medication to patients who need their medicines while the pharmacy is closed. Also, as with other vaccination sites, community pharmacy vaccination sites are eligible for increased fees for any booster they administer before the end of January.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme**Hannah Bardell:**[\[92985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any payments have been made under the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme relating to covid-19 vaccinations.

Maria Caulfield:

There have not been any Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS) payments relating to COVID-19 vaccinations to date.

Claims relating to COVID-19 are taking longer to investigate and process as the related vaccines are new and establishing a relationship between them and their purported side effects takes time. Since taking over the administration of the scheme in November 2021, the NHS Business Services Authority have started processing COVID-19 vaccinations claims and will update claimants on progress. Other VDPS claims continue to be processed as usual.

Hannah Bardell:

[\[92986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme will make payments to applicants diagnosed with Guillain-Barre syndrome in the context of that syndrome having been added to the list of side effects for the AstraZeneca covid-19 vaccination.

Maria Caulfield:

All claims to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme are clinically assessed on a case-by-case basis.

■ Dementia: Research

Chi Onwurah:

[\[92934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the status is of the Dementia Moonshot.

Maria Caulfield:

We are currently working on ways to significantly boost further research on dementia to support the delivery of the dementia moonshot. A new dementia strategy, which will set out our plans on dementia for England for future years, will be published in 2022. The strategy will include our ambitions for dementia research and increasing dementia research funding.

■ Dental Services: Coronavirus

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[79269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department undertook a regulatory impact assessment of the decision by the Chief Dental Officer on 25 March 2020 to restrict NHS face-to-face dental care until 8 June 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 25 November 2021]: No such formal regulatory impact assessment was conducted. A high-level impact assessment was carried out, which indicated that service prioritisation was an essential step in allowing dental contractors to tackle COVID-19 and keep patients, dentists and their teams safe. This also described how, without any regulatory change, dental contractors would not be able to follow the necessary infection prevention and control guidance without exposure to legal risk.

■ Domestic Abuse: Mental Health

Fleur Anderson:

[\[94559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to recognise domestic abuse as an official cause of female mental ill-health.

Gillian Keegan:

We recognise that women experiencing domestic abuse are more likely to experience mental ill-health based on current evidence.

■ Health and Social Care Levy

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[93912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure that additional (a) diagnosis, (b) assessments or (c) operations will be carried out by the NHS using the funding from the Health and Care levy by 2025.

Edward Argar:

The Health and Social Care Levy provides more than £8 billion for the National Health Service in the three years to 2024/25 to specifically support elective recovery. This funding is expected to deliver the equivalent of approximately eight million more checks, scans and procedures. This will allow the NHS in England to deliver approximately 30% more elective activity by 2024/25 than before the pandemic.

■ Health Services: Females

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[93838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish his timetable for the publication of the Women's Health Strategy for England.

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[94450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set out a timetable for the publication of the Women's Health Strategy for England.

Maria Caulfield:

We have published the analytical report of the call for evidence survey and Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England on 23rd December 2021.

■ Healthy Start Scheme

Gareth Thomas:

[\[93695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to provide Healthy Start vouchers to eligible families waiting to receive their new digital payment cards.

Maggie Throup:

Beneficiaries applying for a new National Health Service Healthy Start prepaid card, who are currently in receipt of Healthy Start vouchers and remain eligible, will be

issued with their card within the five working days before their next set of vouchers would have been due.

Gareth Thomas: [\[93696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many British children under the age of four from families with no recourse to public funds are receiving support from the Healthy Start scheme as a result of the extension announced on 2 June 2021.

Maggie Throup:

There are currently nine British children under the age of four, from eight families with no recourse to public funds or no immigration status, who are in receipt of Healthy Start through the interim scheme.

Gareth Thomas: [\[93697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he will publish the consultation on broadening the Healthy Start Scheme to British children under the age of four from families with no recourse to public funds.

Maggie Throup:

The Department has committed to consulting on bringing the interim scheme for British children under the age of four from families with no recourse to public funds to access the Healthy Start scheme into legislation. The consultation is planned for this Winter.

■ **Healthy Start Scheme: Telephone Services**

Gareth Thomas: [\[93694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to remove the call charges for users activating their new digital payment card for the Healthy Start scheme.

Maggie Throup:

There are currently no plans to remove call charges for the National Health Service (NHS) Healthy Start scheme telephone helpline. Calls to the helpline are charged at a local rate and are included in the free minutes of most call plans. The NHS Business Services Authority continues to carry out user research about access to the scheme, which includes conversations about call charges.

■ **Immunosuppression: Coronavirus**

Daisy Cooper: [\[87860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2021 to Question 70317 on Coronavirus: Disease Control, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that clinicians and employers are provided with clear and practical guidance that promotes safe working for people who are immunocompromised.

Maggie Throup:

The Government continues to provide up-to-date guidance for businesses, to assist employers to take reasonable steps to manage the risks of COVID-19 and help protect their staff. 'Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)' is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19

Employers and employees should find pragmatic solutions on a case by case basis, noting that each employee's personal situation and the requirements of their work may be different. If individuals cannot work from home, they should speak to their employer regarding temporary arrangements which can be made to reduce risk in the workplace.

The Health and Safety Executive's guidance 'Working safely during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic' for vulnerable workers assists employers to talk to their workers about any individual concerns and is available at the following link:

www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/index.htm

This is also linked to the Government's guidance on supporting people who are immunocompromised.

We issued updated public health advice on 24 December 2021 for people whose immune system means they are at higher risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19, which is available at the following link: www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk

NHS England and NHS Improvement have also written to general practices and hospital trusts in England to raise awareness of this guidance.

Mr Toby Perkins:**[94320]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of immunosuppressed people being able to have a covid-19 antibody test.

Mr Toby Perkins:**[94321]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy to make covid-19 antibody tests available to immunosuppressed patients; and when he those tests will be available in each CCG area.

Maggie Throup:

There are currently no plans to implement targeted antibody testing for immunocompromised patients. National Health Service clinicians can arrange antibody testing for patients based on their assessment of clinical need. Those with a cancer diagnosis may also be able to access free antibody tests through the National Cancer COVID Survey, which aims to assess levels of protection conferred by antibodies following vaccination/infection in cancer patients.

■ Joint Replacements: Waiting Lists

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[94446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) reduce joint replacement waiting times within the NHS and (b) improve support for people waiting for joint replacement surgery.

Edward Argar:

Joint replacement is being prioritised through the High Volume, Low Complexity programme. This programme shares best practice to improve and facilitate joint replacement surgeries in the National Health Service, including through new surgical hubs which offer additional capacity for surgery.

As announced in September, an additional £1 billion has been provided this year as part of the Elective Recovery Fund, which can be accessed by local trusts if they meet the eligibility criteria to tackle the backlog. A further £8 billion was announced to transform elective services and increase activity in the following three years. This funding could deliver the equivalent of approximately nine million more checks, scans and procedures and includes treatment for joint replacements.

Work is underway to evaluate patient support and to develop regional and system strategies focused on those who are waiting for elective surgery, including patients waiting for joint replacement surgery.

■ Medical Equipment

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[93729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to implement recommendations from the recent Medical Technology Group's Manifesto report to (a) prioritise the patient voice, (b) accelerate patient access to medical technology and (c) improve equitable and timely commissioning of medical devices.

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[93730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the recently published Medical Technology Group's Manifesto report.

Gillian Keegan:

Ensuring that patients in our health and social care system have the best possible outcomes is a priority for the Department. The medical technology directorate aim to do this by ensuring access to safe, effective, best-in-class medical technology in a way that is resilient, cohesive and uses taxpayer's money to best effect. The Directorate is currently developing the strategy to create a vision that aligns with these values. As part of this work, we will consider the Medical Technology Group's Manifesto report, along with other sources. We will also continue engagement with industry and other key stakeholders to consider various approaches to the product pathway for medical devices, including recognising valuable innovations and tackling the underlying causes of lack of adoption.

■ Medical Technologies Directorate

Chi Onwurah:

[\[92929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the objectives of the Medical Technology Directorate will be; and what metrics will be used to assess progress on those objectives.

Maria Caulfield:

The MedTech strategy will set out objectives and metrics for the Directorate and we are committed to publishing this in early 2022. We expect metrics to focus on supply resilience, innovation, and value for money.

■ Members: Correspondence

Patrick Grady:

[\[93784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Glasgow North of 20 July 21 with reference to case number PG23211.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 16 December 2021.

■ Menopause

Kate Osborne:

[\[93907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to include provisions for improving access to treatment for the menopause in the forthcoming Women's Health Strategy.

Maria Caulfield:

The menopause is a priority topic in Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy, which we published on 23rd December 2021, alongside the analytical report of the call for evidence survey. In due course we will publish the full Strategy which will set out our full ambitions in this area.

■ Mental Health Services: Nurses

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[90361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has held with NHS England on the specialised recruitment of mental health nurses.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 15 December 2021]: There have been no specific discussions on the specialised recruitment of mental health nurses.

To recruit more mental health nurses, NHS England and NHS Improvement are supporting mental health trusts to develop specialised international recruitment infrastructure and teams. To date, 1,500 international nurses have been recruited to

work in mental health settings, with 490 of these joining mental health trusts in the past twelve months.

The mental health workforce directly employed by the National Health Service has increased by 18,000 whole time equivalents between March 2016 and March 2021. Our aim is to increase the mental health workforce by an additional 27,000 healthcare professionals by 2023/24 to support the transformation of NHS mental health services and allow an additional 2 million people to access the mental health support they need.

■ **Naloxone: Prisoners' Release**

Grahame Morris:

[\[92885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of issuing guidance to ensure that offenders with a history of opiate use are issued with Naloxone prior to release from prison.

Gillian Keegan:

No such assessment has been made. Existing guidance in the current drug misuse and dependence guidelines in the United Kingdom on clinical management states that commissioners of prison health and community treatment services should consider with their providers how best to support the provision of naloxone and overdose training in the community for those who do not attend for opioid substitution therapy following prison release.

The commissioning of substance misuse treatment for prisoners is the responsibility of NHS England and NHS Improvement. Commissioners and providers of substance misuse services in prisons and in the community work together closely to ensure seamless transfers of care when prisoners are released from custody.

■ **National Institute for Health Research: Finance**

Sarah Jones:

[\[94494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's policy is on how the £50 million for targeted motor neurone disease research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Motor Neurone Disease Research Unit can be accessed.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government delivers research on motor neurone disease (MND) through the Department of Health and Social Care, via the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and through the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, via UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). The Government has committed to make £50 million available for MND research over the next five years through NIHR and UKRI. The Government has also committed to establish an NIHR MND research unit to coordinate innovative research applications. The NIHR and UKRI rely on researchers submitting high-quality applications to access funding. All applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of

the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality.

■ **NHS and Social Services: Coronavirus**

Rachael Maskell:

[93788]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that every unvaccinated health and care staff can have a supported conversation with an appropriate professional.

Maggie Throup:

Further guidance on vaccination as a condition of deployment, including on supportive 1-1 conversations to encourage COVID-19 vaccine uptake, has recently been issued by NHS England. This guidance sets out a wide range of measures to help drive uptake, including providing information on accessing expert clinical advice locally and encouraging employees to have further conversations with their own General Practitioners or trusted healthcare professional if they have any further questions around vaccination.

Rachael Maskell:

[93792]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to ensure that before anyone is dismissed for being unvaccinated in the health and care sector that he will (a) bring a report to Parliament on the number of people who are yet to have a vaccine and (b) assess alternative potential provisions to protect patients from covid-19.

Edward Argar:

The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) (No.2) Regulations 2021 regulations were approved by parliament on 14th December. The Government's policy is to now implement the regulations. This will include continuing to monitor COVID-19 vaccination uptake levels.

The Government is not considering bringing such a report to Parliament or considering alternative potential provisions to the regulations.

Rachael Maskell:

[93793]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to ensure that black and mixed race health and care workers are not disproportionately affected by dismissal for reason of being unvaccinated for covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

The Government continues to be focused on driving uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine as much as possible. Guidance to the service includes further increasing engagement where uptake is lowest including extensive work with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups to encourage health workers to receive the vaccine.

Other actions being taken to reduce the number of workers remaining unvaccinated include:

- The 12-week grace period, allowing time for both workforce planning, and for those colleagues who are not yet vaccinated against COVID-19, to make the positive choice to protect the people they care for, as well as themselves,
- Increasing the number and diversity of opportunities to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Using the booster campaign to make the most of walk-ins, pop-ups, and other ways to make getting the vaccine as easy as possible,
- The use of 1-2-1 conversations for all unvaccinated National Health Service staff with their line manager, with clear guidance on how to do this.

■ NHS and Social Services: Holiday Leave

Rachael Maskell:

[93791]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that health and care staff do not have their leave cancelled this Christmas.

Edward Argar:

This will be a matter for local employing organisations. However, on 15 December, the NHS Staff Council (the partnership of employers and trade unions) published a joint statement on annual leave which points to previous guidance issued by the NHS Staff Council and reminds that staff health and wellbeing should be top priority and any cancellation of leave should be a last resort. The joint statement can be found at the following link: <https://www.nhsemployers.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/Joint-Staff-Council-Statement-Annual-Leave-December.pdf>.

In relation to social care staff, the majority of care workers are employed by private sector providers who decide their pay and terms and conditions.

■ NHS: Coronavirus

Sir Christopher Chope:

[92801]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of NHS clinicians who are currently unvaccinated; and how many of those clinicians will be prohibited from engaging in clinical practice after 1 April 2022 when covid-19 vaccination becomes mandatory for NHS staff.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement does not publish uptake data for specific workforce segments; however latest figures show that roughly 92,000 National Health Service (NHS) staff in England had not received the first dose of the vaccine as of 12th December. The Impact Assessment for these requirements sets out the estimated number of workers that would remain unvaccinated against COVID-19 at the end of the 12-week grace period despite not being medically exempt. This number was estimated to be 73,000 for NHS staff.

From 1 April 2022, the number of unvaccinated clinicians will depend on individual decisions and the positive choice to take up the offer of COVID-19 vaccination. The Government is focussed on driving an increase in uptake, with an overall net increase

of NHS staff vaccinated with a first dose of over 55,000 since the Government consulted on the policy in September.

The impact assessment can be found at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1039988/making-vaccination-a-condition-of-deployment-in-the-health-and-wider-social-care-sector-impact-assessment.pdf.

Hilary Benn:

[93707]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether hospital trusts in England can access the vaccination records of their staff in order to ensure that all staff have been vaccinated against covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

National Health Service (NHS) trusts are permitted under the Health Service (Control of Patient Information) Regulations 2002 to access the COVID-19 vaccination records of their staff for the purpose of controlling and preventing the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, NHS trusts may choose to access vaccination records to allow them to manage the deployment of workers as part of meeting COVID-19 vaccination requirements.

Hilary Benn:

[93708]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with the Information Commissioner on NHS trusts having access to staff vaccination records.

Edward Argar:

The Department has engaged with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), setting out the information requirements and issues arising from the vaccination as a condition of deployment policy. The Department is continuing to engage with ICO through this process including the processing of evidence of a worker's vaccination status, as required by the regulations.

■ Patients: Correspondence

Damien Moore:

[86620]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of requiring NHS Trusts to keep records of correspondence with patients, including conversations over the telephone.

Gillian Keegan:

No assessment has been made. However, we expect that National Health Service trusts, in common with other health and care providers, should ensure clinical records are accurate and up to date. This should include all relevant information about diagnoses and treatment and care decisions, with details of how this information was collected and whether and with whom it was shared.

■ Public Health: Finance**Helen Hayes:** [\[93830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a timetable for notifying local authorities of their public health budgets for 2022-23.

Maggie Throup:

Local Authority Public Health Grant allocations for 2022/23 will be confirmed shortly.

■ Supported Housing: Finance**Matt Western:** [\[94488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much and what proportion of the £300 million announced by the Government on 1 December 2021 will be ringfenced for new supported housing; and how many new homes the Government expects that funding to deliver.

Gillian Keegan:

In the adult social care reform white paper, we committed to continue to incentivise the supply of supported housing for older and disabled people through the Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund with £213 million available over the next three years. This is alongside a new £300 million investment to embed the strategic commitment in all local places to connect housing with health and care, to boost the supply of supported housing and to increase local expenditure on services for those in supported housing.

We will work in partnership with local authorities, housing providers and others to design and establish our new investment. We will share further detail of how the investment will be targeted, as well as details of the impact we expect to deliver, with interested parties as this work develops.

■ Surgery: Waiting Lists**Mr Virendra Sharma:** [\[93731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the challenges described in the Medical Technology Group's Manifesto report to reduce the number of patients on the elective backlog.

Edward Argar:

The Department is taking steps to tackle waiting lists and to reduce the elective backlog through funding, innovation and technology.

The Department is providing a record amount of funding to the National Health Service (NHS), with an extra £34 billion to support health and care services. This includes £2 billion through the Elective Recovery Fund this year to help tackle the backlog that built up during the pandemic, supporting systems to drive up activity, plus £8 billion elective recovery funding over the next three years.

A further £5.9 billion of capital funding was announced in the October 2021 Spending Review to support elective recovery, diagnostics, and technology. This includes £1.5 billion towards elective recovery by expanding capacity through new surgical hubs, which will each provide new theatres for elective recovery. In addition, £2.3 billion has been announced to help increase the volume of diagnostic activity and further reduce patient waiting times, with ambitions to roll out at least 100 community diagnostic centres by 2024-25 to help clear backlogs of people waiting for clinical tests, such as MRIs, ultrasounds, and Computerised Tomography (CT) scans.

The Department has also supported the NHS to introduce virtual wards in over 90% of Integrated Care Systems, which allow patients to recover at home, whilst clinicians remotely monitor temperature, pulse and blood pressure. Through use of the £250 million Elective Recovery Technology Fund, the NHS plans to open more virtual wards, benefiting patients, increasing coverage and providing extra capacity.

■ **Test and Trace Support Payment: Students**

Catherine West:

[\[92999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment to students.

Maggie Throup:

Students are eligible for the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment provided they meet the eligibility criteria for the main scheme or the discretionary scheme (which is set by local authorities).

■ **Tobacco: Regulation**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[94570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Office for Health Improvements and Disparities' investigation into possible breaches of the prohibition of characterising flavours in tobacco products, for what reason the timetable for testing of selected tobacco products continues into early 2022; and which external organisations have been appointed to undertake that testing.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[94571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Office for Health Improvements and Disparities' investigation into possible breaches of the prohibition of characterising flavours in tobacco products, if the Government will make it its policy to remove from the market products found to be in breach of regulations; and what penalties companies found to be in breach of regulations will face.

Maggie Throup:

King's College London and Roswell Park were jointly appointed to undertake testing of a range of products to support the investigation into potential breaches of the prohibition of characterising flavours in tobacco products. Unfortunately, issues have arisen with the export of cigarettes to Roswell Park. The Department is working,

including with the Food and Drug Administration, to resolve the issues and we hope to start testing in early 2022.

■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus

Wendy Chamberlain: **[93064]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the Government's criteria by which countries are placed on the red list for covid-19 travel restrictions.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) produces risk assessments in order to inform Ministerial decisions on border measures, including the addition of countries to the 'red list'. These risk assessments review a range of factors for each country, including assessment of surveillance and sequencing capability, available surveillance and genome sequencing data, evidence of in-country community transmission of COVID-19 variants, evidence of exportation of new variants to the United Kingdom or other countries and travel connectivity with the UK.

Information on the UKHSA's methodology is published alongside key summary data which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-risk-assessment-methodology-to-inform-international-travel-traffic-light-system/risk-assessment-methodology-to-inform-international-travel-traffic-light-system>

Wendy Chamberlain: **[93065]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish any equality impact assessments conducted in the process of placing countries on the red list.

Maggie Throup:

We are unable to provide the information requested as it relates to the formulation or development of ongoing Government policy.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Daniel Kawczynski: **[83280]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether Fit for Flight PCR tests can return a positive covid-19 test result for a person who has recently recovered from covid-19 and thus preventing travel; and what steps should be taken by the traveller in those circumstances.

Maggie Throup:

It is possible for polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests to remain positive for some time after the period of active COVID-19 infection. Those who test positive through a PCR test must self-isolate and follow the guidance at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection

Damien Moore:

[\[94515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the impact on travellers of the cost of covid-19 mitigation measures, such as those associated with private testing providers.

Maggie Throup:

There are a range of prices available to consumers. Since international travel testing requirements were introduced, the average cost of a day two polymerase chain reaction test has decreased to £45 and tests are regularly available from approximately £20. For United Kingdom residents or individuals with residency rights who would suffer severe financial hardship by paying the full cost of their testing fees before they travel, hardship arrangements may be available.

HOME OFFICE

■ Antisocial Behaviour

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[93849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help PCCs, local authorities and other partners work together to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[93850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of community triggers on reducing levels of anti-social behaviour.

Rachel Maclean:

We have provided the police, local authorities, and other local agencies with a range of flexible tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to all forms of anti-social behaviour (ASB) through the *Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014*. These powers are deliberately local in nature, and it is for agencies to use their local knowledge of each incident to determine whether their use is appropriate in the specific circumstances.

The Government is absolutely committed to supporting local agencies in using these powers and in tackling and preventing ASB. We know the serious impact this issue has on both individuals and wider communities.

That is why, in July, the [Beating Crime Plan](#) laid out the Government's plan for tackling crime and ASB. This included a commitment to working with local agencies and partners, including the *Anti-social Behaviour Strategic Board*, to drive down ASB using the full range of powers and tools in the '2014 Act', including the Community Trigger.

My predecessor as Minister for Safeguarding also wrote out to all local authorities this year to remind them of their duties around the Community Trigger.

In addition, funding has made available for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and local authorities via the Home Office's *Safer Streets Fund*, which has now allocated £70m to support areas that are disproportionately affected by crime. Many of the crime prevention measures supported by the fund, such as improved streetlighting and CCTV, are also intended to tackle ASB.

The Home Office updated [statutory guidance](#) this year to support local agencies further to make effective use of the powers from the '2014 Act', and to ensure a victim-centred approach is taken to tackling ASB.

The *Beating Crime Plan* also set out a commitment to launch the second part of the PCC Review which is looking to equip PCCs with the tools and levers they need to drive down crime and ASB.

The Home Office only collects data at Police Force Area level and not at lower levels of geography due to the localised nature of the flexible powers. We look to improve upon this collection from April 2022. HMICFRS have also this year begun to request Community Trigger data from police forces, about all cases they have been involved with, in their local area.

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[94463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will take steps to encourage and support police and crime commissioners to introduce dedicated anti-social behaviour taskforces.

Rachel Maclean:

We have provided the police, local authorities, and other local agencies with a range of flexible tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to all forms of anti-social behaviour (ASB) through the *Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014*. These powers are deliberately local in nature, and it is for agencies to use their local knowledge of each incident to determine whether their use is appropriate in the specific circumstances.

The Government is absolutely committed to supporting local agencies in using these powers and in tackling and preventing ASB. We know the serious impact this issue has on both individuals and wider communities.

In July, the [Beating Crime Plan](#) was published which laid out the Government's plan for tackling crime and ASB. This set out a commitment to launch the second part of the PCC Review which is looking to equip PCCs with the tools and levers they need to drive down crime and ASB.

■ Asylum: Detainees

Grahame Morris:

[\[92883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, under what rules asylum seekers are detained in the UK.

Tom Pursglove:

Information on our powers to detain are set out in our published Home Office Detention: General Instructions guidance on page 11.

This includes the power to detain for the purposes of initial examination under paragraph 16(1) of Schedule 2 to the 1971 Act and the power to detain for the purpose of removal under paragraph 16(2) of Schedule 2 to the 1971 Act.

■ Asylum: Domestic Abuse**Sarah Olney:**[\[93845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number women, who are UK citizens, who have returned to the UK to escape domestic abuse and who have then had to return to their children's country of habitual residence as a consequence of the 1980 Hague Child Abduction Convention.

Rachel Maclean:

The Home Office does not collect detailed data about the reasons UK citizens cross the border, so do not hold any information on the number of UK women citizens returning to the UK to escape domestic abuse abroad nor the number of women having to return to the country of habitual residence of their children following such a return.

■ Belfast Agreement: Nationality**Stephen Farry:**[\[93922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made for the implications of her policies of the publication of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission entitled a Legal Analysis of Incorporating into UK Law the Birthright Commitment under the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement 1998, published March 2020.

Kevin Foster:

We noted the recommendations made in the publication at the time, and Home Office officials met with its author before publication.

The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement birthright commitment on citizenship confirms the right to hold both British and Irish citizenship is accepted by both governments. The British Nationality Act 1981 allows a person of Northern Ireland to be British and does not prevent any such person from being a dual British and Irish citizen if they so choose. It also allows someone who does not want to be a British Citizen to renounce that nationality through an administrative process.

Nationality legislation therefore already reflects the citizenship birthright commitments within the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

■ British Nationality: Applications

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[92803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when UK Visas and Immigration will reach a decision in the case of the hon. Member for Christchurch's constituent, Home Office reference 27929925, in respect of a request of 18 August 2021 for his citizenship certificate to be amended; and when the original documents submitted by the constituent in support of his application will be returned.

Kevin Foster:

The amended citizenship certificate and supporting documents were returned on 15 December 2021.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[92972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the covid-19 restrictions on indoor social gatherings in place in November and December 2020, how many people were charged with breaching those rules; and what the total sum of fines issued for those breaches was.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not hold the specific data requested.

■ EU Nationals: Brexit

Claire Hanna: [\[94567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the Independent Monitoring Authority's recent decision on the legality of the Government's policy with respect to the Withdrawal Agreement and the rights of EU citizens in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

The Government does not agree with the Independent Monitoring Authority's analysis of the Withdrawal Agreement. It has been the UK's long-standing position people granted pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme will have to apply for settled status before their pre-settled status expires.

We have implemented the arrangements we agreed under the Withdrawal Agreement in good faith.

■ Home Office: Members' Constituency Work

Tony Lloyd: [\[93710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to the meeting between the hon. Member for Torbay, the Minister for Immigration and Future Borders, and the hon. Member for Rochdale on 2 November 2021, what progress he has been made in resolving the constituent's case and other similar cases, reference ASS GWF055081555.

Kevin Foster:

Our aim is to conclude applications for an EEA family permit or an EUSS family permit as soon as possible after identity and supporting documents are submitted.

More information can be found here; <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/visa-decision-waiting-times-applications-outside-the-uk#if-you-want-to-join-family-in-the-uk>

A concession was published within guidance on 1 November 2021 [EU Settlement Scheme: family and travel permits - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/eu-settlement-scheme-family-and-travel-permits)

The constituent's case in question was concluded on 18 November 2021.

■ Immigration Controls: Shipping**Karl Turner:****[93748]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the publication of 1 December 2021, Points-based immigration system: delivering on people's priorities, if she will make an assessment of the impact of the points based system on skilled jobs (a) at sea and (b) on land in the maritime industry.

Kevin Foster:

Acting upon advice from the independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), the Government broadened the skills threshold of the Skilled Worker route and introduced a lower salary threshold which – as modelling by the MAC suggests – strikes a reasonable balance between access to labour and controlling immigration.

Eligible offshore occupations under the Skilled Worker route include engineers, engine room attendants; ferryman; merchant seaman and seaman. Firms can hire overseas workers to fill these roles provided salary and English language requirements are met.

Furthermore, recognising the important role Deckhands play in the sector, the Government accepted the MAC's recommendation to add the occupation (for vessels over 9m and for individuals to have at least 3 year's experience in using their skills) to the Shortage Occupation List.

Importantly, the Skilled Worker route offers a flexible approach, by having no minimum length of required stay under the visa; workers can leave and re-enter the UK without interrupting the validity of their visa.

Karl Turner:**[93749]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with ministerial colleagues in the Department for Transport on the points-based immigration system and seafarer employment.

Karl Turner:**[93750]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with ministerial colleagues in the (a) Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and (b) Department for Transport on the enforcement of the National Minimum

Wage for seafarers of all nationalities working (i) in UK territorial waters and (ii) on the UK Continental Shelf since 1 October 2020.

Kevin Foster:

I frequently engage with colleagues across Government, including those in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Department for Transport on a wide range of issues, including the operation of the immigration system.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Justin Madders: [93773]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average response time is for her Department to respond to correspondence from hon. Members in the latest period for which that data is available.

Kevin Foster:

Data about intake and performance in answering Hon. Members Correspondence are published quarterly with the latest Quarter available at: [Customer service operations data: Q2 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/customer-service-operations-data) and this includes data up to and including the end of quarter 2 - 2021. We are proposing the release of data for quarter 3 in due course.

We do not publish average waiting times for substantive responses to correspondence.

■ **Metropolitan Police**

Neil Coyle: [92953]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the Metropolitan Police investigate all crimes irrespective of when those crimes took place.

Kit Malthouse:

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) is operationally independent from Government and free from political interference. It will be for MPS to consider the crimes that they investigate and then, if any evidence comes to light it will be for them to bring it before the Crown Prosecution service to take forward to see whether there is a case to answer.

■ **Migrant Workers: Visas**

Karl Turner: [93747]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many employers in Standard Industrial Classifications (a) 50100-50400 and (b) 52220 have used the visa system to import labour to the UK in each year since 2016 to date.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not use Standard Industrial Classifications and therefore cannot provide the data requested.

■ Offshore Industry: Conditions of Employment**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[94543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what role Border Force officers have in the monitoring of crew involved in offshore employment; and whether that role includes the monitoring of employment rights.

Tom Pursglove:

Border Force is responsible for ensuring any individual seeking entry to the United Kingdom, at the border, for the purposes of offshore employment has the right to do so, as well as hold any relevant entry clearance, should it be required.

The Government provides guidance and codes of practice to help employers prevent illegal working, as well as similar guidance specific to offshore working.

■ Overseas Students: Entry Clearances**Matt Western:**[\[93863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans the Government has to extend the concession that allows universities to sponsor a student's visa for distance learning, which is due to expire in April 2022.

Kevin Foster:

Throughout the pandemic, the Government have introduced several concessions to support international students and their sponsors. International students are permitted to start a course from overseas through distance learning without a visa.

These concessions are kept under regular review.

Matt Western:[\[94483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has in place to extend the concession that enables universities to sponsor students' visas for distance learning due to expire in April 2022.

Kevin Foster:

Throughout the pandemic, the Government have introduced a number of concessions to support international students and their sponsors. International students are permitted to start a course from overseas through distance learning without a visa. These concessions are kept under regular review.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan**Dan Jarvis:**[\[92946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghans relocated to the UK under (a) Operation Pitking and (b) Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (i)

have had their Indefinite Leave to Remain immigration status regularised and (ii) are still waiting.

Victoria Atkins:

Between 15 and 29 August, the Department evacuated over 15,000 people from Afghanistan and people continue to be evacuated from third countries.

The Home Office is supporting those currently in the UK with 6 months leave to apply for and be granted ILR. Our aim is to conclude this process before individuals' leave to remain expires.

Communications have been issued advising individuals of next steps to progress permanent residence in the UK. They also provide links to guidance and information on how prospective employers and landlords can contact the Home Office to confirm individuals' right to take employment and rented accommodation.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[92947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure all Afghans relocated to the UK under Operation Pitting have their Indefinite Leave to Remain immigration status regularised within six months.

Victoria Atkins:

The majority of those who entered the UK during the evacuation phase were granted limited leave to enter with access to public funds and employment. This status is not a bar to them being permanently housed or to starting their life in the UK, including taking employment.

The Home Office is supporting those currently in the UK with 6 months leave to apply for and be granted ILR. Our aim is to conclude this process before individuals' leave to remain expires.

Communications have been issued advising individuals of next steps to progress permanent residence in the UK. They also provide links to guidance and information on how prospective employers and landlords can contact the Home Office to confirm individuals' right to take employment and rented accommodation.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[92948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what advice her Department is issuing to Afghan nationals relocated to the UK under (a) Operation Pitting and (b) Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy when their Indefinite Leave to Remain status is not regularised within six months.

Victoria Atkins:

Following the policy statement, the Government published on 13 September, we will be working through the cases of those who have recently arrived from Afghanistan and are processing them in line with the published policy.

The Home Office is contacting those here in the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy and those moving onto the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, in order to assist them to obtain Indefinite Leave to Remain status.

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

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

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

John Healey:

[93700]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules, HC 913, published on 14 December 2021, whether changes made to the eligibility under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme will apply retrospectively to Afghans who have been relocated to the UK already under the ARAP scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

The clarifications to the eligibility criteria for Category 4 of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) will not apply retrospectively to Afghans who have already been relocated in the UK under the ARAP scheme. They will apply to any ARAP eligibility decisions made on or after 1600 hours on 14 December 2021.

John Healey:

[93703]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme will open.

Victoria Atkins:

We are working across Government and with partners such as UNHCR to design the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), amidst a complex and changing picture. We are committed to working in step with the international community to get this right, and we will set out more details soon.

Eligible people will be prioritised and referred for resettlement to the UK as set out in the policy statement published on gov.uk on 13 September, available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement as explained in my letter to colleagues on 23rd December 2021.

Paul Blomfield:

[93753]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether Afghans relocated to the UK under the ARAP scheme including Locally Employed Staff will count towards the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme allocation of 20,000.

Victoria Atkins:

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) is separate from, and in addition to, the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), which offers any current or former locally employed staff assessed to be under serious threat to life priority relocation to the UK.

Dan Jarvis:

[94393]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the correspondence of 14 December 2021 from the Minister for Safe and Legal Migration to the hon. Member for Barnsley Central on Changes to the Immigration Rules for the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of changes to the eligibility criteria on the number of Afghans seeking asylum in the UK by illegal and unsafe routes.

Dan Jarvis:

[94394]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the correspondence of 14 December 2021 from the Minister for Safe and Legal Migration to the hon. Member for Barnsley Central on Changes to the Immigration Rules for the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of changes to the eligibility criteria on Afghan nationals at risk due to the security threat level in Afghanistan.

Dan Jarvis:

[94395]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the correspondence of 14 December 2021 from the Minister for Safe and Legal Migration to the hon. Member for Barnsley Central on Changes to the Immigration Rules for the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy, if her Department will publish the evidence for the decision to introduce the new changes to the eligibility criteria; and if she will make a statement.

Dan Jarvis:

[94396]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the correspondence of 14 December 2021 from the Minister for Safe and Legal Migration to the hon. Member for Barnsley Central on Changes to the Immigration Rules for the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy, what assessment she has made of the impact those changes will have on the number of places remaining on the first round of the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme as of 16 December 2021.

Kevin Foster:

The Government made changes to the Immigration Rules for the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) on 14 December 2021.

The changes made do not reflect substantive changes to the eligibility criteria, but rather provide much needed clarity on who is eligible for relocation under the scheme. The situation in Afghanistan has changed significantly since the original Rules were drafted and it had become necessary to update them to reflect the reality of those seeking to come to the UK and the number of outstanding applications.

We continue to make efforts to get those who remain in Afghanistan back to the UK, as well as encouraging those we might not be aware of the scheme to come forward. We do not anticipate the changes will result in significantly fewer people being granted status under the ARAP, but they will assist decision makers in identifying those applications which fall for refusal and in explaining those refusals.

The changes to the Rules also include removing the requirement for dependents to be an Afghan national. This will make it possible for families to relocate together when the spouse, partner or children are a different nationality to the lead ARAP applicant.

For those who are not eligible, there may be other options such as the forthcoming Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). This scheme will operate alongside ARAP. The changes to the ARAP Rules will not affect the number of places available on the ACRS and, given the safe and legal routes available, we do not expect them to result in an increase in the number of people attempting to enter the UK by illegal routes.

■ Refugees: Sudan

Claire Hanna: [\[94564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will extend the vulnerable persons relocation scheme to Sudanese refugees who are fleeing conflict.

Claire Hanna: [\[94565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will extend the global resettlement scheme to Sudanese refugees fleeing conflict.

Kevin Foster:

The Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) closed in February 2021, having completed our commitment to resettle 20,000 refugees. A total of 20,319 refugees were resettled under this scheme.

Following the completion of VPRS, the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) was launched in March 2021. The UKRS is a global scheme with a multi-year commitment to resettle vulnerable refugees in need of protection. Refugees are identified and referred for resettlement by the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR.

Through the UKRS, we have expanded our geographical focus beyond the Middle East and North Africa to continue to offer safe and legal routes to the UK for some of the most vulnerable refugees around the world. This includes countries hosting Sudanese refugees.

Since 2015 we have resettled over 1,000 Sudanese and South Sudanese refugees across all of our resettlement schemes.

Claire Hanna: [\[94566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will consider prioritising asylum applications submitted by asylum seekers from Sudan who have recently in Northern Ireland to offer protection to those who have challenged the military regime in that country and their families.

Kevin Foster:

All asylum claims are considered on a case by case basis and in line with published policy. Claims by Sudanese nationals will be considered in the same way as claims from any other nationality.

We do not believe it is appropriate to prioritise claims from one nationality over another as many claimants, irrespective of nationality, are potentially vulnerable and no one is expected to leave the UK while they have a claim outstanding.

■ Seasonal Workers: Visas

Daniel Zeichner: [\[94407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to reintroduce the scheme for temporary visas to poultry workers in 2022.

Kevin Foster:

The Government does not currently plan reintroduce the scheme for temporary visas to poultry workers in 2022. We will however monitor the position closely.

Our points-based system allows for many roles in poultry production to be recruited via the Skilled Worker route, such as poultry processors, bird dressers, pluckers, trussers and butchers for all meats.

■ Tinsley House Immigration Removal Centre

Grahame Morris: [\[92881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether any recent changes have been made to the reception criteria at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre.

Grahame Morris: [\[92882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the current capacity is for Tinsley House Immigration Removal Centre.

Grahame Morris: [\[92884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what additional capacity has been provided at Tinsley House Immigration Removal Centre in response to changes in the number of asylum seekers.

Tom Pursglove:

The immigration removal estate is kept under ongoing review to ensure that the Home Office has sufficient capacity to detain for the purposes of removal, to protect the public and to provide value for money.

In order to support the management of the arrival of migrants, we have temporarily accommodated people under the provisions of the Short-term Holding Facilities (STHF) Rules 2018, in a small number of immigration removal centres (IRCs) including Tinsley House.

The normal operational capacity for Tinsley House IRC was increased on a temporary basis over the autumn in response to these changes. This temporary

increase has now been removed and the centre has reverted to an operating capacity of 162.

Reception criteria at Brook House IRC is managed in line with the published Detention Services Order 03/2016 'Consideration of Detainee Placement in the Detention Estate'.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[94411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral evidence of the Minister for Justice and Tackling Illegal Migration to the Home Affairs Committee on 17 November 2021, HC164, Qq 757, if she will publish the measures on implementing a policy of pushbacks in the channel; and what criteria operational commanders at sea will use to determine the appropriateness of deploying those measures.

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[94412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has received legal advice on the operation of a push-back policy for boats carrying illegal migrants in the English Channel; and what plans she has to implement a policy of pushing back those boats.

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[94413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent guidance she has given to the (a) Border Force and (b) maritime tactics team on operationalising tactics for pushing back boats carrying illegal migrants in the English Channel.

Tom Pursglove:

Preventing the illegal entry of people to the UK in small boats is a priority for the Government. The turnaround tactics are one of a selection of tools to decrease the success rate of crossings and make the route less appealing to criminal facilitators, thereby saving lives.

Publishing details of the operational policy, the Border Force guidance and standard operating procedures, and the assessments which operational commanders use to determine when they should deploy the tactics would confer an advantage to organised criminal groups, giving them insight into how to counter or avoid the tactics.

The tactics will only be deployed when it is safe and legal to do so. We have received legal advice from leading counsel on the deployment of the tactics. We can confirm that the tactics are permitted under international and domestic law.

■ Visas: Married People**Drew Hendry:** [\[94423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of simplifying the acceptance of Premium Bonds as a form of cash saving for the process of meeting income thresholds when individuals are making Spousal Visa application.

Kevin Foster:

The Secretary of State has not held any recent discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of simplifying the acceptance of Premium Bonds as a form of cash saving for the process of meeting income thresholds.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Exports: Advisory Services****Sarah Olney:** [\[93846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how much his Department has spent on advertising the Export Support Service to British businesses.

Mike Freer:

Between 1st October 2021, the date Export Support Service was launched, and Friday 17th December 2021, the Department has incurred costs of £113,705 excluding VAT on Export Support Service advertising to businesses across the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

JUSTICE**■ Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review****Ruth Jones:** [\[94532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to respond to the Bellamy review into the future of legal aid.

James Cartlidge:

The Secretary of State and I are currently considering Sir Christopher's recommendations. The MOJ aims to publish the government's response by the end of March 2022.

■ Criminal Proceedings**Emily Thornberry:** [\[92851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department has set a maximum limit on the number of criminal cases awaiting trial, to act as a target for capping and reducing the current backlog of cases.

James Cartlidge:

In the Crown Court we have seen the outstanding caseload stabilise at around 60,000 cases. The Spending Review provides an extra £477m funding for the criminal justice system. We estimate this will improve waiting times and reduce the number of outstanding cases to 53,000 by March 2025, ensuring that we do right by victims of crime.

We developed the Criminal Justice Action Plan at rapid pace to improve performance of the Criminal Justice System as a whole. The Action Plan defines a set of actions being carried out which intends to improve timeliness of cases throughout the CJS, whilst reducing the outstanding caseload backlog.

Judges continue to work to prioritise cases involving vulnerable complainants and witnesses, to seek to ensure that domestic abuse, serious sex cases and those with vulnerable witnesses (including youth cases) are listed at the first available opportunity. Judges also seek to list cases within their custody time limit, if applicable.

Having the right data across the Criminal Justice System is crucial to recovery. We are committed to working with our partners across the justice system to ensure that it underpins our approach. As part of that, we have committed to publish quarterly Criminal Justice scorecards which will bring together data from across the system on key areas of performance including on timeliness. This will allow us to identify problem areas and take a cross-system response to dips in performance. We have a number of measures to monitor different aspects of timeliness so that we can identify where in the process delays are occurring. The first national scorecards were published in early December and can be viewed at <https://data.justice.gov.uk/cjs-scorecard-all-crime>.

■ Custody: Fathers**Dame Diana Johnson:****[94305]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department has made of the mental health needs of fathers who are going through custody proceedings.

Dame Diana Johnson:**[94306]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that fathers going through custody proceedings are adequately supported.

James Cartlidge:

We know the difficulties parents can face in continuing a relationship with their child following parental separation, which is why this Government is committed to ensuring that all parents can get the support they need to access the justice system across England and Wales.

Since 2015, the Ministry of Justice's Litigants In Person Support Strategy has provided close to £9m to fund a range of services to support individuals. This includes funding for: LawWorks - a charity committed to enabling access to justice to individuals in need of advice, who are not eligible for legal aid and are without the

means to pay for a lawyer; Advocate - providers of pro bono legal work for litigants in person, including written advice and representation up to Court of Appeal; Royal Courts of Justice Advice - which provides free legal advice for those with civil or family cases in court; and Advicenow - a not for profit website for litigants in person offering guides and resources.

HM Courts and Tribunals Service also works closely with the charity 'Support Through Court', who offer practical, procedural and emotional support to all parents facing court without legal representation. Support Through Court is based at 16 courts locations in England and Wales, and also offers a national helpline.

In addition, we are currently in the second year of the two-year, £3.1m Legal Support for Litigants in Person Grant (LSLIP). Launched in April 2020, the grant has enabled local and regional partnerships to be formed which have been fundamental in increasing collaboration between neighbouring services to enhance the advice and support available for litigants in person, including parents.

■ Dogs: Theft

Steve Reed:

[94397]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many dog thefts have resulted in (a) prosecution and (b) conviction in each of the last three years.

James Cartlidge:

Information on theft offences held by the Ministry of Justice does not identify if a dog specifically was stolen. The information may be held on court record but to be able to identify cases in which dogs were stolen would require access to individual court records which would be of disproportionate cost.

The Ministry of Justice has published information on sentences for defendants prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced for more general theft offences, up to December 2020, available in the 'Outcomes by Offence' data tool, here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987715/outcomes-by-offence-2020.xlsx

■ Employment Tribunals Service

Kate Osamor:

[94448]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the backlog in employment tribunals.

James Cartlidge:

Despite the enormous challenges the employment tribunals have faced since the onset of the pandemic, they have remained open and operational throughout. We adapted swiftly to support remote ways of working and running hearings virtually, to ensure ongoing access to justice where cases cannot be heard in person. As a result, the employment tribunals are the single largest user of the Cloud Video Platform across all our tribunals and have used record numbers of remote hearings to return

hearing capacity to its pre-Covid level. We have also embarked on an ambitious recruitment campaign for both judges and legal officers to further boost capacity and allow us to work through outstanding cases as efficiently as possible.

However, significant challenges remain. We are working closely with the judiciary to continue to improve our disposal rate through maximising judicial capacity and driving further recruitment of judges. The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice and the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy have also been working closely on what further measures we can introduce to support recovery across the employment dispute system, and to enhance its resilience and sustainability in the longer term.

The Judicial Review and Courts Bill currently before Parliament will make the independent Tribunal Procedure Committee responsible for Employment Tribunal (ET) and Employment Appeal Tribunal procedure rules. This will allow for a quicker response to the need for changes to ET rules to meet changing circumstances and maximise the impact of ongoing work to tackle the impact of COVID-19 backlogs.

■ **HM Courts and Tribunals Service: ICT**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[92924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much his Department has spent on (a) staffing costs, (b) consultancy spend and (c) software costs for the Common Platform.

James Cartlidge:

Common Platform falls within the Crime pillar, of the February 2021 HMT approved £1.3b Reform Programme. As at the 31 March 2021, HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) had spent £236m on the implementation of the Common Platform Programme. This includes a) £36m on staffing, b) £0.3m on consultancy and c) £199m on the development of the Common Platform.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[92925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the total cost of the development of the Common Platform (a) at the beginning of the development of the project and (b) when that project was launched.

James Cartlidge:

The budgetary requirement as set out in the Common Platform 2015 HMT approved business case for developing the Common Platform is a) circa £280m. Common Platform now falls within the Crime Pillar of the February 2021 HMT approved £1.3b Reform Programme and includes delivering the reformed services in Crime. The budgetary requirement for the development of the Common Platform, (including delivering the reformed services), included in the February 2021 HMT approved business case is b) £308m.

■ Judiciary

Alex Cunningham:

[92923]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of Diversity and Community Relations Judges are (a) women, (b) LGBTQ+, (c) from an ethnic minority, (d) have a disability and (e) attended a non-selective state school.

James Cartlidge:

The judiciary are responsible for the selection and coordination of the activities of Diversity and Community Relation Judges (DCRJ). Diversity information for DCRJs is not collected or reported by Judicial Office. The diversity of judicial office holders is included within the published diversity statistics under their primary appointment and does not therefore specifically disclose the diversity of DCRJs as a group.

A list of current Diversity and Community Relation Judges is published on the Judicial Office website.

■ Judiciary: Public Appointments

Alex Cunningham:

[94349]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the status of his Department's review into widening judicial eligibility criteria to permit CILEX Lawyers to apply for all judicial posts is as of 16 December 2021.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Justice's review of barriers to certain legal professionals, including CILEX lawyers applying to a wider range of judicial offices, is ongoing.

In the Judicial Diversity Forum's (JDF) update to its plan and priorities for 2021/22, published on 20 December 2021 (<https://judicialappointments.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/JDF-2022-action-plan.pdf>), the MoJ committed to review, by July 2022, the process and barriers to appointment to Judicial Office for all parts of the legal profession to ensure we broaden the pool of talent by:

- Exploring fuller opportunities for Solicitors and Chartered Legal Executives to gain court experience, including advocacy, to support preparation for the judiciary;
- Working with the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives, and other legal professional bodies, to explore the necessary steps for increasing CILEX's eligibility for a wider range of judicial roles.

■ Legal Opinion: Remote Working

Alex Cunningham:

[94351]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effect of remote legal advice for defendants during the covid-19 outbreak on the number of non guilty pleas.

James Cartlidge:

Remote legal advice predates the Covid-19 pandemic and was available via telephone advice at detainees' request, as set out in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984). The Legal Aid Agency's (LAA) Criminal Defence Direct service provides telephone advice to individuals in police custody for lower-level offences such as non-imprisonable offences and certain driving offences. The LAA also operates a number of virtual court schemes to enable clients in custody to access legal advice on virtual hearings in custody suites.

The Joint Interim Interview Protocol originally implemented in April 2020, but amended since, allows for remote advice for those detained by the police 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 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.

Guilty plea rates have risen through the pandemic. For defendants dealt with in 'for trial' cases at the Crown Court, the guilty plea rate peaked at 79%, reflecting the restricted ability of the courts to progress jury trials. This has now fallen to about 70% in quarter 2 of 2021. The not guilty plea rate for Q2 is 16%, still below the pre-pandemic average of approximately 20%. The Government does not have the data to assess the effect of remote advice on the rate of not guilty pleas.

■ Magistrates: Recruitment**Alex Cunningham:**[\[92922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish any data his Department holds on the type of school attended by members of the magistracy.

James Cartlidge:

We do not currently hold data on the type of school attended by members of the magistracy.

We are investing over £1m to support the recruitment of new and diverse magistrates, which will enable applications to be completed online and managed via a new digital recruitment system. This will collect a broader range of data on those applying and appointed to the magistracy, including the type of school attended between the ages of 11 and 16.

■ Motor Vehicles: Theft**Steve Reed:**[\[93762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many convictions have been recorded for motor vehicle theft in each year since 2015.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on convictions for motor vehicle theft offences in England and Wales for the last 10 calendar years, available in the 'Outcomes by Offence' data tool, which can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987715/outcomes-by-offence-2020.xlsx

Select the following in the 'offence' filter:

- 130 Theft of a motor vehicle – summary (MOT)
- 48 Theft of a motor vehicle (excl. aggravated vehicle taking) – triable either way (MOT)

The number of convictions will be found on row 24.

■ Offences against the Person Act 1861**Mr Barry Sheerman:****[94297]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to update the Offences Against the Persons Act 1861.

James Cartlidge:

Although the Government has no current plans for a comprehensive update to the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, it has introduced several measures in connection with offences against the person including: filling a gap in the law on non-fatal strangulation by creating a new offence and clarifying that a person has no defence if they claim a victim consented to behaviour intended to cause serious harm in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and supported a Private Members Bill to create a new form of assault with an increased maximum penalty where the victim is an emergency worker carrying out their duties. The Government also proposes in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to create a statutory requirement to consider, as an aggravating factor in sentencing, an assault on a public facing worker serving the public.

■ Powers of Attorney**Alex Cunningham:****[94350]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when his Department plans to publish its response to its consultation on modernising lasting powers of attorney.

Tom Pursglove:

The Department is in the process of analysing the responses it received to the consultation on modernising lasting powers of attorney.

■ Prison Officers: Coronavirus

Damien Moore:

[\[94513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the effect on prisons in (a) Merseyside and (b) Lancashire of prison officers self-isolating after testing positive for covid-19.

Victoria Atkins:

The impact of prison officers self-isolating with Covid-19 across Merseyside and Lancashire alters daily. The numbers of staff in self-isolation are monitored at each prison and are reported to the Prison Group Director's (PGD) Office daily, so if assistance is required it can be sought. There is a twice weekly Covid call with all prisons and their relevant PDG office to provide updates and support.

Different prisons face different risks, and preventative measures are implemented accordingly. All prisons have regime contingency plans in place that can respond if significant staff shortages occur and there is a national framework to provide support from outside of region within the Gold Command structure if required. All prisons within both regions are currently running regimes in line with the national Gold guidance and have sufficient staff to do so.

All prisons have control mechanisms to test staff and we follow national HMPPS guidance on isolation in all cases.

■ Prisons: Drugs

Steve Reed:

[\[94398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish a breakdown of drug incidents in prison since 2010 by (a) drug type and (b) overall weight substances.

Victoria Atkins:

Figures showing the number of incidents where drugs were found in prisons by type of drug onwards are included in the following table from 2013-14 to 2020-21:

Number of incidents where drugs ^{(1),(2),(3)} were found in prisons in England and Wales by drug type and class

	NUMBER							
	12 months ending March							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
TOTAL INCIDENTS	4,469	6,332	9,621	10,666	13,118	18,325	21,575	20,295
Class A drug types:								
Cocaine	75	89	108	128	167	1,216	1,966	2,083

	NUMBER							
Crack	8	12	29	26	42	48	49	59
Heroin	209	184	232	163	173	400	639	591
LSD	0	5	5	0	3	60	154	81
Methadone	-	-	7	20	23	24	32	26
Class A Total ⁽⁴⁾	292	290	381	337	408	1,748	2,840	2,840
Class B drug types:								
Amphetamines	63	48	60	55	66	199	273	435
Barbiturates	23	12	6	10	9	13	20	12
Cannabis	1,142	901	1,006	1,582	2,258	3,144	3,723	3,292
Cannabis Plant	328	239	186	181	258	328	408	287
Class B Total ⁽⁴⁾	1,556	1,200	1,258	1,828	2,591	3,684	4,424	4,026
Class C drug types:								
Benzodiazepines	-	-	23	22	34	92	95	115
Buprenorphine/Subutex	-	-	208	264	296	329	335	331
Steroids	-	-	383	659	593	581	475	372
Tramadol	-	-	20	23	33	33	86	89
Tranquilisers	23	25	25	19	29	29	30	31
Class C Total ⁽⁴⁾	23	25	659	987	985	1,064	1,021	938
Prescription drug types:								
Gabapentin	-	-	28	45	64	110	144	89
Pregabalin	-	-	42	80	159	219	273	203
Prescription drugs Total ⁽⁴⁾	-	-	70	125	223	329	417	292
Psychoactive substances ⁽⁵⁾	-	-	3,182	4,560	4,667	6,658	8,192	9,114

	NUMBER							
Other ⁽⁶⁾	2,898	5,236	3,322	1,182	1,605	2,302	2,922	2,535
Unknown	-	-	1,645	3,087	3,930	4,380	4,362	2,607

Source: HMPPS Incident Reporting System

(1) A breakdown showing drug type for incidents where drugs were found in prisons was introduced in January 2013.

(2) A new incident type was introduced in October 2015. This added an additional 9 categories of drugs that are reportable which, prior to this period would have been reported under 'other'. The drug types which were added at this point are: Psychoactive substances, Benzodiazepines (included within tranquillisers), Buprenorphine, Gabapentin, Methadone, Pregabalin, Steroids, Tremadol and a category for when the drug type is unknown. This incident type also introduced the formal reporting of drug weight found in incidents so this is only available from this time.

(3) More than one type of drug can be found in a single incident, therefore the sum of the drug types found will be higher than the total incidents.

(4) Totals are the sum of the sub-categories within each section. As more than one type of drug can be found in a single incident, sum totals will include some incidents multiple times.

(5) In the Psychoactive Substances Act (2016) "psychoactive substance" means any substance which is capable of producing a psychoactive effect in a person who consumes it, and is not an exempted substance. Exempted substances are: controlled drugs, medicinal products, alcohol or alcoholic products, nicotine, tobacco products, caffeine or caffeine products or any substance which is ordinarily consumed as food, and does not contain a prohibited ingredient.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/2/contents>

(6) The 'other' category may include drugs which would be presented in the other classifications but are not formally recorded so cannot be split out into these categories.

Figures showing the number of incidents where drugs were found in prisons, by drug type, are published from April 2016 onwards in the HMPPS Annual Digest, April 2020 to March 2021, table 9.2b (within the link below). A breakdown showing drug type for incidents where drugs were found in prisons was introduced in January 2013. It is not possible to provide a breakdown by type of drug prior to then, but the above table includes an additional breakdown of drug type between 2013-14 and 2015-16 that is not included within the published data.

Figures showing a breakdown of drug finds by drug weight are only available from October 2015 and are included within table 9.2d (within the link below):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmpps-annual-digest-april-2020-to-march-2021>

We're spending £100m to bolster security and clamp down on illicit items such as drugs that fuel crime behind bars.

■ Rape

Ellie Reeves:

[94490]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of collecting data on protected characteristics within the Criminal Justice System recorded adult rape offences scorecards; and whether he has plans to collect that data.

Victoria Atkins:

We recognise the importance of the Criminal Justice System serving all communities and individuals in England and Wales. For it to do this, we need to understand the diverse make up of those it is serving.

The scorecard is a transformation in the way we will manage and improve future performance in the Criminal Justice System and, as our guiding principles, we are using the best data available to us. This means we do not currently have victim metrics which are broken down by protected characteristics.

■ Recorders

Steve Reed:

[93763]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Recorders have been sitting each year from 2015 to 2021; and for how many days each Recorder sat.

James Cartlidge:

Table 1 shows how many Recorders sat and the total number of days sat by Recorders, in each year between 2015 and 2020. Figures are for England and Wales. Data can only be supplied to December 2020 because the 2021 data are not yet finalised.

Table 1. The number of Recorders who sat, and the total number of Recorder sitting days, England and Wales, 2015 to 2020.

YEAR	NUMBER OF RECORDERS WHO SAT	TOTAL SITTING DAYS
2015	989	23,634
2016	1,057	30,380
2017	953	31,902
2018	997	25,273

YEAR	NUMBER OF RECORDERS WHO	
	SAT	TOTAL SITTING DAYS
2019	844	17,499
2020	789	16,514

Source: Judicial Itineraries System

We are making use of fee-paid judiciary, including those sitting in retirement. For a second year in a row, we have increased the maximum number of sitting days for all Recorders from 30 to 80 days. This year, our planned recruitment has brought in additional judges since October 2021, which is helping us to further increase our activity for the rest of the financial year.

Notes for the table:

1) These figures represent only the days sat in all courts and chambers (including the Royal Courts of Justice). Recorders undertake a range of other functions outside the courtroom that are not shown here.

2) The data for each Recorder sitting has been extracted from a live system and so is slightly different to the published data on sitting days. This can be found in the Royal Court of Justice sitting days tables: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-justice-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2021>

3) Please note the Judicial Itinerary tool, from which each Recorder's sitting day was extracted, was deployed in April 2015 so this data is missing for Jan-Mar 2015. Therefore our 2015 figure only covers Apr to Dec of that year.

4) Only Recorders sitting in the capacity of Recorder are included. Recorders sittings as a Deputy High Court Judge are excluded.

■ Victims: Public Consultation

Anna McMorris: [\[94495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which organisations the Government plans to engage with during the Victims' Bill consultation; what the timeframe is for that consultation; and what the timeframe is for the publication of its results.

Anna McMorris: [\[94496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, for what reason his Department's consultation on Delivering justice for victims is not open for longer than eight weeks; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending that timescale.

Anna McMorris: [\[94498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what engagement he has had with relevant stakeholders on his Department's consultation on Delivering justice for victims.

Tom Pursglove:

We recognise the importance of engaging and hearing from a range of interested groups on this important topic and this consultation is the result of engagement the department has undertaken over the past six months. This includes virtual roundtable events in August, fortnightly calls with the sector, frequent discussions with the Victims' Commissioner and other key voices in this space.

We want to deliver improvements for victims through legislation as soon as possible, which is why we are consulting for eight weeks. There will be further opportunity for engagement on developed proposals, as we plan to introduce a draft Bill for pre-legislative scrutiny.

During this time, we plan to hold engagement sessions with victims, and organisations that support them, such as frontline practitioners, and those who commission and provide support services. We will also be meeting parliamentarians with an interest. These events will provide further opportunity to canvass views, and to speak to groups directly affected by the consultation. We will continue to engage with the wider sector through the existing fortnightly calls.

We aim to publish consultation responses three months after a consultation has closed. It will be published at: <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/>.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Carbon Monoxide and Smoke Alarms: Regulation**

Stephanie Peacock: **[93009]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, for what reason his Department has excluded gas cookers from the extended regulations on domestic smoke and carbon monoxide alarms announced in November 2021.

Stephanie Peacock: **[93010]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to gather evidence on the prevalence of incidents of carbon monoxide poisoning caused by gas cookers.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government takes the risks of carbon monoxide poisoning very seriously. We have announced that we will be legislating to extend requirements for carbon monoxide alarms, so that they are required in all private and socially rented homes in rooms with fixed combustion appliances and where new appliances are installed in any home.

Consideration was given to including gas cookers. The evidence available at the time showed that gas cookers are responsible for fewer incidents of carbon monoxide poisoning than gas boilers and that inclusion would be disproportionate.

■ Cornwall Council: Finance

Mike Amesbury:

[\[93895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions his Department has had with Cornwall Council on their financial challenges and proposed reductions to services and staff.

Kemi Badenoch:

Officials from the Department regularly speak with a range of local authorities around their finances as part of ongoing engagement with the sector.

The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2022/23 makes available an additional £3.5 billion to councils, including funding for adult social care reform. This is an increase in local authority funding for 2022/23 of over 4% in real terms, which will ensure councils across the country have the resources they need to deliver key services.

In total, we expect Core Spending Power to rise from £50.4 billion in 2021/22 to up to £53.9 billion next year. For Cornwall Council this means Core Spending Power increasing from £513.5 million to £549.3 million.

It is for locally elected councils to make decisions around services in their local areas. We continue to encourage any local authority that is worried it is unable to set a balanced budget to come forward and speak to the Department.

■ Disabled Facilities Grants

Matt Western:

[\[94489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much the Government spent on Disabled Facilities Grants each year from 2010-2021; and whether he has made an estimate of how much funding has been provided for changes that have been reversed by subsequent home owners.

Eddie Hughes:

Government funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) each year from 2010 to 2021 can be found at the table below. Government does not collect data on DFG funding provided for adaptations that have been reversed by subsequent homeowners.

DLUHC FUNDED					DHSC FUNDED						
2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
£169m	£200m	£220m	£200m	£185m	£220m	£394m	£473m*	£523m**	£505m	£573m***	£573m

*£431m annual grant plus an additional £42m announced in Autumn Budget 2017

**£468m annual grant plus an additional £55m announced in Budget 2018

***£505m annual grant plus an additional £68m paid to LAs in December 2020

■ Ethnic Groups: China

Sarah Owen: [\[94547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that Chinatowns around the UK are able to recover from the covid-19 outbreak.

Sarah Owen: [\[94548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many times he has spoken with representatives of the East and South East Asian community regarding the impact of covid-19 on Chinatown districts across the UK.

Kemi Badenoch:

We have put in place one of the world's most comprehensive economic responses worth £400 billion – to protect jobs, businesses, and public services throughout and beyond this pandemic. On 21 December, the Chancellor announced a further £1 billion funding for hospitality and leisure businesses, including more than £100 million boost to the additional restrictions grant fund for local authorities in England to support other businesses impacted by the Omicron variant.

The Government has allocated over £13 billion directly to councils in England since the start of the pandemic to tackle the impacts of Covid-19. Over £6 billion is unringfenced in recognition that local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the major Covid-19 pressures in their local area.

■ Housing: Fire Prevention

Virginia Crosbie: [\[94569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to help ensure that affected homeowners are not charged unaffordable remedial costs for historic fire safety defects.

Christopher Pincher:

Building owners and developers should make buildings safe to live in and it should not fall to leaseholders to pay the price when they have failed to do so. The Government is focused on protecting leaseholders, who bought their flats in good faith, and now face unaffordable costs. The Government is investing an unprecedented £5.1 billion to fund the cost of replacing unsafe cladding for leaseholders in residential buildings 18 metres and over in England. This will make homes safer and support those who, through no fault of their own, have been unable to sell their property. Fire risk is lower in buildings under 18 metres and costly remediation work is usually not needed.

■ Local Government Ombudsman: Parish Councils

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[94535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the remit of the Local Government Ombudsmen to include parish councils.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman published its Triennial Review of their complaints and public accountability framework on 2 December. The Review made a number of recommendations to refine their legal framework.

Recommendation 1.2 proposes that a pilot is developed to explore bringing a subset of the largest town and parish councils within the Ombudsman's remit. The Government is considering the Review's recommendations and will respond in due course.

■ Local Government: Meetings

Hilary Benn:

[\[93709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has plans to enable councils to meet virtually in the context of the number of infections of the omicron covid-19 variant.

Kemi Badenoch:

We launched a call for evidence on 25 March to gather views and inform a longer-term decision about whether to make express provision for councils to meet remotely on a permanent basis. The call for evidence closed on 17 June.

The Department has considered the responses to the consultation and the Government will respond shortly.

Layla Moran:

[\[94508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to allow local councils to hold meetings virtually.

Kemi Badenoch:

We launched a call for evidence on 25 March to gather views and inform a longer-term decision about whether to make express provision for councils to meet remotely on a permanent basis. The call for evidence closed on 17 June.

The Department has considered the responses to the consultation and the Government will respond shortly.

■ Members: Correspondence

Mr John Baron:

[\[93716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to respond to correspondence dated 7 September 2021 and chasing correspondence of 5

October, 1 November and 1 December 2021 from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay regarding a constituent, with reference JB34029.

Kemi Badenoch:

A response to my Hon Friend's letter has been issued.

■ **Parish Councils: Reform**

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[94534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans his Department has to reform parish council governance.

Kemi Badenoch:

Parish councils have an important role in improving the quality of life and wellbeing of their communities. The Levelling Up White Paper will outline the UK Government's plans for strengthening communities and supporting local leadership. We will be working with organisations in the sector to develop and take forward these plans.

■ **PAYE: Scotland**

Ian Murray:

[\[94334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the increase in PAYE employees between February 2020 and October 2021 being substantially lower in four of the five regions of Scotland than the majority of other regions and nations of the UK.

Eddie Hughes:

My Department is committed to levelling up all parts of the United Kingdom including, of course, Scotland. My Department opened its first office in Scotland in 2021, an important demonstration of the Government's commitment to levelling up in Scotland and just one part of a wider Government programme which is increasing the number of Civil Service roles based in Scotland. DLUHC staff based in Scotland will play an important role in connecting with partner organisations and communities to ensure Government policies meet local priorities and needs.

■ **Refugees: Afghanistan**

Catherine West:

[\[93839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans he is developing to support local authorities to aid the transition to life in the UK for Afghan refugees.

Victoria Atkins:

Councils who support people through the Afghanistan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) or Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme will receive £20,520 per person, over three years, for integration support provision and other local costs, in addition to £4,500 for education per child, £850 for English

Language courses per adult, and £2,600 for health provision per person. This funding will support councils to devise their own welcome programmes for new arrivals and the provision of services tailored to this group, which they are experts at and have long experience of - including via the Syrian programme plus welcoming many other migrant groups to live, work and settle in their areas.

We have also piloted a welcome week of learning sessions for residents encompassing life in Modern Britain, our values and laws, and sources of support. We are evaluating feedback from Afghans.

DLUHC has directly supported Afghan arrivals through setting up welcome weeks at bridging hotels and a [Welcome Pack](#). They aim to improve understanding of life in the UK, including on education, employment, health, language, law, safeguarding and cultural norms. Additionally, DLUHC has a team of Local Engagement leads dedicated to working with councils to help find homes and settle Afghan arrivals.

Other departments are providing support including liaison officers in hotels to answer questions; utilising Strategic Migration Partners who are experienced in helping arrivals settle into the UK; and supporting Afghan families onto Universal Credit or into work, finding GPs and schools and of course finding homes

■ Regional Planning and Development: Finance

Mike Kane:

[\[94399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to round two of the Levelling Up Fund, when he plans to open that bidding round; what the deadline for that bidding round will be; and what his planned timetable is for announcing funding decisions from that bidding round.

Mike Kane:

[\[94400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to round one of the Levelling up Fund prospectus and criteria, whether he plans to make changes for round two to the (a) classification of priority areas, (b) criteria for eligible bids by parliamentary constituency, in particular the approach where constituency areas cross local authority boundaries and types of bids likely to be supported and (c) themes of town centre/regeneration, culture and transport; and whether he plans to look for a split across the themes of transport, high streets/regeneration and culture when assessing bids for round two.

Mike Kane:

[\[94401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the Government's overall financial commitment to the Levelling Up Fund remains at £4.8 billion; how much the Government plans to make available for round two; and how many funding rounds there will be in total.

Neil O'Brien:

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading

local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets. We will open round two in Spring 2022 and will share further details in due course.

PRIME MINISTER

■ 10 Downing Street

Fleur Anderson: [94551]

To ask the Prime Minister, whether the Metropolitan police maintain records of visitors to Number 10 when they pass through security screening.

Boris Johnson:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given by the Paymaster General to 90472.

Fleur Anderson: [94553]

To ask the Prime Minister, whether the Cabinet Secretary will be given access to (a) mobile phone messages and (b) other electronic communication relevant to his investigation into the gatherings held at Number 10 in 2020 during Tier 3 restrictions.

Fleur Anderson: [94556]

To ask the Prime Minister, if (a) he or (b) Number 10 officials will meet with the Metropolitan Police to facilitate a police investigation into allegations of gatherings in Number 10 offices during December 2020.

Boris Johnson:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given by the Paymaster General to 90509.

SCOTLAND

■ Vacancies: Scotland

Wendy Chamberlain: [93063]

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on (a) worker shortages in Scotland and (b) the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme.

Iain Stewart:

Ministers from this Department are in regular contact with counterparts from the Home Office on a range of matters affecting Scotland, including labour market issues.

The UK Government recently announced that the Seasonal Agricultural Worker visa route has been extended until the end of 2024, to allow migrant workers to come to the UK for up to six months to pick both edible and ornamental crops.

Further information is available online:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/industry-given-certainty-around-seasonal-workers-but-told-to-focus-on-domestic-workforce>

TRANSPORT

■ Bus Services

Rachael Maskell:

[\[94433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his timeframe is for the (a) informal, (b) statutory, (c) public and (d) final consultation stages for the enhanced partnerships set out in the Bus Services Act 2017.

Trudy Harrison:

Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) that have committed to having an Enhanced Partnership (EP) must have it in place by 31 March 2022. The timing of the EP consultation process is a decision for each LTA.

■ Bus Services: Finance

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[94345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his Department's policy to publish the allocation of the Bus Recovery Grant in a timely manner to help ensure that travel companies can meet their relevant deadlines.

Trudy Harrison:

The allocation of Bus Recovery Grant funding to operators has been based on operator revenue and patronage projections. This data includes forecasts from operators which are not in the public domain. Each operator has been given their allocation and the funding received by each operator is commercially sensitive, therefore allocations will not be published.

Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) are also allocated BRG funding and they have been informed of their own allocation along with all other LTAs. Grants received via Section 31 powers, such as the Bus Recovery Grant for Local Authorities, are routinely published by Local Authorities and are on gov.uk.

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[94346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans announce allocations to local transport authorities for bus service improvement plans.

Trudy Harrison:

At the Budget we announced £1.2 billion of dedicated funding for bus transformation deals, part of over £3 billion of new spend on buses over this Parliament. We will announce details of how that funding will be allocated in due course.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[94427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, in what way his Department plans to distribute funding for the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[94428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding the Government has provide for the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Trudy Harrison:

The National Bus Strategy and subsequent guidance set out clear expectations on what Bus Service Improvement Plans should include. At the Budget we announced £1.2 billion of new dedicated funding for bus transformation deals. We will announce details of how that funding will be allocated in due course.

■ Driving Licences

Louise Haigh: [93809]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what day the Vehicle licensing statistics: July to September 2021 will be published.

Louise Haigh: [93810]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date the Electric vehicle charging device statistics: January 2022 Electric vehicle charging infrastructure will be published.

Louise Haigh: [93811]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date the Road freight statistics: July 2020 to June 2021 Road freight: domestic and international will be published.

Louise Haigh: [93812]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date the National Travel Attitudes Study: Wave 6 Public attitudes towards transport will be published.

Louise Haigh: [93813]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date the Blue badge scheme statistics: 2021 Disabled parking badges will be published.

Louise Haigh: [93814]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date the Rail factsheet: 2021 Rail will be published.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department publishes a 12-month forthcoming Official and National Statistics publications calendar, for all statistics published by the Department for Transport and the Office for Rail and Road. This can be found on the Department for Transport's statistics webpage: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/about/statistics#forthcoming-publications>.

This calendar is updated monthly, where dates are announced at least 4 weeks before the publication date, in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics. Publications to be released later than the 4-week period have provisional month date of release.

■ Great Western Railway

Luke Pollard:

[\[94520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has requested operating reductions in costs or routes from Great Western Railway.

Wendy Morton:

Negotiations are ongoing with Great Western Railway regarding a new National Rail Contract. It would be inappropriate to comment any further at this point.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Training

Drew Hendry:

[\[92981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 29 October 2021 to Question 61160 on Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Training, as part of any modifications to the regulations, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of processes to (a) reduce the compunction for experienced professional drivers to successfully complete the same course repeatedly so as to meet their Driver Certificate of Professional Competence course commitments and (b) subsidise costs where a driver has already successfully passed a similar course to the one they are undertaking while seeking to meet the requirements necessary under The Driver Certificate of Professional Competence.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government has been listening to the concerns raised by drivers and industry about Driver CPC and on 8 November announced an urgent review of the scheme.

There is a wide variety of courses available to meet Driver Certificates of Professional Competence (DCPC) requirements. Experienced professional drivers should not feel obliged to complete the same courses repeatedly. Indeed, we encourage taking different courses. For employed drivers, employers not drivers should pay for DCPC courses.

The urgent review of DCPC includes considering surveyed information from drivers and evidence-based work with stakeholders. The requirements for courses and how they are paid for are issues included in the review.

■ Local Transport Plans

Rachael Maskell:

[\[94426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his framework is for funding the development and delivery of new local transport plans.

Trudy Harrison:

Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) are able to update their respective Local Transport Plans (LTPs) as they see fit. The cost of renewing LTPs is factored into the revenue support grant given to LTAs by HM Government.

In the Transport Decarbonisation Plan (TDP) published July 2021, the Government committed to making quantifiable carbon reductions a fundamental part of local transport planning and funding.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Registration**

Derek Twigg: [\[92818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 13 December 2021 to Question 89507 on Motor Vehicles: Registration, how many vehicles have not been able to be traced in the latest period for which figures are available.

Trudy Harrison:

While the DVLA is confident it can trace 92.1 per cent of vehicles from its records it does not hold specific information on how many vehicle keepers it has been unable to trace over a set period.

■ **Railways: Dawlish**

Luke Pollard: [\[94521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Great Western Railway and Hitachi on the failure of IET trains at Dawlish after coming into contact with waves; and if he will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

GWR and the train manufacturer, Hitachi, are working on further solutions for issues caused by sea water on electrical equipment on the roof. My Officials are working with GWR and Hitachi to ensure that any lessons learned are fully understood and recommendations implemented.

■ **Railways: Penzance**

Luke Pollard: [\[94519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans (a) his Department or (b) the franchise operator has to end the Night Riviera sleeper service from London Paddington to Penzance via Plymouth.

Wendy Morton:

There are currently no plans to end the Night Riviera sleeper service.

■ **Transport for London: Finance**

Fleur Anderson: [\[93910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has met with the Mayor of London to discuss Transport for London's December 2021 financial settlement.

Trudy Harrison:

In addition to regular discussions between officials and TfL, the Minister responsible for this issue, Baroness Vere, met the Deputy Mayor of London for Transport on 9 December.

■ **Transport: Carbon Emissions**

Rachael Maskell: [\[94424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his decarbonisation plan will include a toolkit.

Trudy Harrison:

Our Transport Decarbonisation Plan included a commitment to publish a toolkit for Local Authorities to support them in delivering sustainable transport measures in their region and it will be published in early 2022.

Rachael Maskell: [\[94425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding he plans to allocate to his decarbonisation strategy; and how that funding will be distributed.

Trudy Harrison:

The Transport Decarbonisation Plan, Net Zero Strategy and Autumn 2021 spending review gives detail to the funding and allocation over the next three years in support of transport decarbonisation.

■ **Travel Restrictions: South Africa**

Fleur Anderson: [\[93071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason South Africa remains on the covid-19 red list as at 14 December 2021; and when he plans to review that matter.

Robert Courts:

South Africa was removed from the red list at 4am on 15 December. As Omicron cases rise in the UK and in countries around the world, the travel red list is less effective in slowing the incursion of this variant from abroad and managed quarantine measures are no longer proportionate. Additional temporary testing measures remain in place to help prevent additional cases of Omicron from entering the UK and will be reviewed in early January.

■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

Mr Steve Baker: [\[R\] \[93757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies and the formation of his covid-19 international travel policies of the WHO document entitled Policy considerations for implementing a risk-based approach to international travel in the context of COVID-19, published on 2 July 2021.

Robert Courts:

The UK Government's international travel policies are aligned with the WHO recommendations on a range of issues, including regular risk assessments; proof of COVID-19 vaccination not being a condition of entry; and testing and quarantine.

The UK Government also takes into consideration recommendations from guidance documents issued by relevant multilateral organisations, including the OECD's

Blueprint for safe international mobility, and the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force's (CART) recommendations. The government will continue to engage with multilateral organisations to inform its policymaking.

TREASURY

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties

Patricia Gibson: [\[92979\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason the Government's proposed reforms to alcohol excise duty do not apply the same rate to all categories of alcoholic drinks; and what assessment his Department has made of the impact of those reforms on the wine industry.

Patricia Gibson: [\[92980\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the equity of taxation based on ABV percentage of the product in the new alcohol excise duty regulations on wine importers.

Patricia Gibson: [\[94421\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he has taken to ensure that new rules for alcohol excise duty will not disproportionately burden the UK's wine industry.

Patricia Gibson: [\[94422\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what consideration has been accorded to new rules for alcohol excise duty in order to ensure this will not unfairly and disproportionately place a greater burden on the UK's wine industry.

Helen Whately:

The reforms announced at the Budget will produce an alcohol duty system that is overall simpler, fairer and healthier.

The Government believes it is appropriate to charge different rates of duty on drinks based on their alcoholic strength, with stronger drinks paying more duty and lower ABV drinks paying less duty. To minimise differences between categories of drinks, for the first time all products at 8.5% ABV or above will pay the same rate of duty regardless of the product type. This will also be true of products below 3.5% ABV. The existing system of taxing wines above 22% ABV in line with spirits on the basis of their pure alcohol content will continue. The Government also believes it is right to move wine to be taxed in proportion to its strength, as is already the case for beer and spirits. These reforms will result in lighter still wines below 11.5% ABV and many sparkling wines becoming cheaper, while higher strength still wines will pay more duty.

The Government is continuing to engage with industry, and industry members are encouraged to respond to the alcohol review consultation before the deadline of 30 January 2022.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Alison Thewliss:

[93780]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with lenders on forbearance measures on Bounce Back Loans in response to the spread of the omicron covid-19 variant.

John Glen:

Treasury Ministers and officials meet regularly with a wide range of stakeholders, including representatives of the financial services industry. Details of ministerial and senior officials' meetings are available online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/search/transparency-and-freedom-of-information-releases?organisations%5B%5D=hm-treasury&parent=hm-treasury>.

To give businesses further support and flexibility in making their BBLS repayments, the Chancellor announced "Pay as You Grow" (PAYG) options which give businesses the option to repay their BBLS facility over ten years. Businesses also have the option to move temporarily to interest-only payments for periods of up to six months (an option which they can use up to three times), or to pause their repayments entirely for up to six months. If borrowers want to take advantage of this option, they should notify their lender when they are contacted about their repayments.

■ Children: Day Care

Stella Creasy:

[94347]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much the Government has spent on promoting the tax-free childcare scheme in each of the last four financial years.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The government is committed to supporting families with their childcare costs. 316,000 families used Tax-Free Childcare for 371,000 children and spent £35.0 million on top-up for families in September 2021; compared to 227,000 families who used Tax-Free Childcare for 263,000 children and spent £26.5m in September 2020.

The government has spent the following on marketing and research in the current and three previous financial years.

2018/19 – £1,113,270

2019/20 – £241,580

2020/21 – £197,338

2021/22 – £151,205 (full year forecast and not all costs are committed)

In 2018/19 marketing spend involved a national campaign as part of the phased rollout of the scheme.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Alison Thewliss:

[93782]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has contingency plans to reinstate the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in response to the spread of the omicron covid-19 variant.

Lucy Frazer:

As we have done throughout the pandemic, we are closely monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on the economy. We will continue to respond proportionately to the changing path of the virus.

Since the start of the pandemic, the Government has a strong track record of responding quickly, flexibly, and comprehensively in supporting jobs, businesses, individuals, and families when needed.

The effectiveness of our £400 billion package of interventions since the start of the pandemic and the strength of the recovery that we have seen from previous waves means the economy is in a different place now.

Employee numbers are above February 2020 levels in every part of the country and have grown consistently through this year.

So, it is right that our economic response in the face of Omicron adapts too, and that our support is better targeted at the businesses that need it the most, providing better value for taxpayers and helping the economy to bounce back more quickly.

However, we recognise the impact that Omicron and Government guidance is having on businesses and individuals, which is why on 21 December 2021 we announced £1 billion of new grant support for the hospitality, leisure, and cultural sectors, and reintroduced the Statutory Sick Pay Rebate Scheme. This is on top of the existing package of support, in place through to Spring 2022, which includes the Recovery Loan Scheme, business rates relief, VAT reduction, and the ongoing commercial rent moratorium.

■ Devolved Matters: Coronavirus

Alison Thewliss:

[93781]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what funding will be allocated to each of the devolved Administrations to help tackle the omicron covid-19 variant.

Mr Simon Clarke:

At Autumn Budget the UK Government confirmed the devolved administrations were receiving an extra £12.6 billion of Barnett-based funding this year.

On top of this, the UK Government has now confirmed a further £860 million to help the devolved administrations tackle the Omicron variant. This provides the devolved administrations with the certainty they requested to spend more money in advance of the usual process for confirming final Barnett consequential in the coming weeks.

We have already doubled this new funding, from £430 million, and will continue to keep this under review.

■ National Insurance

Seema Malhotra:

[\[93759\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the increase in national insurance contributions in 2022 on inflation.

John Glen:

In its October Economic and Fiscal Outlook (EFO), the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) set out its assessment of the economic impact of government policies announced at the Budget and Spending Review. This includes the increase in National Insurance contributions, which the OBR notes has a small impact on inflation and results in prices being 0.1 per cent higher from 2023-24 onwards.

■ PAYE: Scotland

Ian Murray:

[\[94330\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to page 49 of Scotland's Economic and Fiscal Forecasts, published by the Scottish Fiscal Commission in December 2021, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the increase in PAYE employees between February 2020 and October 2021 being substantially lower in Scotland than other regions and nations in the UK.

Mr Simon Clarke:

In July 2020, the Government launched the Plan for Jobs to protect, support and create jobs across the country. As demonstrated in the Plan for Jobs Progress Update, it is clear that the plan is working.

This includes the Kickstart Scheme, which funds jobs for young people at risk of long-term unemployment, to improve their chances of progressing into long-term and sustainable work. As of 5th December, around 112,000 Kickstart jobs have been started by young people across Great Britain, of which 9,730 were in Scotland.

In addition to Kickstart, the Youth Offer provides a guaranteed foundation of support to 16- and 17-year-olds on in the Intensive Work Search group on Universal Credit in Great Britain.

The Job Entry Targeted Support Scheme (JETS) provides personalised support to those in Great Britain who have been unemployed for 3-12 months. So far, JETS has supported over 176,000 jobseekers across England, Scotland and Wales, with over 43,000 job outcomes achieved.

JETS support is worth around £1,000 per claimant.

Additionally, over 910,000 jobs have been protected by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) in Scotland since March 2020.

■ Scottish Government: Public Finance

Ian Murray:

[\[94327\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the £1 billion shortfall identified by the Scottish Fiscal Commission in the Scottish Government public finances in the financial year 2026-27.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Scottish Government now has substantial tax and welfare powers and is responsible for its own policy choices in these areas.

For example, if the Scottish Government chooses to spend an additional £512 million on new welfare benefits then this means £512 million less spending on other areas or £512 million of additional revenue raising. These types of choices are a direct consequence of devolving tax and welfare powers.

The UK Government continues to operate the Fiscal Framework, including the block grant adjustments for tax and welfare devolution, as agreed with the Scottish Government.

■ Tax Evasion: Cryptocurrencies

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[92829\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the existing HMRC enforcement regime with regards to tax evasion using cryptocurrencies; and if he will make a statement.

Lucy Frazer:

Cryptoassets present unique challenges to HMRC as they can be easily acquired and transferred, including across borders, but do not usually record the identity of their owners.

HMRC has used powers provided by Parliament to gather information from cryptoasset exchanges. HMRC has written to customers where data shows they own, or have owned, cryptoassets. They have advised them of the tax consequences of common transactions.

HMRC also applies traditional enforcement approaches, such as enquiring into tax returns.

The UK continues to work with international partners, including multinational organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, to cooperate, share information, and develop responses.

The majority of individuals and businesses wish to pay the tax that is due, and the Government wants to help them get their tax affairs right. HMRC has published guidance on the taxation of cryptoassets, which is among the most detailed guidance released by any tax administration, on what is a complex topic.

HMRC has developed its capability to deal with risks arising from cryptoassets through the development of in-house training and the use of blockchain forensic tools.

HMRC will continue to actively monitor the compliance risks as this technology develops and the uses and users of cryptoassets change.

WALES

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

John Lamont:

[\[904906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect on the Welsh lamb industry of the end of US restrictions on the import of British lamb.

Simon Hart:

The lifting of this ban is fantastic news and brings Welsh farmers one step closer to putting their first-class lamb on US menus for the first time in 20 years.

Farmers will now be able to reach a new market of over 300 million people. This win will support vital jobs and growth in Wales.

■ Coronavirus: Wales

Ben Lake:

[\[904909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will hold discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on support for (a) businesses and (b) people affected by the outbreak of the covid-19 omicron variant in Wales.

Simon Hart:

The UK Government has supported Welsh businesses and people throughout the pandemic, including providing £1.1bn through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, £2.4bn in business support loans, and supported 475,000 employees through the furlough scheme.

We have further confirmed £270m the Welsh Government can spend in advance of budgets being finalised at Supplementary Estimates.

■ Crown Estate Commissioners: Wales

Steven Bonnar:

[\[904908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of devolving control of the Crown Estate in Wales to the Welsh Government.

Simon Hart:

Effective working relationships already exist between the Crown Estate and the Welsh Government.

There is no public appetite at all in Wales to devolve the Crown Estate, which would serve merely to fragment the market and delay the further development of key projects in Wales.

■ **Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries**

Jacob Young: [\[904907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent assessment the Government has made of the contribution of the steel industry in Wales to the UK economy.

Simon Hart:

The UK Government recognises the importance of the steel industry in Wales and the UK. This House only needs to look at the £30 million loan we secured for Celsa to see our commitment to the sector. Our response during the pandemic helped secure more than 1,000 steel jobs.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Mr John Baron: [\[94301\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of the 27 September, 27 October and 1 December 2021 regarding his constituent with reference JB34361.

Mike Freer:

I apologise for the delay in responding to the hon. Member's correspondence. The response was sent on 17 December 2021.

■ **Racial Discrimination: Islam**

Anneliese Dodds: [\[94509\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what her Department's policy is for (a) describing and (b) communicating incidences of racism targeting expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.

Kemi Badenoch:

This Government remains committed to stamping out anti-Muslim hatred and all forms of religious prejudice. It is unacceptable for anyone to feel unsafe while practicing their religion and we continue to take a zero-tolerance approach to anti-Muslim hatred. The adoption of a definition of Islamophobia by the Government remains under consideration.

In 2020-21 DLUHC provided £1.8million in funding for the Faith, Race and Hate Crime Grant Scheme which supported established community groups and civil society organisations to run short projects that champion the Government's commitment to building a diverse and tolerant society for all faiths and races.

The Government's new Hate Crime Strategy will be published shortly and will build on the successes of the previous Action Plan in tackling all forms of hate crime.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Job Centres

Maria Eagle: [\[92821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether job centres (a) have targets for conducting face-to-face interviews or (b) plan to implement targets for conducting those interviews for recipients of universal credit and other working age benefits; and if she will make a statement.

Maria Eagle: [\[92822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what key performance indicators operate in job centres in respect of interviewing recipients of universal credit and other working age benefits; and if she will publish those key performance indicators.

Maria Eagle: [\[92823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has plans to issue guidance to job centres on conducting interviews online or by telephone as part of the introduction of Plan B covid-19 restrictions.

Maria Eagle: [\[92824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how often a jobseeker on universal credit in Liverpool is required to attend a face to face interview in the job centre; and if she will make a statement.

Mims Davies:

Throughout the pandemic, Jobcentres remained open for claimants who required face-to-face support. From April, Jobcentres in England, Scotland, and Wales returned to their pre-lockdown opening hours and restarted face-to-face appointments, in accordance with government guidelines.

In line with current public health guidance, and with safety measures in place, Jobcentre Work Coaches are continuing to book face-to-face appointments for those claimants who are required to attend mandatory appointments as part of their conditions for receiving Universal Credit.

The frequency of interventions Work Coaches undertake with claimants is determined by the individual circumstances of the claimant, the duration of their claim, and the level of support required at that particular time. There is no target of face-to-face appointments a full-time Work Coach is expected to deliver in one day. Appointments are determined by the circumstances of each claimant and the type of meeting being conducted. Maintaining an effective Work Coach diary is a joint responsibility between a team leader and the Work Coach, and is managed collaboratively through regular discussion and agreement.

Our Jobcentre teams are committed to ensuring all claimants receive the best possible support to meet their individual circumstance. Jobcentre team leaders are responsible for assuring the quality services provided to individual claimants through a combination of observation of Work Coach interviews, feedback, coaching and appraisal.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

David Linden: [\[94499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to respond to the letter of 19 October 2021, reference DL10799, from the hon Member for Glasgow East.

Guy Opperman:

A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 22 December 2021.

■ **Offshore Industry: Continental Shelf**

Alex Cunningham: [\[92926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many planned maintenance shutdowns there were on oil and gas installations on the UK Continental Shelf in (a) 2018, (b) 2019, (c) 2020 and (d) 2021 to date.

Chloe Smith:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) does not routinely collect information on planned maintenance shutdowns on a yearly basis. There is no legal duty for operators on the UK Continental Shelf to inform HSE of this information, however it is held at a company level.

■ **Pensioners: Wakefield**

Jon Trickett: [\[94290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made the potential merits of (a) providing additional financial support to pensioners during winter 2021-22 and (b) assessing the impact of additional support on the financial wellbeing of pensioners in (a) Hemsworth constituency and (b) Wakefield local authority.

Guy Opperman:

The State Pension is the foundation of support for older people. Under this Government, the full yearly amount of the basic State Pension is now over £2,050 higher in cash terms than in 2010.

Around 1.4 million eligible pensioners across Great Britain receive some £5 billion 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 recognise that some people may still require extra support over the winter, which is why vulnerable households across the country can now access an additional £500 million support fund to help them with essentials. The Household Support Fund will

provide £421 million to help vulnerable people in England with the cost of food, utilities and wider essentials. Up to 50% of the Fund is available for councils to spend on households without children, including those of State Pension age. Barnsley local authority has been allocated £2,351,263.96. The Barnett Formula will apply in the usual way, with the devolved administrations receiving almost £80 million.

In addition, Winter Fuel Payments will continue to be payable to customers of State Pension age. We will pay £200 to households with a customer aged between 66 and 79 and £300 to a household with someone aged 80 or over. We pay over 11m Winter Fuel Payments annually at a cost of £2bn which is a significant contribution to winter fuel bills.

Cold Weather Payments 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.

The Warm Home Discount Scheme provides those in receipt of Pension Credit guarantee credit a discount of £140 on their energy bill providing their supplier is part of the scheme.

Furthermore, the Government continues to protect benefits for older people including free eye tests, NHS prescriptions and bus passes.

No such assessments have been made for Hemsworth constituency or Wakefield local authority. However, the latest statistics show that in the three years to 19/20, absolute poverty for pensioners in Yorkshire and the Humber, after housing costs, had reduced significantly.

■ Sick Pay

Alison Thewliss:

[93783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of allocating funding to support an increase in the rate of statutory sick pay.

Chloe Smith:

The Government has previously consulted on Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) reform as part of Health is Everyone's Business. The Government's response to the consultation acknowledged that, while the consultation posed several important questions on the future of SSP which require further consideration, the pandemic was not the right time to introduce changes to the sick pay system.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability and Health

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[93061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what meetings she has had with disabled people on the design of the reforms proposed in the Health and Disability Green Paper.

Chloe Smith:

For the 18 months prior to the formal launch of the consultation underpinning the Green Paper, we ran a significant stakeholder engagement programme to ensure the views of disabled people and their representatives shaped the content.

During the consultation period, we delivered a wide-ranging programme of more than 40 events to promote the Green Paper and hear people's views on the proposals. These included face-to-face and virtual public events, events with the Regional Stakeholder Networks, and a forum of disabled people from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Whilst the formal consultation period has now ended, we continue to engage stakeholders regularly, particularly on the broader aspects of the paper that focus on future reform.

■ Universal Credit

Maria Eagle:

[\[92820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether it is her policy to use digital by default when contacting universal credit recipients; and if she will make a statement.

David Rutley:

It is not the Department's policy to use digital methods by default when contacting all Universal Credit recipients.

We have a number of methods to support us in communicating with claimants. When making an initial application for Universal Credit, individuals are able to opt for their preferred contact method.

Work coaches and claimants can also use Universal Credit online journals to communicate, unless it has been previously identified that this is not an option for the claimant. In these cases, the journal will be updated, however the claimant will also be contacted in a way that suits their individual needs, for example by a phone call.

■ Universal Credit: Work Capability Assessment

Paul Blomfield:

[\[93756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit work capability assessments have been cancelled where the telephone line or other communication channel was deemed inappropriate for the claimant in the last 12 months;

and what procedures are in place to ensure that cancelled assessments are promptly referred to an alternative assessment channel.

Chloe Smith:

We do not hold data on cases where an assessment has started and the Healthcare Professional (HCP) has deemed the assessment channel to be inappropriate.

Prior to booking an assessment, HCPs will seek to make a recommendation based on paper evidence. If an assessment is required, HCPs will consider a range of factors including people's physical and mental health, or whether the claimant has the appropriate access to telephone or video facilities.

There are occasions where an assessment has started, but the HCP is unable to complete the assessment for a variety of reasons, such as the claimant is too unwell to continue or there are mobile phone/internet connection issues. In these circumstances, claimants will be offered an alternative channel on the day (e.g. video to telephone) or a further appointment will be arranged as soon as possible.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Energy Infrastructure Planning Projects

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng): [\[HCWS512\]](#)

This Statement concerns applications for development consent made under the Planning Act 2008 by East Anglia ONE North Limited and East Anglia TWO Limited for the construction and operation of the East Anglia ONE North and East Anglia TWO Offshore Wind Farms with a maximum capacity of up to 800MW (East Anglia ONE North) and 900MW (East Anglia TWO), with associated infrastructure required to export the electricity to a proposed National Grid substation at Friston in Suffolk.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make a decision on an application within three months of the receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) of the Act to set a new deadline. Where a new deadline is set, the Secretary of State must make a Statement to Parliament to announce it. The deadline for the decision on the East Anglia ONE North and East Anglia TWO applications was 6 January 2022.

I have decided to set a new deadline of no later than 31 March 2022 for deciding this application to allow an opportunity for further information including in respect of protected species and construction flood risk mitigation to be provided and considered.

The decision to set the new deadline for this application is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant or refuse development consent.

EDUCATION

■ Institutes of Technology

The Minister for Higher and Further Education (Michelle Donelan): [\[HCWS515\]](#)

I am pleased to say that on the 17 December we announced the creation of 9 new Institutes of Technology (IoTs) following the conclusion to the wave 2 competition, subject to their proposals being turned in to binding agreements. This brings the number of IoTs across the country to 21. All 9 proposals met our quality standards and having an additional IoT to that which we committed to in our Manifesto will provide even greater geographical coverage.

The Wave 2 competition delivered a range of high-quality proposals demonstrating a keen understanding of learner and employer needs and clear partnership working. They will benefit from up to £120m of government investment to fund industry standard facilities and equipment. I am pleased to announce the lead organisations for the successful proposals and the areas they will cover below:

- Blackpool and The Fylde College (Lancashire LEP area)
- Cheshire College South and West (Cheshire and Warrington LEP area)
- Chichester College Group (Coast to Capital LEP area)
- DN Colleges Group (Sheffield LEP area)
- Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group (Stoke on Trent & Staffordshire LEP area)
- Solent University (Solent LEP area)
- South Essex College (South East LEP area)
- University of Derby (D2N2 and Leicestershire LEP areas)
- University of Salford (Greater Manchester LEP area)

Institutes of Technology (IoTs) are collaborations between further education providers, universities and employers, with employers at the heart of decision-making, curriculum development and delivery. They specialise in delivering higher technical education, supporting our aim to reform technical training to help employers get the skilled workforce they need and offer local people rewarding jobs and higher paid long-term careers.

The first wave of 12 Institutes of Technology in areas such as Yorkshire and Humber, the West Midlands, North East, South West and London were backed by £170 million investment to fund industry-standard facilities and equipment; most are already open to learners.

■ Skills Update

Minister for Higher and Further Education (Michelle Donelan): [\[HCWS518\]](#)

On 17 December 2021, I announced a package that forms part of the government's skills revolution which will level up more opportunities for everyone and plug skills gaps to boost the economy. Adults and young people across the country will benefit from more high-quality and flexible education and training – levelling up opportunities and supporting more people into higher skilled, higher wage jobs.

A further nine Institutes of Technology were also announced and will join the 12 already up and running. The government's network of Institutes of Technology are unique collaborations between employers, further and higher education providers - backed by £290 million of government funding – that specialise in delivering high-quality Higher Technical Education and training across a range of STEM occupations and industries, in subjects such as advanced manufacturing, digital and cyber security, aerospace, automotive engineering and healthcare to train people for technical careers that will plug skills gaps. The new Institutes of Technology, in locations including Blackpool, Derby, Salford and Essex, will help deliver the skilled workforce businesses need and support people of all ages to get better jobs and fulfil their potential. This takes the total to 21 Institutes of Technology, delivering on the government's manifesto commitment.

People looking to upskill or retrain will have access to more than 100 short courses starting from September 2022, lasting between 6 weeks to a year, helping to fit training

around their lives. More than 20 universities and colleges will offer the courses in subjects where there are skills shortages such as digital, Net Zero, Education, STEM and Healthcare, and offering an alternative to studying a traditional three-year degree. Student finance will be available to students taking the courses, marking the next step in the development of the government's Lifelong Learning Entitlement which, from 2025, will provide individuals with a loan entitlement to be the equivalent of four years of post-18 education they can use flexibly over their lifetime.

The Office for Students has made awards totalling £128 million to 100 successful further and higher education providers who will lead projects to modernise facilities following the outcomes of the Office for Students' Strategic Priorities Grant 2021/22 capital bidding exercise, with a particular focus on STEM and supporting the disadvantaged. Two examples of successful projects include funding for Nottingham College to create a new Laboratory Science and Innovation Centre to expand their training offer, and funding to Roehampton University to deliver a new Healthcare hub to support more higher technical, apprenticeships and flexible modular training. Details of all the successful projects can be found on the Office for Students' website.

On 17 December 2021, we also opened the bidding for a share of over £150 million from the fourth wave of the T Level Capital Fund, for colleges, schools and sixth forms delivering T Levels. The funding will be used to refurbish buildings and build brand new facilities, including creating training kitchens for catering students, studios for media students, and facilities for agricultural courses such as trainee milking parlours or labs to learn about land science in readiness for students starting courses in September 2023. The fund will also enable providers to buy up to date, industry standard equipment.

A further 12 projects totalling £16 million supported by wave 3 of the T Level Capital Fund were also announced, bringing the total to 77 projects that will provide new buildings and facilities for students studying T Levels from September 2022. Successful projects include Gateway Sixth Form College in Leicester, awarded funding to create a dedicated health suite and a central learning resource space for students, and UTC South Durham, awarded funding to extend their engineering hall, to include two engineering workshops and an IT suite.

The Chancellor announced in the Budget that an extra £1.6 billion would be invested in 16-19 education and training by 2024-25 compared with 2021-22. The Department for Education has published details of how £615 million of that funding will be invested next year, resulting in the per student funding being boosted by over 8% from £4,188 in 2021/22 to £4,542 in 2022/23. This includes funding for an extra 40 hours of education per student to help them catch up on lost learning due to the pandemic. On top of this, funding for high value courses - those that deliver the skills that the country needs and which can lead to higher wages for students – and high cost courses including building and construction will also be increased.

The measures announced on 17 December will help level up opportunities for people and communities across England, and ensuring we have the skilled workforce needed to boost our economy.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Covid-19 update

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Sajid Javid):

[[HCWS517](#)]

The UK's COVID-19 vaccination programme continues to protect the nation against the virus. In light of the Omicron variant, we have accelerated the deployment of the vaccination programme to make vaccine accessible to all those eligible. Thanks to the remarkable work of the NHS, volunteers, the armed forces and everyone involved in the vaccination programme, more than 34 million boosters and third doses have now been administered in the UK. On Thursday 30 December, we reached the target we set to offer all eligible adults in England a boosters by the end of December. However, our fight against the virus does not stop there and we urge everyone to play their part in protecting the country by taking up the vaccine and booster offer without delay.

Following emerging data on the spread of the Omicron variant and careful consideration of available data, the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has published further advice on the COVID-19 vaccination programme. Her Majesty's Government (HMG) has accepted this advice and all four parts of the UK intend to follow the JCVI's advice.

At this time, the JCVI has advised the following[1]:

1. A two-dose primary course of Pfizer vaccine should be offered to children aged 5 to 11 who are either in an at-risk group as per the UK Health Security Agency's (UKHSA's) Green Book or who are a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed.
2. Booster vaccination eligibility should be expanded to include all those aged 16 and 17 not already included in an at-risk group, no earlier than three months after completion of their primary course.
3. Booster vaccination should be offered to 12 to 15-year-olds who are either in an at-risk group (as per Table 4 of UKHSA's Green Book) or who are a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed. Booster vaccine should be offered no earlier than three months after completion of their primary course.
4. Booster vaccination should be offered to those aged 12-15 who are severely immunosuppressed and who have had a third primary dose, no earlier than three months after completion of the third dose.

The NHS is working through updated guidance and will set out how this is going to be operationalised, in the new year.

The JCVI will continue to review the programme and options for maximising health benefits alongside closely monitoring the rapidly evolving data on the Omicron variant of concern.

With the vaccine offer opened to those aged 5 to 11 in an at-risk group and deployment of the extended booster vaccine offer, I am now updating the House on the liabilities HMG has taken on in relation to further vaccine supply via this statement and the

Departmental Minutes containing a description of the liability undertaken. The agreement to provide indemnity with deployment of further booster doses to the population increases the statutory contingent liability of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Given the urgency with which we required JCVI advice and now deployment, we regret that it has not been possible to provide 14 sitting days' notice to consider these issues in advance of announcing the planned extension to the booster programme in the UK.

Deployment of effective vaccines to eligible groups has been and remains a key part of the Government's strategy to manage COVID-19. Willingness to accept the need for appropriate indemnities to be given to vaccine suppliers has helped to secure access to vaccines, with the expected benefits to public health and the economy alike, much sooner than may have been the case otherwise.

Given the exceptional circumstances we are in, and the terms on which developers have been willing to supply a COVID-19 vaccine, we along with other nations have taken a broad approach to indemnification proportionate to the situation we are in.

Even though the COVID-19 vaccines have been developed at pace, at no point and at no stage of development has safety been bypassed. The MHRA approval for use of the currently deployed vaccines clearly demonstrates that these vaccines have satisfied, in full, all the necessary requirements for safety, effectiveness, and quality. We are providing indemnities in the very unexpected event of any adverse reactions that could not have been foreseen through the robust checks and procedures that have been put in place.

I will update the House in a similar manner as and when other COVID-19 vaccines or additional doses of vaccines already in use in the UK are deployed.

HM Treasury has approved the proposal.

[1] [JCVI statement on COVID-19 vaccination of children and young people: 22 December 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jcvi-statement-on-covid-19-vaccination-of-children-and-young-people-22-december-2021)

■ Implementation of Statutory Integrated Care Systems (ICSs)

Minister of State (Minister for Health) (Edward Argar):

[HCWS516]

Since 2018, integrated care systems (ICSs) have been developing more integrated ways of working, bringing together NHS organisations and partners from local government and beyond to plan and provide services around residents' needs as locally as possible. This integrated approach to person-centered care brings together actors in health and social care, alongside local and voluntary partners, to support people to retain their independence, health and wellbeing for longer.

The Health and Care Bill supports the move towards integration by providing measures to put Integrated Care Systems on a statutory footing through the establishment of Integrated Care Boards and Integrated Care Partnerships. The Bill is currently being considered by Parliament and will soon be subject to line-by-line scrutiny at Committee Stage in the House of Lords. It is essential that Parliament is given sufficient time to properly consider the Bill.

Therefore, subject to the passage of the Bill, NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care have continued to plan for the establishment of the proposed Integrated Care Boards. This includes a joint decision to set a target date for the introduction of statutory Integrated Care Systems in July 2022.

Joint working arrangements have been in place at system level for some time and significant steps have already been taken in preparing for the introduction of statutory Integrated Care Boards, if and when the Bill is enacted. This progress towards the proposed statutory Integrated Care Systems will continue in the new year. The target date for establishment of Integrated Care Boards in July 2022 (which, as indicated earlier, is subject to the successful passage of the Bill) will provide greater certainty to systems and staff that are preparing for statutory Integrated Care Systems. NHS England and Improvement will of course continue to support systems with preparing for the proposed statutory Integrated Care Systems.

■ Our vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Patient Safety and Primary Care) (Maria Caulfield): [\[HCWS519\]](#)

Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England was published on 23 December 2021. This sets out our ambitions and next steps for women's health, mapped against what we have been told through the Women's Health Strategy Call for Evidence. It reflects the commitment this government is making to women's health and will set the direction of future work.

The Vision is informed by the evidence we received in our Call for Evidence. This was announced in March this year on International Women's Day, to support the development of the Women's Health Strategy. It ran for 14 weeks to 13th June 2021 and comprised three components:

1. A public survey

We received nearly **100,000 responses** from individuals in England who wanted to share their own experiences, the experiences of a female family member, friend or partner, or their reflections as a healthcare professional.

1. Written submissions

We received **over 400 written responses** from organisations with expertise in women's health which were used to inform the Vision document.

1. Focus groups

We also commissioned focus groups with women to acquire depth of insight. The resulting independent academic report has recently been published on the University of York website and can be found [here](#):

I would like to extend my thanks to every person and organisation who took the time to share their experiences through the Call for Evidence and spread the word about the consultation. It is thanks to these participants that we were able to acquire such rich insights into views on women's health.

Recent progress on women's health

Whilst we have been working to analyse the huge number of responses for the Call for Evidence, we have not waited to take action. In July we published the government response to the Cumberlege report which focussed on how the system listens to women when they raise concerns about their health and safety.

In October, I announced several measures designed to improve menopause care. This included amendments to the charging regulations to reduce the cost burden of HRT for menopausal women and a new UK-wide menopause taskforce which will hold its inaugural meeting shortly.

Earlier this year, we committed to ban the abhorrent practice of virginity testing in our strategy for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls as part of our commitment to safeguard women and girls. In November 2021, the government delivered on this commitment by bringing forward a government amendment to the Health and Care Bill to ban Virginity Testing, which was passed unopposed in the House.

This activity marks a significant improvement in many areas which touch upon women's health. However, there is clearly much more to be done.

Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy and Analytical Report of the Call for Evidence

On 23 December 2021, the government published the analytical report of the Call for Evidence and Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England.

The analytical report of the Call for Evidence sets out the findings from the public survey. This has provided rich insight into women's experiences and priorities for their health and care, and at times makes for sobering reading.

For example

- 84% of respondents said there have been instances when they were not listened to by healthcare professionals.
- Nearly 2 in 3 respondents with a health condition or disability said they do not feel supported by the services available for individuals with their condition or disability
- 58% of respondents said they felt uncomfortable talking about health issues with their workplace and 7% were not sure how they felt. These issues do not affect all women equally. White respondents felt the most comfortable discussing health issues at work (37%), while the Asian and Other ethnic group felt the least comfortable (30% and 29% respectively)

There are no quick and easy solutions to some of the entrenched problems within the system. However, I am determined to make sure that we act on the concerns that women have shared with us. This government and our stakeholders across the system are committed to doing better for women.

Priority topics

Respondents were also given the opportunity to share the conditions which were most important to them. Their responses give us the mandate to look carefully at women's health across the life course and make meaningful change.

The priority topics for women varied by age, broadly aligning with the stage of their life. However, the overall top five topics respondents want to see prioritised for inclusion in the Women's Health Strategy are:

- gynaecological conditions
- fertility, pregnancy, pregnancy loss and post-natal support
- the menopause
- menstrual health; and
- mental health

Insight from the written submissions has also informed the development of the Vision. We will publish a separate report, based on the written evidence submitted by organisations and individuals with expertise in this field, in early 2022.

The Vision

Alongside the analysis of the Call for Evidence, we also published **Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England** which sets out our ambitions for women and girls' health in England.

The phenomenal volume of responses to the Call for Evidence has meant that analysis has taken longer than anticipated. It was essential that we gave the analysis the level of rigour it deserved, in order to understand fully what we have been told by the public.

It was also important to me to share the analysis with parliament and the public as soon as possible and show the clear direction it has given us. As such, we are publishing our Vision now and will follow up with the full Women's Health Strategy in Spring 2022.

The Vision document first sets out our life course approach to women's health, and our thematic priorities which cut across all stages of the life course

On **women's voices**, our ambition is for all women to feel comfortable talking about their health and to no longer face taboos when they do talk about their health. We will also work to better understand the causes of women not feeling listened to make sure any interventions address the root cause.

On **healthcare policies and services**, our ambition is that women can access services that meet their needs across throughout their lives. We want to support local systems to deliver models of care that work for women. We will also work to explore improvements in care for specific conditions where disparities are greatest.

On **information and education**, our ambition is to make sure that all women will have access to high quality information and education from childhood through to adulthood, in school and beyond. Further, clinicians must feel confident to deliver information and high-quality care more broadly to women. To do this, clinicians need to have high quality, relevant training on women's health.

On **health in the workplace**, our ambition is that all women feel supported in the workplace and can reach their full potential at work. We are conducting work relating to the menopause in the workplace which we hope will act as best practice for other conditions.

On **research, evidence and data**, our ambition is to embed routine collection of demographic data of participants in research trials to make sure that our research reflects the society we serve. We are also committed to looking into the gender data gaps further and identifying where there are differences in conditions between genders.

Priority areas

In addition to these themes, the Vision sets out our ambitions on priority conditions where the call for evidence highlighted particular issues or opportunities. These include but are not limited to:

- menstrual health and gynaecological conditions
- fertility, pregnancy, pregnancy loss and postnatal support
- the menopause
- healthy ageing and long-term conditions
- mental health; and
- the health impacts of violence against women and girls

On this last point on violence against women and girls, I was pleased to be able to announce on the 23 December 2021 the immediate action that this government is taking to protect women and girls from harm.

When the government published the **tackling violence against women and girls strategy** earlier this year, we committed to establishing an expert panel to review whether we should ban hymenoplasty. This is a procedure to reconstruct the hymen, with the intended purpose of causing bleeding during sexual intercourse.

We established the independent panel due to concerns that the uptake for the procedure, which although it is regulated, is intrinsically linked to virginity testing, and stems from the same repressive attitudes towards a women's sexuality and the concept of virginity.

In December, the Panel recommended to Government that hymenoplasty should be banned.

As announced before Christmas, the Government agreed with this recommendation and will introduce legislation ban hymenoplasty as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Next Steps for developing the Women's Health Strategy

In Spring 2022 we will publish the full Women's Health Strategy, building on our Vision and ambition, and set out in detail our plans for meeting the specific health needs of women throughout the different stages of their lives.

To support this, we will appoint **the first ever Women's Health Ambassador for England**.

This person will focus on raising the profile for women's health, increasing awareness of taboo topics, and bringing in a range of collaborative voices to develop the Women's Health Strategy.

The Ambassador will develop networks across and outside of government to champion women's health and break down stigmas which surround particular areas of women's health.

I am pleased to announce that we will shortly be launching an expression of interest for this role. I would encourage applications from candidates who have experience in the sector and a passion for women's health. I look forward to working with the post-holder to drive forward this agenda even further as we develop the Strategy.

This Vision speaks to the commitment of this government to women's health. It sets the direction for the strategy we are developing over the coming months. In Spring 2022, we will publish the full Women's Health Strategy building on our Vision and ambition and set out in detail our plans for specific health needs that women experience throughout their lives.

I am excited about the coming months and what we will be able to achieve in the long-term. The publication of Our Vision for Women's Health and the analytical publication of the Call for Evidence marks a key milestone in women's health.

I am confident that based on the evidence and a clear vision, we will be able to make progress on the issues that matter most to women, in developing the Strategy for Spring 2022.

TRANSPORT

■ Transport for London Funding Extension December 2021

Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):

[\[HCWS514\]](#)

Following my statement to the House on 13 December, I am updating the House on a seven-week extension of the current Transport for London funding settlement that was due to expire on 17 December 2021. The Mayor of London and I have agreed to extend the current settlement to 4 February 2022.

We have thus far supported London with over £4bn funding and these extraordinary funding settlements for Transport for London recognise the reliance of London's transport network on fare revenue, and Government's commitment now and in the future to mitigating loss of fare revenue because of the pandemic. This extension has provided certainty to Transport for London and to Londoners over the Christmas and New Year period whilst also allowing Government and Transport for London to monitor and adapt to the impact of the Omicron variant of the virus.

The extended settlement will continue to support the capital and its transport network – on the same terms as previously agreed - until 4 February, when Government expects there to be a new funding settlement in place. The extension letter also includes

amendments to the current settlement relating to fares and the Hammersmith bridge ferry.

On 15 December, the Department for Transport received further information and specificity from the Mayor of London relating to his proposals, set out in his letter of 8 December, to raise new income of between £0.5bn and £1bn in line with the commitment agreed under the June 2021 emergency settlement. The original deadline for this information was 12 November. Following receipt of the Mayor of London's 15 December letter, the Government is satisfied that at this stage he has provided sufficient information on his proposals. We have therefore agreed to extend the current Transport for London Settlement from 17 December 2021 to 4 February 2022 so that Government is able to fully consider these proposals.

The Government is committed to supporting London and the transport network on which it depends, whilst balancing that with supporting the national transport network as a whole.

TREASURY

■ Economy Update

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak):

[\[HCWS513\]](#)

Today I can inform the House that I have asked the Office for Budget Responsibility to produce an economic and fiscal forecast for Wednesday 23 March 2022, as per the Charter for Budget Responsibility. The Budget Responsibility and National Audit Act 2011 states that the OBR must produce a forecast on at least two occasions each financial year.

Today I have also laid before Parliament an updated Charter for Budget Responsibility. The updated Charter sets out the new fiscal framework announced at Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021.

The new fiscal rules will allow the government to continue funding first-class public services and drive economic growth through record investment, while ensuring that debt falls over the medium term.

In accordance with the Budget Responsibility and National Audit Act 2011, the Charter was first published in draft on 27 October as it includes modified guidance to the Office for Budget Responsibility. No further changes have been made to the updated Charter since it was published in draft.

A debate and votes in the House of Commons on the updated Charter and the level of the welfare cap will be scheduled in due course.