



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 6 January 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:51 P.M., 06 January 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	4	CHURCH COMMISSIONERS	11
ATTORNEY GENERAL	4	■ Clergy: Discipline	11
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	4	DEFENCE	11
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	4	■ Afghanistan: Refugees	11
■ Business: Public Bodies	4	■ Ajax Vehicles: ICT	13
■ Committee on Climate Change	5	■ Ajax Vehicles: Safety	14
■ Copyright: Publishing	5	■ Iraq: Armed Forces	14
■ Dementia: Research	6	■ Russian Military Studies Centre	14
■ Electronic Commerce: Intellectual Property	6	DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	15
■ Future Fund: Greater London and North East	6	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	15
■ Horizon Europe	6	EDUCATION	17
■ Industry: Technology	7	■ Advisory Services: Families	17
■ Innovate UK: Grants	8	■ Children: Bullying	17
■ Life Sciences: Finance	8	■ Children: Social Services	18
■ Manufacturing Industries: Vaccination	9	■ Department for Education: Correspondence	18
■ Pfizer: Contracts	9	■ Equality	20
■ Research: Investment	9	■ Foster Care	20
■ Utilities: Insolvency	10	■ Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill	21
■ Vaccine Manufacturing and Innovation Centre	10	■ Higher Education: Finance	22
		■ Pre-school Education: Labour Turnover	23

■ Pre-school Education: Labour Turnover and Recruitment	24	■ Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva: Research	38
■ Pupils: Disability	24	■ Foetal Death: Registration	38
■ Schools: Mental Health Services	25	■ General Practitioners: Yorkshire and the Humber	38
■ Students: Loans	25	■ Members: Correspondence	39
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	26	■ Motor Neurone Disease: Research	39
■ Air Pollution	26	■ Princess Royal Hospital Telford: Accident and Emergency Departments	39
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	27	■ Protective Clothing: Coronavirus	40
■ Begum Khaleida Zia	27	■ Schools: Coronavirus	40
■ Colombia: Human Rights	27	■ Social Services: Older People	40
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	28	■ Social Services: South East	41
■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff	29	HOME OFFICE	41
■ International Climate Fund	29	■ Afghanistan: Visas	41
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	30	■ Antisocial Behaviour	42
■ Ambulance Services: Yorkshire and the Humber	30	■ Asylum: Afghanistan	43
■ Breast Cancer: Research	31	■ Educational Exchanges: Passports	43
■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome	31	■ Immigration: Afghanistan	44
■ Coronavirus	32	■ Members: Correspondence	44
■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	32	■ Visas: Hospitality Sector	44
■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing	33	TRANSPORT	45
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	33	■ Bus Services: Finance	45
■ Dental Services	35	■ Transport for London: Finance	45
■ Dental Services: Ilford North	35	TREASURY	46
■ Dentistry: Assessments	35	■ Treasury: Official Hospitality	46
■ Dentistry: Hendon	36	WORK AND PENSIONS	46
■ Dentistry: Mental Health	37	■ Offshore Industry: Continental Shelf	46
■ Dentistry: Recruitment	37	■ Work Capability Assessment	46
■ Down Syndrome Bill	37		

WRITTEN STATEMENTS	48	LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	52
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	48	■ Protecting the Integrity of our Elections	52
■ Departmental Contingent Liability Notification: Energy Supply Company Special Administration Regime	48	PRIME MINISTER	54
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	48	■ Annual Report of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner	54
■ Update on annual fisheries negotiations	48	TRANSPORT	55
JUSTICE	51	■ Civil Aviation Authority 2021 Progress Report	55
■ Outdoor Marriages and Civil Partnerships	51		

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

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Damian Collins:

[904915]

To ask the Attorney General, what recent assessment she has made of the CPS's ability to request and receive data from social media platforms in (a) general and (b) cases involving a deceased child.

Alex Chalk:

Requesting data from social media platforms for use in criminal investigations – which may of course lead to the CPS bringing charges – is an investigative matter for the police, who will have to decide if that's an appropriate line of inquiry.

Where investigators are unable to obtain data held overseas themselves, CPS prosecutors may draft and issue requests for Mutual Legal Assistance from international counterparts. That capability is further enhanced by powers created by the Government in the Crime (Overseas Production Order) Act 2019.

Alan Brown:

[904921]

To ask the Attorney General, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the compatibility of the Nationality and Borders Bill with international law.

Suella Braverman:

Any request for my advice is subject to the Law Officers' Convention and this includes discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the compatibility of proposed legislation with international law.

The UK prides itself on its leadership within the international system, and that it discharges its international obligations in good faith.

Either the Solicitor General or I attend the Parliamentary Business and Legislation Committee, which scrutinises all of the government's legislation before it reaches Parliament.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business: Public Bodies

Chi Onwurah:

[94372]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Innovation Strategy, what steps has his Department taken to facilitate interactions between businesses and (a) UK Research and Innovation and (b) other public bodies.

George Freeman:

In the development of the Innovation Strategy, the Department worked across Government, engaging at both Ministerial and official level and with over 400 businesses and organisations across the whole of the UK.

The Innovation Expert Group, which was announced as part of the R&D Roadmap in 2020, featured representatives from innovative UK businesses and business-focused trade bodies. It played a key role in supporting the development of the UK Innovation Strategy by facilitating conversations between officials from across Whitehall and a broad spectrum of UK businesses. The discussions generated continue to help us to refine government's innovation policy thinking.

Since the Innovation Strategy was published, the Department has continued a high level of engagement with businesses.

In addition, in early 2022 and as announced in the Innovation Strategy, we will establish the Business Innovation Forum with representatives from the UK's largest R&D intensive businesses, UK startups and scaleups, and experts in the funding and commercialisation of innovation. The forum will galvanise action from the business community and provide an opportunity for officials from UKRI and other public bodies to interact with key innovation stakeholders in addition to the interaction they already undertake with industry.

The Department will also continue to facilitate bilateral conversations with UK businesses on innovation policy this year.

■ Committee on Climate Change**Geraint Davies:**[\[93693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he had with the Climate Change Committee on the report by its UK Health Expert Advisory Group report entitled Sustainable Health Equity: Achieving a Net Zero UK before publication of the Sixth Carbon Budget in December 2020.

Greg Hands:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to him on 10th December 2021 to Question [88605](#).

■ Copyright: Publishing**Sarah Olney:**[\[93848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of an international copyright exhaustion regime on the UK's book industry; and what plans he has to publish that assessment.

George Freeman:

The Government recently held a consultation on the UK's future exhaustion of intellectual property rights regime. The potential impact of an international exhaustion

regime on the UK's book industry is likely to form part of the overall assessment, alongside the potential effect on other sectors of the economy. The Government will provide an update on this consultation in due course.

■ **Dementia: Research**

Chi Onwurah: [\[94367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding the Government is planning to invest in dementia research in the financial year 2022-23.

George Freeman:

As we announced in November, the Government will invest £375 million in neurodegenerative disease research over the next five years to fund projects into a range of diseases including dementia.

■ **Electronic Commerce: Intellectual Property**

Sarah Olney: [\[93847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions and communications he has had with online marketplaces with regards to the UK's exhaustion of intellectual property rights regime.

George Freeman:

Ministers at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy have spoken to a wide variety of stakeholders with regards to the UK's exhaustion of intellectual property rights regime.

■ **Future Fund: Greater London and North East**

Chi Onwurah: [\[94361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much and what proportion of Future Fund: Breakthrough allocated to date has been to businesses in (a) the North East, (b) England, and (c) Greater London.

George Freeman:

Future Fund: Breakthrough has announced two investments to date, both in England. One of the companies is based in London and the other in Bristol. Details of the amounts invested are commercially confidential.

■ **Horizon Europe**

Chi Onwurah: [\[94370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has published alternative plans to full association with the EU Horizon programme.

George Freeman:

The Government has always been clear that our priority is to support the UK's research and development sector and maintain strong international collaborations and we will continue to do this in all future scenarios.

As announced in the 2021 Spending Review, in the event that the UK's association to Horizon Europe is not formalised by the EU, the funding allocated to Horizon association will go to UK government R&D programmes, including those to support international partnerships.

In November, the Government announced a guarantee to provide a financial safety net for successful UK applicants to Horizon Europe, while the government continues to push to formalise our association as soon as possible. At the same time, I published an open letter to the R&D sector setting out the UK's commitment to association, but also our priorities for supporting the sector in a scenario where association proves not possible. These build on the UK Research and Development Roadmap, which sets out a solid foundation for our plans in different scenarios.

■ Industry: Technology**Chi Onwurah:**[\[94369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what growth-stage support is available to the UK's tech sector.

George Freeman:

The tech sector benefits from a range of support measures, including research grants and loans from Innovate UK; networks and industry contacts accessed through Catapults; and the government's new 'Help to Grow' schemes that will help smaller businesses across the UK learn new skills, reach new customers and boost profits.

Companies at all stages of growth, including those operating in the tech sector, can access the advice and support they need through the Business Support Helpline, the British Business Bank's finance hub, and government services available through GOV.UK.

Government support for the tech sector is coordinated by the Digital Economy Council, working with private sector bodies including Tech Nation and Tech UK. Tech Nation supports tech entrepreneurs at every stage of the business lifecycle. Its growth-stage programme, Upscale, is now in its seventh year and is providing 60 hours of expert support and coaching, spread over six months, to a cohort of 30 founders and senior leadership teams.

The British Business Bank crowds-in private capital to the tech sector through its commercial subsidiary, British Patient Capital (BPC), and through regional funds in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, the Midlands and the North of England. In announcing its 2021 results, BPC noted that 26 of its 51 fund investments were in the 'venture growth' space, defined as funds that invest at Series B onwards.

In addition to its own investments, BPC also runs Future Fund: Breakthrough, a £375 million programme focused on growth-stage companies. The fund announced its first tech investment on 17 November 2021, in the £60 million Series D round of Bristol-based Ultraleap, a provider of machine-learning-based hand tracking software.

■ Innovate UK: Grants

Chi Onwurah: [\[94359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will provide details of Innovate UK's grants, broken down by (a) amount, (b) recipient type, including company size bands, academia, research organisation, (c) model, including collaborative or single company, and (d) support level.

George Freeman:

Details of Innovate UK grants are published on their website and can be viewed here:

[Innovate UK funded projects since 2004 – UKRI.](#)

■ Life Sciences: Finance

Chi Onwurah: [\[94371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 2 December 2021 to Question 79368, what progress has been made on attracting investment for Life Sciences Investment Programme.

George Freeman:

There has been a strong response to the Life Sciences Investment Programme request for proposals, which was published on 7 July 2021. The British Business Bank is holding talks with fund managers who expressed an interest, and the first investments are expected to be announced during the first half of 2022.

Chi Onwurah: [\[94373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding the Government will invest in skills in biosciences in the financial year 2022-23.

George Freeman:

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

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), funds a variety of doctoral training opportunities in partnership with others, details of these can be viewed on the UKRI website here: [Studentships – UKRI.](#)

The Department for Education have also asked the Office for Students to reform the Strategic Priorities Grant for 2021-22. These reforms included the reallocation of high-cost subject funding towards the provision of high-cost subjects that support the NHS and wider healthcare policy; science, engineering and technology subjects; and specific labour market needs. As a result, the total funding for high-cost subjects,

such as medicine, engineering and other high-cost subjects, is 12% (£81m) higher in 21/22 compared to 20/21.

■ **Manufacturing Industries: Vaccination**

Chi Onwurah: [\[94360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential economic effect of making vaccine manufacturing one of the National Security and Investment Bill's 17 key sectors.

George Freeman:

The Government consulted on the 17 areas of the economy in which certain acquisitions will be subject to mandatory notification under the National Security and Investment Act 2021. These are specified in the National Security and Investment Act 2021 (Notifiable Acquisition) (Specification of Qualifying Entities) Regulations 2021. Vaccine manufacturing does not feature as an area in its own right but some of the activities involved in vaccine manufacturing are addressed.

■ **Pfizer: Contracts**

Gareth Thomas: [\[94279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason the Government agreed to (a) keep confidential and (b) hold outside of the UK any dispute with Pfizer on the contract that company holds for producing covid-19 vaccines; and if he will make a statement.

George Freeman:

The Government has agreed to keep confidential any dispute(s) that arise with Pfizer because of commercial sensitivity.

■ **Research: Investment**

Chi Onwurah: [\[94374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to page 72 of the UK Innovation Strategy, published in July 2021, what steps his Department has taken to improve the regional distribution of private R&D investment.

George Freeman:

The 2021 Spending Review set out the Government's plan to increase public R&D spending to £22 billion a year by 2026/27 and restates our target for UK economy-wide R&D investment to reach 2.4% of GDP by 2027. Private investment forms around 2/3rd of current activity, so it is only by working with innovative businesses and funders from the private sector that we will reach 2.4%. The Innovation Strategy commits to using levers such as procurement, better regulation and the identification of key technologies as a means to create the conditions for private sector investment in innovation across the country.

We want to encourage businesses to invest in local economies and communities. The Innovation Strategy also outlined our thinking on how to grow innovation clusters, and to ensure that research and innovation benefits the economy and society across the UK through both systemic and targeted measures that respond to the varying needs of places. It announced £127 million in new investment through the Strength In Places Fund. This fund has pioneered bringing together consortia of diverse local actors, including business, to develop the R&D capabilities of places across the UK to improve local economic growth. The Government is investing over £300 million in 12 major projects in nations and regions across the UK, attracting an additional £340 million of investment including from private firms.

The forthcoming Levelling Up White Paper will take a comprehensive place-based approach to economic growth and will set out more detail on how the Government will support levelling up through R&D.

■ Utilities: Insolvency

Alan Brown:

[93786]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will list which energy retail companies have become insolvent in 2021; on which date each of those companies stopped trading; how many customers were transferred as result of those insolvencies; how many customers remain to be transferred as result of those insolvencies; how much consumer credit has been transferred or returned to customers; what administration costs were associated with the transfer of those customers; what other costs were associated with those insolvencies and transfer of customers; and what the value is of any outstanding renewables obligations connected to those insolvencies.

Greg Hands:

Data on the energy retail companies that have become insolvent during 2021, including the date they stopped trading and the number of affected customers is available on Ofgem's website at <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/news-and-views/blog/how-youre-protected-when-energy-firms-collapse>. All affected customers' credit balances have been protected. Administrative and additional insolvency costs are a commercial matter for the businesses involved. Ofgem will publish 2021 data for Renewables Obligation payments in 2022.

■ Vaccine Manufacturing and Innovation Centre

Chi Onwurah:

[94363]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to reinvest any investment recouped from the sale of Vaccine Manufacture and Innovation Centre into life sciences.

George Freeman:

Officials are working closely with VMIC and other third parties to ensure that the UK retains a strong domestic vaccine manufacturing capability to contribute to our response to COVID-19 and resilience to other future health emergencies. We believe

VMIC will play an important role in the UK's vaccine ecosystem. At present, these discussions are commercially sensitive.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[94364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 14 December 2021 to Question 89571, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of intervening in the sale of VMIC on the grounds of maintaining the UK's national capability to tackle public health emergencies.

George Freeman:

VMIC is a private company. Mergers and acquisitions of private companies are primarily commercial matters for the parties concerned and the Government does not comment on the details of individual transactions. We remain strongly committed to support UK leadership in vaccines.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ Clergy: Discipline

Rachael Maskell:

[\[96971\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what progress has been made with the Clergy Discipline Measure review.

Andrew Selous:

The Lambeth Working Group on the Review of the Clergy Discipline Measure, chaired by the former Bishop at Lambeth, presented its final paper to the General Synod in July 2021. That paper recommended that the Clergy Discipline Measure be replaced by new legislation which provides for a wider approach to issues of discipline, including the creation of a system which allows for the determination of lesser types of misconduct and grievance. This work is now being taken forward by a smaller Implementation Group, chaired by the Bishop of Worcester. That Group intends to finalise their proposals over the coming months and consult with various interested bodies between February and May 2022 with a view to presenting detailed legislative proposals to General Synod in July 2022.

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

John Healey:

[\[93702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Statement of changes to the Immigration Rules published on 14 December 2021, HC 913, if she will make a comparative assessment of roles that meet eligibility requirements for the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme under (a) the criteria of furthering the UK's

military and national security objectives and (b) previous ARAP criteria for assistance to locally employed staff.

James Heappey:

[Holding answer 5 January 2022]: The amendments to the immigration rules, as laid by the Home Secretary, are intended to ensure greater clarity and consistency for potential applicants, and that ARAP policy is reflected accurately. As such, there has been no substantive change in the ARAP eligibility criteria. Furthermore, the amended immigration rules will not apply retrospectively, and as such only applicants that have not yet undergone eligibility assessments will be assessed under the new rules.

John Healey:

[\[93704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many individual Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy applicants have been relocated to the UK each month since April 2021.

James Heappey:

[Holding answer 5 January 2022]: The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) has been one of the most generous in the world, under which circa.1,300 Locally Employed Staff (LES) and others who supported the UK mission in Afghanistan have been relocated to the UK since April 2021, with a large proportion being evacuated on over 100 RAF flights as part of Operation PITTING.

We owe a debt of gratitude to all Afghan nationals who risked their lives working alongside UK forces. For this reason, the ARAP scheme is not time-limited and will endure, facilitating the relocation of eligible Afghans and their families, from third countries if possible.

As at 16 December 2021, the number of ARAP eligible principles relocated by month is shown in the table below:

APRIL	0
May	1
June	24
July	188
August (inc Op PITTING)	981
September	11
October	30
November	70
December	47
Total	1,352

As at 16 December 2021 the overall total of ARAP eligible people (families and dependants) who have been relocated to the UK since April 2021 is:

PRIOR TO OP PITTING	1,978
During Op PITTING	Approximately 5,000
Since Op PITTING	674

Brendan O'Hara: [\[94406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of applications to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy made under Category 4 since the scheme was established as of 14 December 2021 have been (a) considered eligible and (b) considered eligible and called forward to the airport and (c) considered eligible, called forward to the airport and resettled in the UK.

James Heappey:

[Holding answer 5 January 2022]: The ARAP Scheme has been one of the most generous in the world, under which over 99,000 applications have been received and circa.1,300 Locally Employed Staff (LES) have been relocated to the UK since April.

Those Afghans who were called forward to the Airport have had both their eligibility for ARAP confirmed and successfully undergone the Home Office visa process. However, there is not a separate Category 4 application process, all applicants must apply through the ARAP Scheme application form and a dedicated caseworker will confirm which category applies to the applicant upon deciding eligibility. As such, the information cannot be provided in the format requested.

■ **Ajax Vehicles: ICT**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[93683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what (a) Central Processing Unit, (b) Graphic Processing Unit and (c) storage technology is being used on the AJAX Armoured Fighting Vehicle; and when that technology was purchased.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ajax Electronic Architecture is a distributed multi-processor system, with a variety of component suppliers. Ajax has an Intel Central Processing Unit (CPU) and Xilinx Graphic Processing Unit (GPU). The storage technology is solid state and designed to protect sensitive data stored on the system.

It is the responsibility of General Dynamics as the prime contractor to deliver vehicles that meet the Ministry of Defence's requirements, including the associated technology. The processor and storage architectures are designed to be scalable and have built-in growth capability. The CPU/GPU/storage technology was purchased progressively from 2015 to 2020 to meet contracted requirements and future growth capacity.

■ Ajax Vehicles: Safety**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[93721\]](#)

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; which office within his Department issued a safety notice for AJAX vehicles in December 2020 which stated that design upgrades were required to reduce vibration.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ajax Vehicle Demonstration and Manufacture Delivery Team of Defence Equipment & Support issued the safety notice for Ajax Vehicles in December 2018, stating that design upgrades were required to reduce vibration.

■ Iraq: Armed Forces**Andrew Bowie:**[\[94458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the threat posed to UK forces by pro-Iran militia in Iraq.

James Heappey:

Iranian-inspired militia activity in Iraq poses an ongoing threat to Coalition forces. We have been clear that these attacks, and the threat of the attacks, harm Iraq's peace, stability and prosperity. We continue to work with the Government of Iraq to promote stability and reduce the threat of further attacks by these groups.

■ Russian Military Studies Centre**Martin Docherty-Hughes:**[\[93769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what support his Department (a) is providing and (b) has plans to provide to the Russian Military Studies Centre.

James Heappey:

The Russian Military Studies Centre remains a valuable and unique resource to Defence. The archive of books and journals is housed at the Defence Academy in Shrivenham, with support including direction and funding of cataloguing activity, ongoing provision of subscriptions to digital journals, and librarian services to support journal access and management. Defence has committed £63,000 in 2021 to the archive.

Looking forward, the Defence Academy have recently commissioned a detailed study of this capability, alongside their other library facilities, to find new ways of best utilising the archive to assist in understanding the Russian military within a broader, integrated reference capability. The first phase of this study is set to deliver in the early part of 2022.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Andrew Bowie:**[\[904873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with Ofcom and broadcasters on supporting Gaelic language television.

Julia Lopez:

The Government has a strong record of demonstrating its commitment to minority language broadcasting to ensure that our broadcasting sector services all audiences of the UK nations and regions.

In particular, the government has embedded a duty to regional and minority languages within the BBC's general duties under the current Charter, with a further set of responsibilities in the Framework Agreement.

Ministers regularly meet Ofcom and broadcasters to discuss a wide range of issues.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[904874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if her Department will take steps to promote the singing of the national anthem in the UK.

Chris Philp:

Although it's not the place of the government to mandate the singing of the National Anthem, we are delighted that it is regularly sung at occasions throughout the UK such as major sporting events, the Last Night of the Proms and other events at which Members of the Royal Family are present, and of course schools are also free to promote the singing of the National Anthem. The Government supports the singing of the Anthem at any appropriate occasion.

Ruth Cadbury:[\[904875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure that those responsible for the collapse of Football Index are held to account.

Chris Philp:

The Gambling Commission has revoked the licence of Football Index's operator, BetIndex. It has also referred it to the Insolvency Service to consider whether directors breached fraud or insolvency laws.

The Insolvency Service investigates allegations of Directors misconduct and they can conduct criminal investigations against those suspected of committing criminal offences.

Senior members of the company have also surrendered their Personal Management Licences.

Christian Wakeford: [\[904876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent progress her Department has made on improving online safety.

Chris Philp:

The Online Safety Bill will drive a step-change in online safety by holding tech companies to account.

Following the conclusion of the pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Bill, we are carefully considering the Joint Committee's recommendations and thank the Committee for its work.

The Government is committed to introducing the Bill as soon as possible.

David Simmonds: [\[904877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to help support grassroots sports initiatives.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sport and physical activity are vital for our physical and mental health, and should be front and centre as we build back better from the pandemic.

That's why Sport England has invested over £1.5 billion of funding in developing grassroots sport since April 2016, including £120,535 of support in his constituency since March 2020.

At the recent Spending Review, the government set out our commitment to grassroots sports, investing £205 million to build or transform up to 8,000 multi-use sports facilities; £21.9 million to refurbish park tennis courts; and up to £30 million per year to increase access to school facilities and improve PE teacher training.

Andrew Selous: [\[904878\]](#)

What recent discussions she has had with representatives of the UK film industry on that sector's compliance with health and safety legislation.

Julia Lopez:

The Government is dedicated to improving the creative industries, upskilling individuals, and promoting health and safety.

My department recognises the importance of the film industry's compliance with relevant health and safety legislation and we engage regularly with the sector, including through the British Film Institute.

EDUCATION

■ Advisory Services: Families

Dame Margaret Hodge:

[\[93676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has plans to (a) maintain funding to and (b) extend the contract for Family Rights Group's family advice service beyond March 2022.

Will Quince:

Departmental officials recently wrote to the Family Rights Group stating our intention, subject to internal approvals and business planning, to extend the family and friends advice service contract by 18 months. We expect to give confirmation of our decision early in 2022.

■ Children: Bullying

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[93772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made a recent assessment of the economic impact over the course of a person's life associated with childhood bullying for (a) women and (b) men.

Will Quince:

The department knows from research that childhood bullying does have a long-term effect over the course of a person's life. We have not made a specifically quantified assessment of the economic impact, but the effects of bullying are recognised in a wide range of studies.

In general, mental health and wellbeing are the key factors to be impacted by bullying. The effects can present themselves in many different ways, such as depression or anxiety, and these effects can be long lasting. Evidence also suggests that bullying is likely to have a negative impact on other educational outcomes such as engagement and participation. This means that preventing and tackling bullying can both reduce the costs associated with mental ill health and help realise the benefits associated with educational participation and attainment.

Schools can play a central role in preventing and tackling bullying. That is why the department has ensured teachers have the power to tackle behaviour issues and provided guidance and support for schools on activity that can prevent it:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>.

We are also making sure that all children in England will learn about respectful relationships, in person and online, as part of new mandatory relationships, sex and health education. This includes content on the different types of bullying, the impact it has, the responsibility of bystanders, and how to get help.

As part of Anti-Bullying Week, the department confirmed funding for five leading organisations, worth over £1 million in total, to support schools and colleges in championing tolerance and respect as part of their responsibility to tackle all forms

bullying. These projects will support our aim to reduce incidences and the impact of bullying on all pupils, with a particular focus on specific protected characteristics and help us develop our evidence base further.

■ Children: Social Services

Helen Hayes:

[\[93821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the spread of the omicron variant of covid-19, whether his Department has issued updated guidance to children's social care providers on mitigating measures to prevent the spread of covid-19.

Will Quince:

The department published updated guidance for children's social care providers on 15 December.

The guidance includes revisions in line with the introduction of 'Plan B' for England. This prioritises measures which can help control the transmission of COVID-19, while seeking to minimise economic and social impacts, and is in line with the measures set out in the government's formal 'COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan 2021'.

■ Department for Education: Correspondence

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[92907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many items of correspondence with Ministers in his Department from (a) hon Members in England, (b) councillors in England, and (c) all other members of the public in England, has been (i) received and (ii) sent in each of the last 48 months.

Michelle Donelan:

For the 48 months between 1 December 2017 and 30 November 2021 the Department for Education received 62,645 items of ministerial correspondence and responded to 49,831 items. The number of items received and sent differ as the received figure includes duplicated requests or follow ups, and items responded to after 30 November 2021.

Correspondence received from hon. Members, Councillors, and members of the public [1]

YEAR	TOTAL	HON. MEMBERS [2]	COUNCILLORS [3]	PUBLIC
2017[4]	1,056	801	6	231
2018	11,738	8,314	72	3,116
2019	9,037	6,189	66	2,584
2020	24,009	19,663	48	3,855
2021[5]	16,805	13,281	36	3,042
Total	62,645	48,248	228	12,828

Correspondence sent to hon. Members, Councillors, and members of the public

YEAR	TOTAL	HON. MEMBERS [6]	COUNCILLORS [7]	PUBLIC
2017[8]	959	772	3	170
2018	9,632	7,369	52	2,072
2019	7,295	5,427	48	1,710
2020	15,567	12,968	35	2,307
2021[9]	16,378	13,587	37	2,453
Total	49,831	40,123	175	8,712

[1] Includes all correspondence received, including correspondence where a response was not required

[2] Includes all MPs, data for England only is not available for all years

[3] Data included where the Councillor's title is known

[4] Data covers 1-31 December 2017

[5] Data covers 1 January – 30 November 2021

[6] Includes all MPs, data for England only is not available for all years

[7] Data included where the Councillor's title is known

[8] Data covers 1-31 December 2017

[9] Data covers 1 January – 30 November 2021

■ Equality

Tim Loughton: [\[94270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funds his Department has paid to Diversity Role Models in each of the last five years; and to what projects those funds were allocated.

Will Quince:

During Anti-Bullying Week, the department announced funding to five leading organisations, including Diversity Role Models, to deliver new anti-bullying projects which are aimed at preventing and tackling bullying of all children and young people, including those with protected characteristics. Diversity Role Models has been offered £187,530.00 grant funding for the period from 10 August to 31 March 2022 Further details can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-support-for-schools-to-tackle-bullying>.

In addition to this, across financial years 2016-2020 Diversity Role Models was involved in two projects as part of the Government Equalities Office (then part of the Department for Education) Anti-Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic (HBT) Bullying programme. They received a payment of £57,057.45 in April 2016 and were provided with £131,231.25 to as part of the 2019-20 financial year extension of the Anti-HBT Bullying programme. Further details can be found here: <https://www.diversityrolemodels.org/news/diversity-role-models-appeals-to-schools-to-use-new-funding-to-tackle-bullying-of-lgbt-pupils>.

■ Foster Care

Helen Hayes: [\[93828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of foster care placements which have been unsuccessful in England in 2020-21 by region.

Helen Hayes: [\[93829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of adoption placements which have been unsuccessful in England in 2020-21 by region.

Will Quince:

The department does not hold information on all adoption breakdowns. We do hold information on the numbers of children who return to care who had had a previous permanence arrangement.

Figures by region on the number of children who started to be looked after who had a previous permanence arrangement under an adoption order, are shown in the table. National figures are available in table C1 of the statistical release Children Looked After in England (including Adoption) year ending 31 March 2021 at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions>.

National figures showing the reasons why a child changed placement from a fostering arrangement during a year are also available in the same statistical release in table

B4 via the above link. The figures in the attached table show this breakdown by region.

There are many factors that contribute to instability and placements ending in an unplanned way. Since April 2015 we have been collecting the 'reason for placement changes' as part of the children looked after data return submitted by local authorities. This helps us to better understand why children move, at a national and local level. However, it is not possible to make a full interpretation of whether these placements were successful or not from the categories described.

Some placement moves are necessary, particularly when part of a plan to find a longer term or permanent home for a child. Planned moves are often in the best interests of the child - a first placement may be organised at short notice due to an emergency and may not be a perfect fit, or a child may need a short-term placement for specialist care.

Attachments:

1. 93828_93829_table [93828_93829_looked_after_children_fostered_adopted.xls]

■ **Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill**

Matt Western: [\[93016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will consult (a) Universities UK, (b) the University and College and Union, (c) National Union of Students and (d) other relevant stakeholders when preparing the guidance to support the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill.

Matt Western: [\[93017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate his Department has made of the total cost of the delivery of the functions of the office of the Director of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom proposed in the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill 2021.

Matt Western: [\[93018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has collected data on the number of events cancelled on higher education campuses since the introduction of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill to Parliament.

Matt Western: [\[93019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department plans to publish the guidance accompanying the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill.

Matt Western: [\[93020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to ensure that the guidance accompanying the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

Michelle Donelan:

The Office for Students (OfS) will publish guidance to support the new regulatory framework and complaints scheme, following completion of the Bill's passage. I anticipate that they will consult widely, including with sector representatives and student bodies, as appropriate in due course.

Guidance for higher education providers in England and students' unions of Approved (fee cap) providers in England on the strengthened and additional duties imposed by the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill will be published by the OfS.

The OfS is accountable to the Department for Education and to Parliament. They can also be asked to appear in front of the Education Select Committee.

The Department for Education published an Impact Assessment on 12 May 2021. This sets out the expected costs and benefits of the Bill, including the office of the Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom. This is publicly available here: <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862/publications>.

Data on the number of events cancelled on higher education campuses since the introduction of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill to Parliament is not available. According to Prevent monitoring data, 0.24% of events were cancelled during academic year 2018/19, not necessarily due to freedom of speech concerns. This Bill is not only about event cancellations – it will underpin a culture change across campuses where students, staff and visiting speakers feel able to express lawful views without fear of negative repercussions.

Higher Education: Finance**Matt Western:****[93855]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the funding of the higher education system is protected against increasing inflation.

Matt Western:**[93856]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of rising inflation on the funding of the higher education system since student fees were capped at £9250.

Matt Western:**[93859]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the purchasing power of the maximum amount of undergraduate maintenance loan.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is committed to a sustainable funding model for higher education (HE) that supports high-quality provision, meets the skills needs of the country and maintains the world-class reputation of our HE sector, while sharing its costs fairly between graduates and the general taxpayer.

Tuition fee levels must ensure that universities continue to be properly funded, while representing value for money for students and taxpayers, not all of whom will have wanted to go to university. Maximum tuition fees for standard full-time courses will remain at £9,250 for the 2022/23 academic year. This will be the fifth year in succession that maximum fees have been frozen, providing better value for students and keeping the cost of HE under control.

Since 2012, total income for universities in England has increased by around £7.4 billion in real terms. Income from tuition fees is augmented by the Strategic Priorities Grant, which is paid directly to providers, and totals £1.4 billion in academic year 2021/22. On 19 January 2021, the former Secretary of State for Education wrote to the Office for Students (OfS), setting out his priorities for reform of the Strategic Priorities Grant for the 21/22 academic year. These reforms include the reallocation of high-cost subject funding, towards the provision of high-cost subjects that support the NHS and wider healthcare policy, high-cost STEM subjects, and subjects meeting specific labour market needs. As a result, the total funding for high-cost subjects, such as medicine, engineering and other high-cost subjects, is 12% (£81 million) higher in the 2021/22 academic year compared to 2020/21.

Students from the lowest income families have access to the largest ever amounts of living costs support in cash terms. Maximum grants and loans for living costs, which are a contribution towards a student's living costs while attending a university, have been increased by 3.1% for the current 2021/22 academic year, with a further 2.3% increase announced for 2022/23. Annual increases in maintenance support from government are based on inflation forecasts for the first quarter of the calendar year after the start of the academic year (using the All Items Retail Prices Index less mortgage interest payments (RPI-X) measure) provided by the Office for Budget Responsibility.

■ Pre-school Education: Labour Turnover

Helen Hayes:

[\[93825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the number of early years workers who have left the sector compared to the number of new joiners in each of the past five years.

Will Quince:

The department has published figures on the total number of paid staff working in childcare and early years provision in the 'childcare and early years providers survey: 2021'. This report shows that the total number of paid staff working in childcare and early years provision in 2021 was estimated at 328,500. This figure is somewhat lower than in 2019 (344,100) but in line with the estimates for 2018 (331,400). 2018 is the earliest year for which comparable data are available. No comparable data was collected in 2020 because of reprioritisation as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The average (mean) number of paid staff per early years setting remained similar in 2021 compared with 2019 for all provider types.

We have commissioned qualitative interviews on the theme of early years workforce, including questions about joiners and leavers, and a survey on the impact that COVID-19 is currently having on early years workforce issues. We expect these pieces of research to be published in spring 2022.

■ Pre-school Education: Labour Turnover and Recruitment

Helen Hayes:

[\[93827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps is he taking to support early years providers to recruit and retain staff.

Will Quince:

We are committed to supporting the early years sector to develop a workforce with the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience to deliver high quality early education and childcare, and to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. That is why we have recently announced an additional £153 million in programmes to support workforce development, including increasing the number of places available for early years initial teacher training. We are also developing new early years training routes, including a new National Professional Qualification for Early Years Leadership and support for new apprenticeship routes for careers in the early years.

■ Pupils: Disability

Damien Moore:

[\[94516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that children with long-term illnesses are fully supported throughout their education.

Will Quince:

The government is committed to pupils with medical conditions and long-term illnesses being properly supported at school so that they have full access to education.

In 2014, the government introduced a new duty on schools to support pupils with all medical conditions and has published statutory guidance on this for schools and others. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>.

Schools also have duties under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments and not to discriminate against disabled children, which may include some children with long-term medical conditions, in relation to their access to education and associated services. Schools must make reasonable adjustments to their practices, procedures and policies to ensure that they are not putting those with a disability at a substantial disadvantage compared with their peers.

■ Schools: Mental Health Services

Stephen Morgan:

[\[93879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of schools with Mental Health Support Workers.

Will Quince:

Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges is a priority for the government. The department works closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England/Improvement to introduce Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs), to work closely with schools and colleges. MHSTs are intended to provide early intervention on mild to moderate mental health issues, as well as helping staff within a school or college setting to provide a 'whole school approach' to mental health and wellbeing.

There are now over 280 MHSTs set up or in training. 183 teams are operational and ready to support children and young people in around 3,000 schools and colleges, covering 15% of pupils in England. A further 104 teams are in development with more to be commissioned this year, which will deliver the NHS Long Term Plan commitment to reach 20-25% of pupils a year early (2022). In March 2021, DHSC announced £79 million to significantly expand children's mental health services. Part of this will be spent on speeding up and expanding the provision of Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) in schools and colleges. By 2023, we plan to have a total of around 400 MHSTs, covering an estimated 3 million children and young people (around 35% of pupils in England).

A high-level MHST breakdown by year, region and area can be found here: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/cyp/trailblazers/>.

■ Students: Loans

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[93739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential (a) financial and (b) administrative effect of the lifelong loan entitlement on higher education providers.

Michelle Donelan:

The Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE) will be introduced from 2025, providing individuals with a loan entitlement to the equivalent of four years of post-18 education to use over their lifetime. It will be available for both modules and full years of study at higher technical and degree levels (levels 4 to 6), regardless of whether they are provided in colleges or universities. The government intends that the LLE will create new opportunities for providers to offer more flexible learning pathways for students and develop new business models.

The impact assessment published alongside the Skills and Post-18 Education Bill included a significant section on the LLE. This was produced as part of an ongoing

process, assessing and carefully considering the possible effects of the LLE and how best to deliver it.

We are also actively speaking with higher education and further education providers, including considering the operational implications on their administrative and financial structures. We will continue to engage to understand provider needs as we build towards introduction from 2025.

There is also potential for income gain through new learners entering the system. Although the tuition fee income gains from new learners may be more modest given the shorter duration of courses, large enough numbers could result in a net benefit to higher education and further education providers on average.

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[93740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of access to the lifelong loan scheme for people who have a degree qualification.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is introducing the Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE) from 2025 to support flexible learning, upskilling and retraining. The government is considering conditions of access and eligibility for study funded by the LLE and will be consulting on the detail and scope in due course. We are also working closely with representatives from across the education sector, as well as key delivery bodies to scope and design the necessary system changes.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Air Pollution

Geraint Davies:

[\[93689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the new Ecodesign regulations on reducing exceedances of the new World Health Organisation air quality guidelines for fine particulate matter, PM2.5.

Jo Churchill:

Eco-design stoves will be considered as part of the work being undertaken to support the setting of PM_{2.5} targets through the Environment Act 2021. Evidence will be published alongside a consultation on proposed targets in early 2022 and further analysis will be undertaken to inform the development of Environmental Improvement Plans once targets are set.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Begum Khaleda Zia**

Stephen Kinnock: [\[96884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations she has made to her Bangladeshi counterpart on the deteriorating health of former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and access for her to adequate healthcare.

Stephen Kinnock: [\[96885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations she has made to her Bangladeshi counterpart on allowing the former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to travel abroad to access healthcare treatment.

Amanda Milling:

Lord Ahmad, the Minister for South Asia, visited Bangladesh on 15 November to 17 November and met with the Government of Bangladesh, civil society actors and other key figures. During the visit, Lord Ahmad reiterated the UK's commitment to supporting human rights and democratic values.

We will continue to stress to the Government of Bangladesh, both in public and in private, the importance of respect for human rights and the rule of law. We expect those in detention, including Khaleda Zia, to be treated in accordance with Bangladesh's international commitments on human rights. We regularly engage with the Government of Bangladesh on the treatment of those in detention and on the integrity and independence of the judicial process.

■ Colombia: Human Rights

Patrick Grady: [\[94420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department has made an assessment of the circumstances surrounding the death threats received by human rights defender, Diego Enrique Salcedo Ladino, in Meta, Colombia.

Vicky Ford:

The British Government remains concerned about persistent levels of violence and threats against human rights defenders in Colombia. UK ministers and senior officials regularly raise human rights issues, as well as specific cases of concern, with the Colombian Government and in multilateral fora. The former Minister for Europe and the Americas spoke to Vice President Ramírez regarding the human rights situation on a visit to Colombia from 22 to 24 November.

Colombia is a UK 'Human Rights Priority Country,' and we also consistently raise our concerns regarding violence against human rights defenders at the UN Security Council, as we did at meetings in July, and on 14 October. We urge the Colombian

Government to further integrate its presence in conflict-affected areas, and strengthen the institutions that can investigate and prosecute the criminal actors responsible. We have called on involved institutions to heed the early warnings of the Ombudsman's Office to help prevent attacks from happening and protect those at risk.

Through our Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund (CSSF) programme, which has provided £68 million in support of peace agreement implementation, security and stability in Colombia since 2015, we will continue to prioritise funding interventions to protect human rights defenders, social leaders and indigenous communities.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[94280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of the covid-19 vaccine doses that the Government has redistributed to lower income countries have been AstraZeneca vaccines; and if he will make a statement.

Amanda Milling:

As of 05 January, the UK has delivered 23.3 million doses to countries in need of which 17.8m have been delivered via COVAX and 5.5 million doses delivered directly. A further 7.5 million doses have been received by COVAX and will shortly be allocated and shipped in line with COVAX's fair allocation model. All doses donated to date have been AstraZeneca doses delivered to ODA eligible countries.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[94281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, in the context of data on the AstraZeneca vaccine's level of effectiveness against the omicron covid-19 variant, what proportion of the UK's doses to be redistributed to lower income countries in 2022 will be AstraZeneca; and if he will make a statement.

Amanda Milling:

Decisions on vaccine donations will continue to depend on supply chain reliability, Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advice and the ability of countries to absorb and deploy vaccines. Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine has been crucial to the UK's domestic vaccination programme, accounting for over 40% of the vaccines used. This vaccine has a significant role as part of our continuing 'evergreen vaccination programme offer' and for members of the population coming forwards for boosting who are mRNA intolerant.

World Health Organisation have said that Omicron is probably already in most countries, and is spreading at a rate we have not seen with any previous variant. Whilst early estimates suggest vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic infection with Omicron is significantly lower than with Delta, the UK Health Security Agency have highlighted that, as we saw with previous variants, the effectiveness against severe disease with Omicron (protecting both individuals and health systems) is likely to be substantially higher than against symptomatic infection. This means that full

vaccination with AstraZeneca is likely to continue to reduce the risk of hospitalisation and death from Omicron.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff

Preet Kaur Gill:

[93006]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has plans to reduce the number of staff employed by her Department; and what estimate she has made of the number of staff that will be employed by her Department in 2025.

Amanda Milling:

The Department's focus on strategic workforce planning will ensure that we have the right capabilities to deliver on our international priorities as set out in the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy and the forthcoming International Development Strategy. We want to ensure we invest in our people, take forward work to align terms and conditions and reward high performers. We will remain agile in the face of emerging opportunities and challenges.

Various workforce models were looked at prior to the current Foreign Secretary joining which we are not proceeding with. At this stage no decisions on changes to staff numbers have been made. But, as the Prime Minister and Minister Cleverly have said in the House on 15 and 16 December, there will not be an across the board 10 per cent reduction in FCDO staff. Indeed, with the addition of new responsibilities on the UK's relationship with the EU, we will need to further expand our capability in some areas to reflect new priorities.

■ International Climate Fund

Wendy Chamberlain:

[94538]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate she has made of the total of UK payments to the International Climate Fund; and whether that level of payments meets the commitments made by the UK at the Copenhagen COP in 2009.

Vicky Ford:

Securing the collective developed country commitment to provide \$100 billion per year in climate finance to developing countries, first made in Copenhagen in 2009, has been a core focus of the UK's COP26 Presidency. Under the UK's Presidency, 95 per cent of the largest developed country climate finance providers made new, forward-looking commitments, with many doubling or even quadrupling their support for developing countries to take climate action. These pledges mean that the \$100 billion finance goal will be met by developed countries by 2023 at the latest, and it is now likely that \$500bn will be mobilised over the period 2021-25. This means more money for developing countries to decarbonise and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Further information can be found here: <https://ukcop26.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Climate-Finance-Delivery-Plan-1.pdf>

The UK has led by example with our International Climate Finance (ICF). We provided £9.8 billion ICF between April 2011 and March 2021, and are committed to providing a further £11.6 billion between 2021/22 and 2025/26 (a doubling of our ICF spend in the previous five years), with an extra £1 billion in 2025 if the economy grows as forecast.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Ambulance Services: Yorkshire and the Humber

Jon Trickett:

[\[94288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the Yorkshire Ambulance Service's average response time was for (a) category 1 calls, (b) category 2 calls, (c) category 3 calls and (d) category 4 calls in each year since 2010.

Jon Trickett:

[\[94289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) double crewed ambulances and (b) rapid response vehicles have operated in the Yorkshire Ambulance Service in each year since 2010.

Edward Argar:

Yorkshire Ambulance Service's average response time for (a) category 1 calls, (b) category 2 calls, (c) category 3 calls and (d) category 4 calls in each year since 2010 is not available as current ambulance response time standards were introduced in 2017 by National Health Service England. Relevant data on average response times is held and published from 2017-18 onwards.

Yorkshire Ambulance Service's average response time was for (a) category 1 calls, (b) category 2 calls, (c) category 3 calls and (d) category 4 calls in each year since 2017 can be found in the table below:

MEAN AMBULANCE RESPONSE TIME - YORKSHIRE AMBULANCE SERVICE (HH:MM:SS)

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Cat 4
2017-18	00:07:48	00:23:57	00:55:04	01:20:41
2018-19	00:07:21	00:20:26	00:50:28	01:08:59
2019-20	00:07:12	00:20:34	00:48:09	00:52:33
2020-21	00:07:38	00:20:36	00:47:23	01:04:06
2021-22	00:09:13	00:34:32	01:44:42	02:30:26

Note: For the year 2017-18 this only includes figures from August 2017 to March 2018. For the year 2021-22 this only includes figures from April 2021 to November 2021 (latest published).

Source: National Health Service England

The number of a) doubled crewed ambulances and b) rapid response vehicles that have operated in the Yorkshire Ambulance Service in each year since 2010 is not held centrally.

In 2021, the Yorkshire Ambulance Service has 410 double crewed ambulances and 106 rapid response vehicles.

■ **Breast Cancer: Research**

Robert Largan:

[\[93921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to support research into secondary breast cancer.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department invests £1 billion per year in health research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The NIHR's cancer research expenditure has risen from £101 million in 2010/11 to £138 million in 2019/20. The NIHR is supporting over 800 cancer studies through its Clinical Research Network. This includes 20 studies for women with secondary breast cancer.

In partnership with Cancer Research UK, the NIHR is jointly funding a network of Experimental Cancer Medicine Centres across the country. These centres are implementing the discovery and early-phase clinical testing of new anti-cancer treatments including immunotherapy.

■ **Chronic Fatigue Syndrome**

Damien Moore:

[\[94511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase (a) public awareness of and (b) support for people suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome, CFS/ME.

Maria Caulfield:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is an arm's length body of the Department with responsibility for developing evidence-based guidance for the health and care system including for chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS/ME).

To increase awareness, support and understanding of CFS/ME, NICE recently updated their CFS/ME guidance. The guidance includes specific recommendations on providing information and support to people with CFS/ME including personalised advice about managing symptoms.

Additionally, the guidance recommends that training for all staff delivering care to people with CFS/ME should include materials helping them to understand what CFS/ME is, how it is diagnosed and managed.

NICE is working with system partners to support the implementation of the guideline.

■ Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell: [\[93797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the incubation period is of the omicron covid-19 variant prior to someone being symptomatic.

Maggie Throup:

The average incubation period for COVID-19 is five to six days. Individuals can infect others from around two days before symptoms start. It is therefore important to continue to follow government guidance on isolation if a close contact of a COVID-19 case.

There is currently insufficient evidence to suggest that the incubation period for Omicron is different to other variants.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Caroline Lucas: [\[93732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reintroducing shielding guidance for people in the clinically extremely vulnerable group.

Maggie Throup:

Given the improved protections against the virus through vaccines and treatments and the significant impact that shielding can have on an individual's physical and mental wellbeing, the clinical advice is that it is not appropriate to reintroduce shielding.

The latest guidance published on 24 December 2021 for people previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19 is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

We have also issued updated public health advice for people whose immune system means they are at higher risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19, which is available at the following link:

<https://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>

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Holly Lynch:

[\[93808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, who is responsible for the enforcement of the wearing of face coverings in supermarkets and shops.

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.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Matt Vickers:

[\[93918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all walk-in covid-19 vaccine centres are adequately supplied with covid-19 vaccine doses; and what steps he is taking to ensure that appointments are not required at those centres.

Maggie Throup:

All sites, including walk in COVID-19 vaccination centres, order their own vaccine supply via the online National Health Service (NHS) Foundry ordering platform in-line with anticipated supply requirements for the week ahead.

Orders are placed against the maximum limitations set by NHS systems and regions to ensure that there is an equitable split of vaccines across each region in England and to avoid oversupply. Where supply is required above maximum limitations, this can be requested and approved. Orders are then approved at a system and regional level before being processed by the national team for distribution.

The national team can also choose to push stock out, but this would only be for a short period, and as an exception in response to a significant change in Government policy, such as the Omicron booster surge currently in place.

We are working across the devolved administrations to ensure the vaccine programme is rolled out as quickly and efficiently as possible. The Vaccine Taskforce (VTF) leads on the supply management function of the COVID-19 vaccine programme. Each devolved Government receives regular supply updates from the VTF and are updated as soon as new schedules are available.

Appointments are not required at walk-in COVID-19 vaccination centres.

Gareth Thomas:[\[94278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Pfizer/BioNTech covid-19 vaccine is subject to the 36 month grace period on price controls as outlined in the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

Under the terms of the 2019 Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access, new active substances launched within 36 months of licensing of the first indication in the United Kingdom will benefit from freedom of list pricing at launch. A decision has not been made on whether the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, a licensed branded medicine known as Comirnaty, qualifies as a new active substance.

Mr Toby Perkins:[\[94317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many housebound patients that require covid-19 vaccinations at home there are in each Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) area; and how many of those patients have received the covid-19 booster vaccination as of 14 December 2021, by CCG.

Maggie Throup:

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

On 12 December 2021, the Prime Minister announced all eligible adults will now be offered a booster jab before the end of the year. To deliver this offer of boosters to all adults by the end of the year, General Practitioners teams are being asked to prioritise their services to free up capacity to support the COVID-19 vaccination programme, including for housebound patients, alongside delivering critical appointments such as cancer, urgent and emergency care.

For those completely housebound and unable to leave their homes, Primary Care Networks have established mobile or roving vaccination teams. A standard operating procedure and operational guidance has been provided to local health teams to support their efforts to reach those who are housebound.

Mr Toby Perkins:[\[94319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timetable is for the paper version of the covid-19 vaccine certificate being capable of recording that a person has received their covid-19 booster vaccination.

Maggie Throup:

Since 13 December, the Travel NHS COVID Pass letter includes all details about an individual's COVID-19 vaccination events, including booster vaccinations. A letter can be requested through NHS.UK or by calling 119. Booster vaccinations are not currently required for the domestic NHS COVID Pass letter.

■ Dental Services

Richard Fuller:

[\[80937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of provision of NHS dental services in North East Bedfordshire constituency; what steps his Department is taking to help increase the provision of NHS dental services; and what discussions he has had with Health Education England on the provision of (a) NHS dentists and (b) dental training places.

Maria Caulfield:

No recent formal assessment has been made. The provision of National Health Service dental services has been limited since 8 June 2020. Dental practices are currently focussing first on urgent care and vulnerable groups, including children, followed by overdue appointments. We are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement to increase activity levels as quickly as possible based on evidence on the levels of care that can be provided safely whilst protecting staff and patients from the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Health Education England has recently published their recommendations for improving training, education and recruitment of dental professionals in their Advancing Dental Care Review and are working with system partners to deliver those recommendations. The Department adjusted the number of dental school places for the 2021 academic year and we will ensure that numbers of dental school places are in line with England's workforce requirements.

■ Dental Services: Ilford North

Wes Streeting:

[\[87777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the average waiting time for patients for (a) a routine NHS dental appointment and (b) an urgent NHS dental appointment in Ilford North constituency.

Maria Caulfield:

Data on waiting times for routine and urgent National Health Service dental appointments is not collected centrally by NHS England. Appointments for NHS treatment are managed directly by dental practices.

■ Dentistry: Assessments

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[94272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to assess the number of dentists scheduled to have taken the part 2 exam since the start of the covid-19 outbreak; what constraints there are to taking the ORE assessment for British citizens and others; what steps he will take to suspend or overcome the impact of the five year limit; and what the outcome has been relevant discussions with the General Dental Council on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

The Dentists Act 1984 requires overseas applicants to the General Dental Council's register to undertake its Overseas Registration Exam (ORE) to confirm they have the requisite skills and knowledge to practise dentistry in the United Kingdom. This legislation restricts system capacity, including the availability of places on the ORE exam. The Department is currently working with the General Dental Council on legislative proposals to allow it greater flexibility to expand the registration routes open to international applicants.

Safety restrictions brought in as part of the COVID-19 response made it necessary for the General Dental Council to suspend Parts 1 and 2 of the ORE in April 2020. On 2 December 2021, it announced a planned sitting of the Part 2 exam in January 2022. The legislation also restricts Part 2 ORE places being offered to candidates where five or more years have passed since they first attempted Part 1 of the exam. Therefore, the General Dental Council has not been able to offer places for the January 2022 sitting to any candidates whose five-year period expired during the time that the ORE has been suspended. Before the pandemic, three sittings a year were offered for the Part 2 exam, each with a capacity of 144 candidates.

Officials are working with the General Dental Council to develop proposals which will provide candidates with additional time to take the Part 2 assessment in the future. We plan to consult on this proposed legislative change, alongside proposals to change the Council's international registration processes, in early 2022.

■ Dentistry: Hendon**Dr Matthew Offord:****[89564]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of provision of NHS dentists in Hendon constituency.

Maria Caulfield:

The provision of National Health Service dental services has been limited since 8 June 2020. Dental practices are currently focussing first on urgent care and vulnerable groups, including children, followed by overdue appointments.

We are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement to increase activity levels as quickly as possible based on evidence on the levels of care that can be provided safely whilst protecting staff and patients from the risk of COVID-19 transmission. NHS England and NHS Improvement are reviewing current capacity and the potential for extra commissioning to support access to NHS dentistry in London. Over 40 urgent dental care hubs are continuing to deliver care to patients and this service has been extended until March 2023 to continue the provision of urgent treatment. Work has also begun to identify the challenges facing the longer-term recovery of NHS dental services in London.

■ Dentistry: Mental Health

Ed Davey: [\[87561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the mental health and wellbeing of NHS dentists; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are aware that the pandemic has been challenging for the mental health and wellbeing of all health and care workers, including National Health Service dentists. NHS England and NHS Improvement have invested in additional mental health support which is available to all NHS dental teams. This includes the 'Looking After You Too' service. NHS Practitioner Health is also available to dentists, including confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week via a dedicated phonenumber and a crisis text service. Further resources are also available online via NHS People.

■ Dentistry: Recruitment

Chris Loder: [\[84477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS dentists his Department plans to recruit in (a) England and (b) Dorset over the next 12 months.

Chris Loder: [\[84478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of number of NHS dentists required in West Dorset.

Maria Caulfield:

As independent providers of NHS services, general dental practices are responsible for the recruitment of staff to meet the conditions of their National Health Service contract. No formal assessment has been made of the adequacy of the number of NHS dentists in West Dorset.

However, NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with Health Education England and Bristol and Peninsula Dental schools as part of the South West Dental Reform programme to address the challenges facing NHS dentistry in the region. The programme will be look at innovative ways to attract dental staff to areas including Dorset.

■ Down Syndrome Bill

Ben Lake: [\[87806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with his counterpart in the Welsh Government on the Down Syndrome Bill.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 9 December 2021]: Engagement with the Welsh Government is continuing at Ministerial and official level to ensure the alignment of policy and

improvements in outcomes for people with Down's syndrome across the United Kingdom.

■ **Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva: Research**

Drew Hendry:

[\[96951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of a dedicated research fund for research into fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made. The Department provides over £1 billion to the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) to deliver health and social care research. The usual practice of the NIHR is not to ring-fence funds for expenditure on particular topics and to welcome funding applications into any aspect of human health. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition.

■ **Foetal Death: Registration**

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[94471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing voluntary formal registration for stillbirths that occur before 24 weeks gestation.

Maria Caulfield:

In February 2018, the Department announced a new Pregnancy Loss Review to consider questions on registering/certifying pregnancy loss that occurs before 24 weeks gestation and the quality of National Health Service care for women experiencing such losses.

The Pregnancy Loss Review has successfully engaged with a range of stakeholders, including baby loss charities, parents with lived experience of pregnancy loss, registrars and clinicians.

Work on the Pregnancy Loss Review was paused in 2020 owing to the response to the COVID-19 emergency. Work has now resumed, progress has been made and we aim to publish the Review findings in due course.

■ **General Practitioners: Yorkshire and the Humber**

Jon Trickett:

[\[94287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) qualified permanent GPs and (b) training grade and locums in the general practice workforce in (i) Hemsworth constituency and (ii) Yorkshire in each year since 2010.

Maria Caulfield:

The data requested is not held centrally.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

John Penrose: [\[96834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to the letters from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of 4 October and 3 November 2021 on behalf of his constituent, Dr Cara Knight.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 21 December 2021.

■ **Motor Neurone Disease: Research**

Fleur Anderson: [\[97167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how the £50 million in funding allocated to targeted motor neurone disease research can be accessed.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government has committed to make £50 million available for motor neurone disease (MND) research over the next five years through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). 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.

■ **Princess Royal Hospital Telford: Accident and Emergency Departments**

Mark Pritchard: [\[79306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps officials in his Department are taking with representatives of Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust to agree the timetable for introducing an A&E Local at the Princess Royal Hospital as part of the Future Fit Programme.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 25 November 2021]: The Strategic Outline Case (SOC) on the reconfiguration of acute services, including emergency services, in Shropshire and Telford and the Wrekin has been submitted to NHS England and NHS Improvement. Under these proposals, accident and emergency (A&E) services will be consolidated on the Shrewsbury site and a 24 hours a day, seven days a week A&E local service will be provided at the Telford site. The SOC will be subject to an assurance review and will require formal approval by the National Joint Investment Committee before it can proceed to the next stage, which will include further detailed business case development.

■ Protective Clothing: Coronavirus**Christian Matheson:** [\[87694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the allocated expenditure is by the Government or its agents on the rental of storage space to store unused personal protective equipment in the 2021-22 financial year.

Edward Argar:

The information is not available in the format requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Christian Matheson: [\[87696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will list the sites that have been used by the Government or its agents for the purpose of storing unused personal protective equipment.

Edward Argar:

We are unable to provide the location of storage facilities as this information is commercially sensitive.

■ Schools: Coronavirus**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[94344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the trial of ventilation technologies taking place in primary classrooms in Bradford, on what date the (a) tender for that trial was first commissioned and (b) trial commenced; between which dates the trial was actively collecting data; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

The trial of ventilation technologies in primary schools in Bradford is funded by the UK Health Security Agency. The tender was published 28 April 2021, with contracts awarded to the successful bidders in July 2021. The trial is ongoing and will continue to the end of the school year 2021/2022.

■ Social Services: Older People**Damien Moore:** [\[41204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that elderly citizens on low incomes are able to access social care.

Gillian Keegan:

The Government is committed to ensuring individuals have access to the care and support they need. When local authorities charge for care and support, they must undertake a financial assessment to determine what the individual can afford to pay from their income and assets and ensure they retain enough income to pay for any needs that are not being met by the local authority.

Local authorities make assessments based on a range of factors. The Minimum Income Guarantee determines the floor for income retained for those receiving care

in their own home and the personal expense allowance for those receiving care in a care home. On 7 September 2021, the Government announced that from April 2022 it will unfreeze these allowances and they will rise in line with inflation.

■ Social Services: South East

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[59930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he made of vacancies in the care sector in (a) Slough and (b) the South East as at 1 October 2021.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 25 October 2021]: Skills for Care estimates that the vacancy rate in the adult social care sector in the South East was 8% in August 2021, compared to an average of 6.7% for 2020/21 as a whole. Skills for Care do not publish a separate monthly estimate of vacancies in Slough, but they have estimated that the average vacancy rate was 12.9% in 2020/21.

HOME OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Visas

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[94451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to secure visas for the children of British Nationals who are still in Afghanistan.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 5 January 2022]: Family members of British citizens who were not called forward as part of Op Pitting will need to apply to come to the UK under the existing economic or family migration rules. They will be expected to meet the eligibility requirements of their chosen route, which includes paying relevant fees and charges, and providing biometrics. There is currently no option to give biometrics in Afghanistan

The British Embassy in Kabul has suspended in-country operations and all UK diplomatic and consular staff have been temporarily withdrawn. The UK is working with international partners to secure safe routes out of Afghanistan as soon as they become available, but while the security situation remains extremely volatile, we recommend people in Afghanistan do not make applications and pay application fees at this time as they will not be considered until biometrics are provided. Those Afghans who are outside of Afghanistan and able to get to a Visa Application Centre (VAC) to provide their biometrics are able to make an application in the usual way

If the child is a British national, we are not currently able to issue passports or Emergency Travel Documents in Afghanistan. To obtain an Emergency Travel Document, a family member would need to attend one of our Embassies and High Commissions in neighbouring countries, where face to face consular services are available to British nationals.

■ Antisocial Behaviour

Stephanie Peacock: [\[93851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that (a) the Community Trigger and (b) other tools designed to tackle anti-social behaviour are being used properly and effectively to stop people who cause persistent anti-social behaviour.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[93852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to improve local data on anti-social behaviour for the purposes of providing clarity on the severity of the situation at a more local level than the Police Force Area.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[93853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to work with (a) police and crime commissioners, (b) local authorities and (c) agencies to (i) understand and (ii) tackle local challenges relating to 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.

■ Asylum: Afghanistan

Imran Hussain:

[96906]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum decisions relating to applicants from Afghanistan are awaiting a decision.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on asylum applications awaiting an initial decision, by nationality, are published in table ASY_D03 of the '[asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to the end of September 2021.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

■ Educational Exchanges: Passports

Fleur Anderson:

[97154]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will reconsider the change in rules that require EU children on school exchanges to have a passport, rather than being allowed to enter the UK as a group with their ID cards and a List of Travellers collective passport.

Kevin Foster:

As part of the changes to the Immigration Rules in September 2021, we no longer accept national identity cards as a valid travel document from EU, EEA and Swiss visitors to the UK.

Almost a year's notice was provided for this change to allow groups to plan ahead and obtain passports where they do not already have them before they travel.

The experience at the UK Border since the change has been positive, with EU, EEA and Swiss nationals making the switch to using their passport for travel. Using a passport also means most EU nationals making a short visit can also use e-gates where available for a quicker and easier arrival experience.

There are no plans to change our approach.

■ Immigration: Afghanistan

Imran Hussain: [\[96904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people from Afghanistan have been granted Limited Leave to Remain (LLR) since 2001; and how many people with LLR from Afghanistan are in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office publishes data on grants of limited leave to remain (extensions) in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release' on

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

Data on Afghan nationals granted an extension (Limited Leave to Remain (LLR)) from 2010 are published in table Exe_D01 of the [managed migration detailed datasets](#). The published data on extensions exclude cases decided under asylum rules. Earlier extensions data can be found in the [Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom](#) publications. These were published in the form of a Command Paper until 2006 and as an online bulletin between 2007 and 2009. Please note that prior to 2006, Afghan nationals were included in the 'Remainder of Asia' but not identified separately in the data.

Data on Asylum applications, initial decisions and resettlement are published in [asylum table Asy_D01](#) in the Immigration Statistics release.

Information is not available on the number of people with LLR from Afghanistan that are in the UK.

■ Members: Correspondence

Julie Elliott: [\[96881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to make a decision on the issue presented in the correspondence from the hon. Member for Sunderland Central of 21 October 2021 in relation to a passport application made in March 2021.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office responded to the correspondence on 5 January 2022.

■ Visas: Hospitality Sector

Jessica Morden: [\[96824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending access to temporary visas to staff working in the hospitality sector.

Kevin Foster:

I refer the honourable member to my response to question 71316 on 15 November 2021

TRANSPORT**■ Bus Services: Finance**

Rachael Maskell: [\[94429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of the Bus Services Improvement Plan will focus on electric buses.

Rachael Maskell: [\[94432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to use funding for the Bus Service Improvement Plan for funding Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) schemes.

Trudy Harrison:

The National Bus Strategy and subsequent guidance set out clear expectations on what Bus Service Improvement Plans should include. At the last Budget and Spending Review in October 2021 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.

We have also announced £525 million to deliver zero emission buses over this Parliament, of which £355 million was new funding announced as part of the Spending Review in October 2021.

Rachael Maskell: [\[94430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what (a) criteria and (b) process his Department plans to use to determine which local authorities are successful in receiving the bus service improvement plan funding.

Rachael Maskell: [\[94431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to announce funding for bus service improvement plans.

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.

■ Transport for London: Finance

Fleur Anderson: [\[94555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to meet with the Mayor of London to discuss a long-term financial settlement for Transport for London.

Trudy Harrison:

In addition to regular discussions between officials and TfL, the Minister responsible for this issue, Baroness Vere, is due to meet the Deputy Mayor of London for Transport in January 2022.

The Government is committed now, and in the future, to mitigating loss of fare revenue because of the pandemic, in a way that is fair to national taxpayers.

TREASURY

■ Treasury: Official Hospitality

Florence Eshalomi: [\[90967\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether any social events took place between three or more people within his Departmental buildings between (a) 5 November 2020 and 1 December 2020 and (b) 16 December 2020 and 22 February 2021.

Helen Whately:

This information is not collected. At the time, staff were expected to work from home and undertake meetings remotely, wherever possible

Some staff came into the office to work on the Spending Review 2020, on 25th November 2020, and we are aware that a small number of staff had impromptu drinks at and around their desks at the end of the working day.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Offshore Industry: Continental Shelf

Alex Cunningham: [\[94352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2021 to Question 80980 on Offshore Industry: Continental Shelf, if she will provide a copy of the HSE's detailed questions to production installation duty holders regarding the specific impact of pandemic-related down-manning on maintenance and inspection backlogs.

Chloe Smith:

A copy of the Health and Safety Executive's Question Set, as referred to in the answer to Question 80980, is attached.

Attachments:

1. HSE Pandemic Maintenance Backlog Questions [HSE Pandemic Maintenance Backlog Questions.pdf]

■ Work Capability Assessment

Paul Blomfield: [\[93755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data her Department and contracted assessment providers hold on the proportion of work capability assessments that have been carried out (a) by telephone, (b) paper-based and (c) face-to-face in the last (i) three, (ii) six, (iii) 12 and (iv) 18 months.

Chloe Smith:

The information requested can be found in the table below.

Although not included in your question, it may be helpful to know that we have also been conducting video assessments, where appropriate, alongside telephone, paper based and face to face assessments. The proportion of video assessments have been included in the table for completeness.

Completed Work Capability Assessments	TIME PERIOD			
	Last 3 months Sep 21 – Nov 21	Last 6 months Jun 21 – Nov 21	Last 12 months Dec 20 – Nov 21	Last 18 months Jun 20 – Nov 21
(a) Telephone	73%	76%	80%	78%
(b) Paper-based	15%	14%	15%	18%
(c) Face to face	6%	6%	3%	2%
(d) Video	6%	3%	2%	1%

Please note:

All of the above data is derived from contractual management information produced by the Assessment Providers.

Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

The above data is derived from unpublished management information which is collected for internal departmental use only and has not been quality assured to Official Statistics Publication Standards.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Departmental Contingent Liability Notification: Energy Supply Company Special Administration Regime**

Minister of State (Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change) (Greg Hands): [\[HCWS524\]](#)

Today I will lay before Parliament a Departmental Minute describing a contingent liability arising from the issuance of a letter of credit for the Energy Administrators acting in the Special Administration Regime for Bulb Energy Limited ('Bulb').

It is normal practice when a Government Department proposes to undertake a contingent liability of £300,000 and above, for which there is no specific statutory authority, for the Department concerned to present Parliament with a minute giving particulars of the liability created and explaining the circumstances.

I regret that, due to recess, I have not been able to follow the usual notification timelines to allow consideration of these issues in advance of issuing the letter of credit.

Bulb entered the Energy Supply Company Special Administration Regime on 24 November 2021. Energy Administrators were appointed by court to achieve the statutory objective of continuing energy supplies at the lowest reasonable practicable cost until such time as it becomes unnecessary for the special administration to remain in force for that purpose.

My Department has agreed to provide a facility to the Energy Administrators, with a letter of credit issued, with my approval, to guarantee such contract, code, licence, or other document obligations of the company consistent with the special administration's statutory objective. I will update the House if any letters of credit are drawn against.

The legal basis for a letter of credit is section 165 Energy Act 2004, as applied and modified by section 96 Energy Act 2011.

HM Treasury has approved the arrangements in principle.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Update on annual fisheries negotiations**

Minister of State (Victoria Prentis): [\[HCWS521\]](#)

The UK and EU have now reached an agreement on fishing opportunities for the 2022 fishing year. This is the second time the UK has entered into bilateral negotiations with the EU as an independent coastal State, following the signing of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) between the UK and EU in 2020.

In its second year negotiating as a coastal State, the UK has also successfully concluded the UK-EU-Norway trilateral negotiations and UK-Norway bilateral negotiations. Both agreements mark the start of new fisheries arrangements in the North Sea and a strong willingness from all Parties to collaborate closely in the future.

The UK Government has worked closely with Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive, and the outcomes secured by the UK will enable us to improve the sustainable management of our fish stocks in support of the whole of the UK fishing industry in the short and long term.

Collectively from the EU-UK bilateral, EU-UK-Norway trilateral, and Coastal States negotiations, the UK has secured agreement on the Total Allowable Catches (TACs) for 86 stocks.

UK-EU Agreement

The agreement we have reached with the EU covers 69 UK-EU TACs, resulting in a total value of fishing opportunities for the UK in 2022 of approximately 140,000 tonnes, worth around £313 million, based on historic landing prices.

Guided by best available scientific advice as part of sustainable fisheries management, the UK and EU agreed reductions across a number of TACs, meaning that overall the UK will have around 12,000 tonnes less quota compared to 2021 from these negotiations. However, even with this reduction, the UK has around 28,000 tonnes more quota from these negotiations than it would have received with its previous shares as an EU Member State. This is estimated to be worth around £45 million based on historic landing prices.

As in previous years, the UK negotiated this year's TACs taking account of sustainability principles. A full assessment of the number of individual TACs set consistent with International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) advice on catch opportunities will be published shortly and after the conclusion of all the UK's annual fisheries negotiations and the setting of consultative TACs.

On exchanges of quota with the EU, the UK and EU agreed to the continuation of the interim exchange mechanism which has operated successfully since July 2021, enabling voluntary exchanges between the UK and Member States. This will continue until the Specialised Committee on Fisheries (SCF) can agree a permanent mechanism, as required by the TCA. The UK and EU agreed to hold a final round of exchanges on 21 January 2022 to allow for the wrapping up of this year's exchanges.

On non-quota stocks (NQS), the UK and EU resolved the outstanding provisional historic baseline tonnage figures, this includes the removal of catches from Crown Dependency waters. The revised baseline figures are 12,365 tonnes for UK vessels in EU waters, and 33,023 tonnes for EU vessels in UK waters. It was also agreed to hold further technical discussions from January 2022 to ensure that future data exchanges on NQS uptake are robust and accurate.

Exceptionally, the UK and EU agreed not to apply the NQS tonnage limits provided for in the TCA for 2022. We will closely monitor uptake data and in the event either Party reaches 80% of their total, a discussion will be held in the SCF to consider next steps.

The UK and EU also committed to work at pace to develop multi-year strategies for shared NQS as set out under the TCA, with the aim of developing the first of these by 31 July 2022. Both Parties confirmed our shared priority to ensure the sustainable management of NQS stocks from 2023 onwards.

The UK and EU agreed to roll forward the previously agreed measures for seabass. In addition, it was agreed that further adjustments would be introduced in 2022. These include an increase in the annual limits for landings of bass from hook and lines and fixed gillnets, as well as an amendment to the commercial trawl/seine flexibility.

Finally, the UK and EU agreed to prioritise and handle NQS, seabass (including the ICES assessment tool), stock without ICES advice, inter-annual quota flexibility and other topics through the Specialised Committee on Fisheries.

UK-EU-Norway Trilateral Negotiations

The UK reached an agreement with Norway and the European Union on catch limits for 2022 for six jointly managed stocks in the North Sea. The catch limits agreed for 2022 are worth over £184 million to the UK fishing industry.

The agreement demonstrates the Parties' continued commitment to the sustainable management and long-term viability of cod, haddock, plaice, whiting, herring, and saithe stocks in the North Sea. Alongside the total allowable catches (TACs) for 2022, the agreement puts in place a process to review the distribution and management of shared stocks which are important for the whole UK catch sector.

UK-Norway Bilateral Negotiations

The agreement reached with Norway includes reciprocal access to each other's waters. The UK will gain access to 30,000 tonnes of whitefish stocks such as cod, haddock and hake. There will also be access to fish pelagic stock: the UK industry will be able to fish its full quota of Atlanto-scandian herring in Norwegian waters, and up to 17,000 tonnes should it swap in additional quota from the EU in 2022. In return, Norway will be able to fish up to 17,000 tonnes of North Sea herring in UK waters. This is less than a third of the level of access for North Sea herring enjoyed by Norway while the UK was a member of the European Union. We also agreed some quota exchange, estimated to be worth just over £5m. This includes bringing in stocks such as North Sea whiting, hake and anglerfish, and arctic cod.

The agreement puts in place a process which ensures that the fishing arrangements do not have detrimental consequences for fish stocks and the wider marine environment. The mutual access will also allow respective fleets more flexibility to target the stocks in the best condition throughout the fishing year, supporting a more sustainable and economically viable fishing industry.

In parallel to the conclusion of these negotiations, Norway has allocated to the UK 6,550 tonnes of cod around Svalbard. This means the UK can fish over 7,000 tonnes of cod in the arctic in 2022, estimated to be worth around £16 million, and 1,500 tonnes more than in 2021.

UK-Faroe Island Negotiations

Bilateral fisheries negotiations between the UK and Faroes are ongoing. Both parties are pursuing a pragmatic and well-balanced agreement. The UK's overriding priority is to ensure that the deal is in the best interests of the UK industry and protects the marine environment, promoting sustainable stock management.

Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs)

The UK is a Contracting Party to five RFMOs and played a central role in negotiations in 2021 in securing a number of important new RFMO measures for 2022 and beyond. These include a new rebuilding plan for North Atlantic shortfin mako shark in the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), a new management measure for yellowfin tuna in the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), an interim measure for the Greenland salmon fishery in the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO), new 'area closures' to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO), and a measure to protect juvenile haddock at the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC). The UK also confirmed its 2022 shares in the four ICCAT stocks negotiated with the EU under the TCA.

The UK will build on these successes in 2022 and beyond, working to achieve rapid progress on our priority objectives for RFMOs both in terms of fishing opportunities where appropriate, and furthering our marine conservation priorities.

Multilateral 'coastal State' negotiations

The UK and other coastal States (the parties responsible for a stock's management due to it being distributed in their waters) for mackerel, blue whiting and Atlanto-Scandian herring agreed to set the global TACs for 2022 in line with the advice provided by ICES.

We have also agreed to discuss sharing arrangements for each stock in 2022. The UK will chair discussions on mackerel and Atlanto-Scandian herring.

JUSTICE

■ **Outdoor Marriages and Civil Partnerships**

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Tom Pursglove):

[\[HCWS522\]](#)

On 20 December, the Government launched a public consultation on outdoor weddings and civil partnerships. This consultation sets out, and seeks views on, the Government's proposals to continue to permit outdoor civil marriages and civil partnerships on approved premises, and to permit outdoor religious marriages in the grounds of places of worship.

Since 1 July 2021, couples have been able to have their civil marriage and civil partnership proceedings in the open air, in the grounds of buildings such as stately homes and hotels which are approved or became approved for these civil ceremonies. Previously, these proceedings could only take place indoors or otherwise within permanently immovable structures. These outdoor ceremonies were made possible because the Government laid a statutory instrument ('SI') putting in place these

flexibilities, in order to give couples more choice of setting, and to support the wedding and civil partnership sector. However, that SI has effect only until the end of 5 April 2022.

We are now proposing to lay a further SI so that these outdoor civil marriage and civil partnership proceedings can continue beyond 5 April 2022 indefinitely, and to extend the policy of permitting outdoor ceremonies to religious marriages using a separate legislative reform order. Together, these proposals would ensure that the provision for outdoor marriages and civil partnerships on approved premises continues indefinitely and would extend similar arrangements to religious weddings in the grounds of places of worship. The proposals would enable couples to have a greater choice in relation to the location of their ceremonies, and for approved premises and religious bodies to have more flexibility in the locations for ceremonies, should they choose to offer it. No religious group would be obliged to provide outdoor ceremonies, and existing protections to safeguard religious freedoms would remain in place.

The consultation can be found here: <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/outdoor-marriages-civil-partnerships>. A copy of the consultation paper will be deposited in the Libraries of the House.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Protecting the Integrity of our Elections

Minister of State for Equalities and Levelling Up Communities (Kemi Badenoch): **[[HCWS525](#)]**

I am pleased to update Parliament today on amendments the Government will shortly be bringing forward to the Elections Bill which will help to ensure we fully deliver on our commitment to protecting our democracy.

The changes brought forward by the Bill are vital to ensure our democracy remains secure, fair, modern and transparent and I am therefore pleased to also update Parliament today with further information on their implementation. It is our expectation that all the measures will be in place within the lifetime of this Parliament and implementation will be staged over a sensible and pragmatic timetable; it is imperative that this is done properly and with sufficient time for the elections sector and for voters to prepare for the new requirements.

Voter identification and the Voter Card

I am today publishing a policy statement, 'Protecting the integrity of our elections: voter identification at polling stations and the new Voter Card,' which sets out more detail on the Government's proposals for the voter identification policy.

The statement includes details of the rationale for the list of accepted photographic identifications in the Elections Bill and further information around our plans for the application process for Voter Cards.

A Voter Card will be available free of charge to ensure that all electors have access to an accepted form of identification. The Government is clear that the process for applying for

this card must be accessible for all those who need it. There will therefore be a range of application routes, Voter Cards will be valid across all of Great Britain - not just in the issuing area - and the Government will shortly be tabling amendments to adjust some of the current drafting of the Bill to increase the accessibility and security of the Voter Card and ensure the Voter Card system works for all eligible voters.

Voters in Northern Ireland have been required to show identification when voting at polling stations since 1985, and the photographic voter identification system has been in place there for almost 20 years since it was brought in by the last Labour Government in 2003. Since its introduction, this requirement has successfully helped to tackle electoral fraud and has been operating with ease. In their 2021 Public Opinion tracker, the Electoral Commission recorded not a single Northern Ireland respondent reporting 'I don't have any identification / I would not be able to vote'.

It is our expectation that voter identification will be in place in Great Britain in time for polls taking place in spring 2023, with the Voter Card system in operation in good time ahead of this.

Absent Vote Applications

The Government will be introducing a further amendment to the Bill to require identity verification for absent vote applications, as is already the case for Northern Ireland. This will ensure that applications are legitimate, protecting the system from fraud.

A further amendment will provide for an online absent vote application service, making this process more efficient for both citizens and electoral administrators and placing both integrity and elector participation at the heart of our democracy. The new online application service, as well as existing paper applications, will require electors to have their identity verified as part of the process, ensuring that the system is as streamlined as possible for users. As we legislate to update our electoral system we are therefore also ensuring public confidence that our elections will remain secure well into the future.

In order to ensure efficiency of electoral administrative processes, it is our ambition to align the new online application process with other changes to absent vote arrangements and the delivery of overseas electors' voting rights. Rollout of the online service will be conditional on the identity verification processes being in place and the timing of rollout in Northern Ireland will be dependent upon meeting the particular safeguards required in Northern Ireland. This is in order to reduce any opportunity for individuals to exploit the processes and steal votes.

Technical amendments to the Elections Bill

The Bill will be amended to reflect that responsibility for elections has moved from the Cabinet Office to the new Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. In addition, an amendment will be made to provisions in the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 regarding membership of the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, to allow for the most relevant minister to be appointed by the Prime Minister to be able to deputise for the Secretary of State on the Committee as and

when needed. These changes will not increase the Government's allocated representation on the Committee.

Several amendments will also be made to the clauses in the Bill relating to the new digital imprints regime. These amendments include clarifying the enforcement responsibilities of the Electoral Commission and the police, and improving consistency between the clauses that relate to 'paid material' and those that relate to 'other electronic material' (or unpaid material). They will also clarify that the imprint rules will only apply to unpaid electronic material wholly or mainly related to referendums, when published during the referendum period. Further, these amendments will ensure that the regime covers all relevant elections, including all City of London elections. These amendments will help ensure transparency and empower voters to make informed decisions about the material they see online.

The associated document has been placed in the libraries of both Houses and amendments to the Elections Bill will be tabled in due course.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Annual Report of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner

Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):

[\[HCWS523\]](#)

I have today laid before both Houses a copy of the annual report of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner, Rt. Hon. Sir Brian Leveson.

Overall, this report demonstrates that the security and intelligence agencies, law enforcement agencies and other relevant public authorities' use of investigatory powers shows extremely high levels of operational competence combined with respect for the law. The report also sets out the breadth and complexity of the powers covered by the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 and other legislation and offers constructive criticism on the practical framework and individual instances of how these are used. Where the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) has identified problems, departments and agencies have worked hard to address these.

This year the Commissioner has decided not to include a confidential annex to the Report, as allowed under Section 234 of the 2016 Act, as all relevant issues have been covered in this report. This has been subject to consultation with relevant government departments and agencies and I am content it is not prejudicial to national security.

I would like to add that this Report demonstrates the high quality of the oversight of our intelligence and security agencies' use of the most intrusive powers. I am satisfied that our arrangements are amongst the strongest and most effective in the world. Despite the unique challenges which COVID-19 created, the Commissioner notes their oversight has been no less rigorous than in previous years and his report details the changes they made to their inspection practice to ensure this.

I would like to place on record my thanks to the current and previous Commissioners and their staff for their work, as well as echoing the Commissioner's thanks to the agencies

and departments and civil society organisations which have helped with the establishment of IPCO over the past few years. I join him in extending my particular thanks to all those who took on the responsibility of serving as temporary Judicial Commissioners under Section 22 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 during the lockdown period, who ensured the work of IPCO was able to continue uninterrupted.

I commend this report to the House.

TRANSPORT

■ Civil Aviation Authority 2021 Progress Report

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Robert Courts):
[\[HCWS520\]](#)

During the passage of the Air Traffic Management and Unmanned Aircraft Act 2021 through Parliament, Ministers confirmed that the Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA) annual progress report on the Airspace Modernisation Strategy would be published, and a copy placed in the Libraries of both Houses accompanied by a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS).

The Airspace Modernisation Strategy sets out, through 15 initiatives, ways and means of modernising airspace, initially focussing on the period until the end of 2024. The initiatives include airspace design, operational concepts and new technology.

Six of the 15 initiatives are assessed as on track, and five initiatives require further work. The delayed timescales of delivery against the original plans set out in the Airspace Modernisation Strategy have predominantly shifted because of ongoing recovery of the aviation industry from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Four initiatives will need further legislation on Performance Based Navigation and Air Traffic Management, core elements of the Airspace Modernisation Strategy. The Department for Transport will be taking legislation forward this year to ensure continued progress to the overall Airspace Modernisation Strategy programme.

Key areas of progress have been noted within Free Route Airspace (initiative 2), remobilisation of the Future Airspace Strategy Implementation South and North airspace change programmes made possible by Government funding (initiatives 4 and 5) and initiatives 9, 10 and 11 on aligning air traffic provision with international standards, review of airspace classification and electronic conspicuity respectively.

There has also been progress with the Airspace Change Organising Group submitting Iteration 2 of their Masterplan - which will set out where airspace changes need to be coordinated and developed - for assessment by the CAA.

Chapter 2 provides an update from the co-sponsors on policy and regulatory process, with a particular emphasis on stakeholder engagement activity undertaken as part of the Airspace Modernisation Strategy refresh and the re-introduction of the Airspace Modernisation Strategy Support Fund. Strategic risks have also been flagged within this

chapter, predominantly concerning future delivery model, financing, and resourcing of the modernisation programme.

Chapter 3 provides updates related specifically to activities under the Airspace Modernisation Strategy, undertaken within areas of particular interest from the General Aviation and Communities stakeholder groups.

I will place a copy of the Airspace Modernisation – 2021 Progress Report in the libraries of both Houses

Attachments:

1. Airspace Modernisation – 2021 Progress Report [Airspace Modernisation Progress Report - 2021.pdf]