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CONTENTS

| | | | |
|--|----------|--|----|
| ANSWERS | 7 | ■ Ministers: Ethnic Groups | 15 |
| ATTORNEY GENERAL | 7 | ■ Senior Civil Servants: Ethnic Groups | 15 |
| ■ Attorney General: Buildings | 7 | ■ Sick Leave: Coronavirus | 16 |
| ■ Barristers: Public Appointments | 7 | CHURCH COMMISSIONERS | 17 |
| ■ Hamas | 7 | ■ Clergy: Discipline | 17 |
| ■ Public Sector: Misconduct | 8 | COP26 | 17 |
| BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY | 8 | ■ Climate Change: Developing Countries | 17 |
| ■ Global Britain Investment Fund: Motor Vehicles | 8 | DEFENCE | 18 |
| ■ High Speed 2 Line: Iron and Steel | 9 | ■ Afghanistan: Refugees | 18 |
| ■ Offshore Industry: Conditions of Employment | 9 | ■ Ajax Vehicles: Costs | 18 |
| ■ Royal Mail: Small Businesses | 11 | ■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement | 19 |
| ■ Royal Mail: Standards | 11 | ■ Ajax Vehicles: Safety | 19 |
| ■ Small Businesses: Finance | 11 | ■ Apache AH-64 Helicopters: Guided Weapons | 19 |
| ■ Small Businesses: Streatham | 12 | ■ Armed Forces Bill | 19 |
| CABINET OFFICE | 13 | ■ Armed Forces: Skilled Workers and Technology | 20 |
| ■ Armed Forces: Charities | 13 | ■ Army: Staff | 20 |
| ■ Business Interests | 13 | ■ Defence: Employment | 23 |
| ■ Cobra: Meetings | 14 | ■ Maritime Patrol Aircraft: Weapons | 23 |
| ■ Honours: Newport West | 14 | ■ Military Aid: Care Homes | 24 |
| ■ Infected Blood Inquiry | 14 | ■ Military Aid: Coronavirus | 24 |
| ■ KPMG: Contracts | 15 | | |

| | | | |
|---|----|---|----|
| ■ Ministry of Defence: Information Officers | 24 | ■ Schools: Staff | 40 |
| ■ Nuclear Submarines: Repairs and Maintenance | 25 | ■ Schools: Ventilation | 40 |
| ■ Rolls Royce: Recruitment | 25 | ■ Schools: Vocational Guidance | 41 |
| ■ Sub-Saharan Africa: Radicalism | 26 | ■ Sex and Relationship Education: Endometriosis | 43 |
| DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT | 26 | ■ Skilled Workers: Vacancies | 43 |
| ■ Broadband: South West Hertfordshire | 26 | ■ Supply Teachers: Coronavirus | 44 |
| ■ Educational Visits | 27 | ■ Supply Teachers: Vetting | 45 |
| ■ Football Governance Fan-led Review | 27 | ■ Teachers: Labour Turnover | 45 |
| ■ Gambling: Compensation | 27 | ■ Teachers: Recruitment | 46 |
| ■ Mobile Phones: East Riding | 28 | ■ Teachers: Training | 47 |
| ■ Music: Trade Unions | 28 | ■ Universities: Antisemitism | 48 |
| ■ Scots Gaelic Language: Broadcasting | 28 | ■ Workforce Development Fund | 49 |
| EDUCATION | 29 | ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS | 49 |
| ■ Apprentices and Education | 29 | ■ Air Pollution | 49 |
| ■ Apprentices: Degrees | 30 | ■ Ammonia: Pollution Control | 50 |
| ■ Arts and Humanities: Degrees | 31 | ■ Clean Air Zones: Greater Manchester | 50 |
| ■ Further Education: Finance | 32 | ■ Deposit Return Schemes | 51 |
| ■ Israel: Education | 32 | ■ Litter | 51 |
| ■ National Tutoring Programme | 33 | ■ Wood-burning Stoves | 52 |
| ■ Non-teaching Staff: Pay | 34 | FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE | 52 |
| ■ Out-of-school Education | 35 | ■ Afghanistan: British Nationals Abroad | 52 |
| ■ Out-of-school Education: Discrimination | 35 | ■ Afghanistan: Home Country Nationals | 53 |
| ■ Remote Education | 36 | ■ Afghanistan: Politics and Government | 53 |
| ■ School Leaving | 37 | ■ Afghanistan: Refugees | 53 |
| ■ Schools: Admissions | 38 | ■ Afghanistan: Repatriation | 54 |
| ■ Schools: Coronavirus | 38 | ■ Arctic and Shipping | 55 |
| ■ Schools: Finance | 39 | ■ Belarus: Migrants | 55 |

| | | | |
|---|----|---|----|
| ■ Bosnia and Herzegovina: Peace Negotiations | 56 | HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE | 66 |
| ■ Cameroon: Football | 56 | ■ Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust: Finance | 66 |
| ■ China: Aviation | 57 | ■ Cancer: Health Services | 67 |
| ■ China: Foreign Relations | 57 | ■ Care Homes: Visits | 67 |
| ■ Commonwealth: Foreign Relations | 58 | ■ Carers: Vetting | 68 |
| ■ Developing Countries: Female Genital Mutilation | 58 | ■ Contraceptives | 68 |
| ■ Developing Countries: Research | 59 | ■ Contraceptives: Health Education | 69 |
| ■ Ethiopia: Peace Negotiations | 59 | ■ Coronavirus | 69 |
| ■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Gettyimages | 59 | ■ Coronavirus: Disease Control | 70 |
| ■ India: Oxfam | 60 | ■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing | 71 |
| ■ Kazakhstan: Politics and Government | 60 | ■ Coronavirus: Screening | 72 |
| ■ Malawi: Drugs | 61 | ■ Coronavirus: Vaccination | 76 |
| ■ Palestinians: Non-governmental Organisations | 61 | ■ Dementia: Air Pollution | 81 |
| ■ Palestinians: Schools | 62 | ■ Dementia: Research | 81 |
| ■ Russia: Ukraine | 62 | ■ Dentistry: Labour Turnover | 82 |
| ■ Rwanda: Politics and Government | 63 | ■ Department of Health and Social Care: Randox Laboratories | 82 |
| ■ Somalia: Politics and Government | 63 | ■ Eating Disorders: Mental Health Services | 83 |
| ■ South Sudan: Diseases | 64 | ■ Gambling: Health Services | 83 |
| ■ South Sudan: Humanitarian Situation | 64 | ■ General Practitioners: Recruitment | 84 |
| ■ Sudan: Politics and Government | 65 | ■ Genito-urinary Medicine: Females | 84 |
| ■ Tigray: Humanitarian Aid | 65 | ■ Health Services: Females | 85 |
| ■ Turkey: Economic Situation and Politics and Government | 66 | ■ Health Services: Private Sector | 85 |
| | | ■ Health Visitors: Pilot Schemes | 86 |
| | | ■ Healthy Start Scheme: Migrants | 86 |
| | | ■ Hepatitis: Disease Control | 87 |

| | | | |
|---|----|---|-----|
| ■ Immensa Health Clinic: Contracts | 87 | ■ Social Security: Fees and Charges | 99 |
| ■ Influenza | 88 | ■ Sugar: Consumption | 100 |
| ■ Influenza: Vaccination | 88 | ■ Surgery: Greater Manchester | 100 |
| ■ Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation | 88 | ■ Travel Requirements: Coronavirus | 100 |
| ■ Malnutrition: Health Services | 89 | ■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus | 101 |
| ■ Members: Correspondence | 89 | ■ Travel: Coronavirus | 101 |
| ■ Mental Health | 90 | ■ Travel: Quarantine | 102 |
| ■ Mental Health Services: Coronavirus | 90 | ■ Travel: USA | 103 |
| ■ Mental Health Services: Gravesham | 91 | HOME OFFICE | 104 |
| ■ Motor Neurone Disease: Medical Treatments | 91 | ■ Asylum: Afghanistan | 104 |
| ■ NHS Test and Trace: Telephone Services | 91 | ■ Asylum: Finance | 104 |
| ■ NHS: Coronavirus | 92 | ■ Educational Visits: EU Nationals | 104 |
| ■ NHS: Pensions | 93 | ■ Extradition | 105 |
| ■ NHS: Recruitment | 94 | ■ Forensic Science Regulator Act 2021 | 105 |
| ■ NHS: Software | 94 | ■ Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority | 106 |
| ■ Osteoporosis: Females | 94 | ■ Knives | 107 |
| ■ Parkinson's Disease: Research | 95 | ■ Members: Correspondence | 107 |
| ■ Pharmacy: Disclosure of Information | 95 | ■ Offshore Industry: Immigration Controls | 108 |
| ■ Physician Associates: Prescriptions | 96 | ■ Offshore Industry: Undocumented Migrants | 109 |
| ■ Public Health: Greater London | 97 | ■ Pets: Theft | 109 |
| ■ Refugees: Afghanistan | 97 | ■ Refugees: Afghanistan | 109 |
| ■ Sexual Assault Referral Centres: Standards | 98 | ■ Refugees: Employment | 112 |
| ■ Smoking: Health Education | 98 | ■ Theft: Cars | 113 |
| ■ Smoking: Health Hazards | 98 | ■ UK Border Agency: Patrol Craft | 113 |
| ■ Social Media: Mental Health | 99 | ■ West Midlands Police: Finance | 113 |
| | | ■ Windrush Compensation Scheme | 113 |

| | | | |
|---|-----|--|-----|
| JUSTICE | 114 | ■ High Speed 2 Line: Iron and Steel | 124 |
| ■ Custodial Treatment: Domestic Visits | 114 | ■ High Speed 2 Line: North East | 124 |
| ■ Family Courts: Greater London | 115 | ■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Wales | 124 |
| ■ Necrophilia: Sentencing | 115 | ■ Leamside Line | 125 |
| ■ Pets: Theft | 116 | ■ Parking: Students | 125 |
| ■ Prisoners' Release | 116 | ■ Railway Stations: Visual Impairment | 125 |
| ■ Prisoners' Release: Electronic Tagging | 117 | ■ Roads: Accidents | 126 |
| LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES | 118 | ■ Shipping: Crew | 126 |
| ■ Buildings: Air Conditioning | 118 | ■ Speed Limits | 127 |
| ■ Evictions: Ethnic Groups | 118 | ■ Trains: Coronavirus | 128 |
| ■ Members: Correspondence | 119 | ■ Trains: Greater London | 128 |
| NORTHERN IRELAND | 119 | ■ Travel: Coronavirus | 129 |
| ■ Members: Correspondence | 119 | TREASURY | 129 |
| PRIME MINISTER | 119 | ■ Bank Cards: Fees and Charges | 129 |
| ■ 10 Downing Street: Meetings | 119 | ■ Banks: Closures | 130 |
| ■ Independent Adviser On Ministerial Interests | 120 | ■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme and Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme | 130 |
| SCOTLAND | 120 | ■ Buildings: Fire Prevention | 131 |
| ■ Broadcasting: Scots Gaelic Language | 120 | ■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme | 132 |
| ■ Fiscal Policy: Scotland | 120 | ■ DMB Solutions: VAT | 132 |
| ■ Lord Advocate: Scotland | 121 | ■ Economic Situation | 133 |
| ■ PAYE: Scotland | 121 | ■ Environment Protection and Health | 133 |
| SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION | 121 | ■ Equitable Life Assurance Society: Compensation | 134 |
| ■ Elections: Proof of Identity | 121 | ■ Events Industry: Finance | 134 |
| ■ Politics: Education | 122 | ■ Housing: Prices | 135 |
| TRANSPORT | 122 | ■ London Stock Exchange | 135 |
| ■ Country Parks: Liverpool | 122 | ■ Railways: Midlands and North of England | 136 |
| ■ Hammersmith Bridge: Repairs and Maintenance | 123 | | |
| ■ High Speed 2 Line | 123 | | |

| | | | |
|--|-----|---|------------|
| ■ Research: Tax Allowances | 136 | WOMEN AND EQUALITIES | 140 |
| ■ Stocks and Shares: Evergrande Group | 137 | ■ LGBT Advisory Panel: Public Appointments | 140 |
| ■ Tax Avoidance | 137 | WORK AND PENSIONS | 141 |
| ■ Tax Avoidance: Telephone Services | 138 | ■ Food Banks | 141 |
| ■ Tourism and Travel: Finance | 138 | ■ Kickstart Scheme: Defence | 142 |
| ■ Travel: Government Assistance | 139 | ■ Poverty | 142 |
| WALES | 139 | ■ Poverty: Older People | 143 |
| ■ Business: Newport West | 139 | ■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations | 144 |
| ■ Hospitality Industry: Newport West | 140 | MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS | 146 |
| | | EDUCATION | 146 |
| | | ■ National Tutoring Programme | 146 |
| | | ■ National Tutoring Programme: Enfield | 146 |

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

■ Attorney General: Buildings

Rachel Hopkins:

[98508]

To ask the Attorney General, what the total floor area of her departmental estate was in each year from 2010-11 to 2020-21.

Alex Chalk:

The total floor area of the Attorney General's Office (AGO) is as follows:

2006- 2016 - 20 Victoria street – 371m2 (approx. *)

2017- 2021- The Sanctuary – 432m2

2021 - Petty France 639m2**

* Estimate based on floors occupied in a shared building, the department cannot locate total AGO allocation in this building so figure may not include meeting rooms and storage areas.

** Increase due to specialist rooms required.

■ Barristers: Public Appointments

Damien Moore:

[94514]

To ask the Attorney General, what recent assessment she has made of the trends in the number of people called to the bar in England and Wales over the last five years.

Alex Chalk:

The legal profession in England and Wales is independent of Government and is regulated by approved regulators, for which the Legal Services Board (LSB) has oversight responsibility. The approved regulators and LSB are independent of Government. Data on the trends of the number of people called to the bar in England and Wales, broken down by gender, ethnicity and age, provided by the Bar Standards Board can be [found here](#). The statistics show that over the past 5 years the number of females being called to the bar is greater than the number of males. They also show that over the last three years the number of those called to the bar from an ethnic minority background is greater than those from a white background. This is testament to the huge amount of work to improve diversity of those practicing at the bar.

■ Hamas

Hilary Benn:

[96781]

To ask the Attorney General, whether the CPS plans to issue guidance on the impact of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2000's provisions on holding a meeting in support of a

proscribed organisation on organisations or individuals who hold meetings with members or supporters of Hamas to encourage them to turn away from violence and join peace talks.

Alex Chalk:

The CPS recognises the vital work undertaken by civil society to provide humanitarian relief and to promote peacebuilding efforts overseas and that this can take place within a backdrop of instability and fluid governance arrangements, including heavily sanctioned countries or in countries/regions where proscribed terrorist groups are active.

While there are no plans to issue guidance covering these specific circumstances, the CPS intends to publish general prosecutorial guidance in 2022 on the interaction between counter terrorism legislation and the work of aid agencies operating overseas that provide humanitarian relief or promote peacebuilding efforts. A draft of the guidance has been prepared and the CPS is currently engaging in wider consultation with HMG colleagues prior to publication.

■ **Public Sector: Misconduct**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[98226\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, at what time and on what date the Solicitor General informed officials of his decision not to refer to the Court of Appeal the two cases of misconduct in a public office listed under unique reference number 731 in the register of cases reviewed under the Unduly Lenient Sentence Scheme.

Alex Chalk:

The Solicitor General communicated his decision to officials on the morning of 24 December 2021.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Global Britain Investment Fund: Motor Vehicles**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[96876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 5 November 2021 to Question 64608 on Global Britain Investment Fund, what estimate he has made of the financial benefit to automotive clusters in the West Midlands, North East and North West from Global Britain Investment Fund funding.

Lee Rowley:

The £1.4 billion Global Britain Investment Fund (GBIF) will drive investment in industries of national strength, including automotive, which has key regional clusters in the West Midlands, North West and North East.

■ High Speed 2 Line: Iron and Steel

Bill Esterson:

[\[96867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues to encourage the setting of targets for British made steel in the construction of HS2.

Lee Rowley:

The UK is a champion of free and fair trade across the globe. British businesses exported £601 billion worth of goods and services to other countries in 2020, demonstrating the value of free and open markets.

It is important to note that the UK is party to the World Trade Organisation's plurilateral Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA), which involves most of the world's major economies. The GPA commits its signatory parties to guaranteeing fair and transparent public procurements and to treat suppliers from fellow GPA countries in the same manner as domestic suppliers for all covered procurements. Thus, setting UK targets for major procurement projects or any measures which favour, or indirectly discriminate in favour of, UK products or suppliers would constitute a breach of the UK's international obligations under the GPA.

Nonetheless, the Government is keen to ensure a strong UK steel industry. Against this backdrop, BEIS launched a Steel Procurement Taskforce in March 2021, which brings together Government Departments and the steel sector which is aimed at promoting the unique selling points of UK steel and helping industry position itself for success in forthcoming major public contracts. It will report its findings early this year.

■ Offshore Industry: Conditions of Employment

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[97137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he will take to ensure employee and worker rights are supported in the plans for transition from oil and gas to renewables in the offshore work force.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to the protection of workers' rights for those in offshore employment. In 2020 the Government extended minimum wage entitlement to seafarers on domestic voyages. The Government expects all employers to comply with UK employment law.

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[98449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what records are kept on breaches of employment regulations in the offshore sector.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to the protection of workers' rights for those in offshore employment.

The vast majority of employment rights in the UK are enforced by individuals through employment tribunals. The state enforces certain specific rights (national minimum wage, regulations on employment businesses, employment agencies, and certain labour providers involved in shellfish gathering and fresh produce supply). The relevant enforcement body in each area will take any action necessary to protect the workers within their remit, and to ensure that the records kept by employers, employment agencies, employment business, and labour providers meet the requirements of their respective legislation.

The right to the national minimum wage is enforced by HMRC. Since 2015, the Government has ordered employers to repay £100m to 1 million workers who had been underpaid. Businesses employing offshore workers may come under several Companies House sectors. The Low Pay Commission does not determine offshore workers as being at high risk of underpayment.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[98450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he has taken to ensure the protection of workers' rights where offshore businesses seek to transition from oil and gas to renewables.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to the protection of workers' rights for those in offshore employment. In 2020, the Government extended minimum wage entitlement to seafarers on domestic voyages. The Government expects all employers to comply with UK employment law.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[98451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what (a) records are kept and (b) action is taken against employers in the offshore sector who breach employment law.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to the protection of workers' rights for those in offshore employment.

The vast majority of employment rights in the UK are enforced by individuals through employment tribunals. The state enforces certain specific rights (national minimum wage, regulations on employment businesses, employment agencies, and certain labour providers involved in shellfish gathering and fresh produce supply). The relevant enforcement body in each area will take any action necessary to protect the workers within their remit, and to ensure that the records kept by employers, employment agencies, employment business, and labour providers meet the requirements of their respective legislation.

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Companies House sectors. The Low Pay Commission does not determine offshore workers as being at high risk of underpayment.

■ **Royal Mail: Small Businesses**

Helen Hayes:

[\[98350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of delayed or lost Royal Mail deliveries on small independent businesses during Christmas 2021.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises the importance of a reliable universal postal service to small businesses across the UK and we know postal workers have worked exceptionally hard to meet demand over the festive period.

Ofcom, the independent regulator, has an ongoing postal market research programme which tracks the use of, and attitudes to, post among small and medium enterprise (SME) customers.

Ofcom summarises its findings in its annual monitoring update for postal services. Ofcom's last report covering 2020-21, published on 9 December 2021, found that overall satisfaction levels with Royal Mail's services remain high with 79% of SMEs being satisfied. Satisfaction among SMEs about the level of lost post sent by Royal Mail was at 70%. Ofcom aims to publish the next report towards the end of 2022.

■ **Royal Mail: Standards**

Helen Hayes:

[\[98349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) parcels and (b) letters which were not delivered by Royal Mail within its stated timeframes in November and December 2021.

Paul Scully:

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

Royal Mail is required by Ofcom to publish quality of service reports on a quarterly basis. Royal Mail's next report, covering the period October-December is expected to be published by March at the latest.

■ **Small Businesses: Finance**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[96871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2021 to Question 77452 on Future Fund, what steps his Department is taking to tackle disparities in equity finance across the regions.

Paul Scully:

The Government reaffirmed its commitment to supporting equity finance across the UK at the 2021 Spending Review. We announced over £1.6 billion of new funding for the British Business Bank's (BBB) regional investment funds, which provide debt and equity finance for SMEs to help them with their next stage of growth.

This funding will allow the BBB to set up new funds in Scotland and Wales and build on its existing activity in Northern Ireland. It will also see existing regional funds expand to allow businesses in the North East and South West of England to benefit from debt and equity finance provision.

We have also committed an additional £150 million to the Regional Angels Programme, which helps entrepreneurs across the UK access early-stage equity finance. Of the initial £100m commitment through this programme, 80 per cent went to businesses outside London and the South East of England.

■ Small Businesses: Streatham**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:****[97123]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support SMEs in Streatham that are experiencing cancellations and a decline in footfall during the covid-19.

Paul Scully:

Recognising that the rise of the Omicron variant means some businesses are likely to struggle over this period, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced on 21 December that additional support will be available for businesses who have been impacted by the new variant.

The Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant provides local councils with one-off grant funding to support hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses in England. Further information can be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-youre-eligible-for-the-omicron-hospitality-and-leisure-grant.

The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) provides local councils with grant funding to support businesses that are severely impacted by coronavirus and the rise of the Omicron variant, which are not eligible for other grant funding. Further information can be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-youre-eligible-for-the-coronavirus-additional-restrictions-grant. Around 200,000 businesses will be eligible for business grants which will be administered by Local Authorities. The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) fund is open until March 2022.

The Recovery Loan Scheme is open to all businesses, including those who have already received support under the existing COVID-19 guaranteed loan schemes. At the Autumn Budget, the Chancellor announced an extension of the scheme for SMEs from 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2022.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:[\[97124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that SMEs in Streatham are (a) kept up to date with any changes to covid-19 restrictions and (b) supported with any measures they may be required to take in response to those changes.

Paul Scully:

Throughout the pandemic, the Government has recognised the need to provide businesses, workers and the public with as much notice as possible of any changes to COVID-19 restrictions.

We published our Autumn and Winter plan for managing COVID-19 last September, including details of Plan B measures should they be required. Plan B measures are now in place to slow the spread of the virus and ease pressure on the NHS, while minimising the impact on lives and livelihoods.

The Government has provided around £400 billion of direct support for the economy through the pandemic to date, which has helped to safeguard jobs, businesses and public services in every region and nation of the UK.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Armed Forces: Charities****John Healey:**[\[96772\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the £5 million boost for armed forces charities announced by the Government on 6 September 2021, how much and what proportion of that funding has been distributed to armed forces charities; how many of those charities have received additional funding from that £5 million; and how much each of those charities has received.

Leo Docherty:

The £5 million additional funding for Armed Forces charities is being delivered via the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust through an open competition. Applications opened on 13 December 2021 and will close on 17 January 2022. Applications will be assessed after this date and the successful charities will be notified in due course.

Charities who wish to submit applications can do so via <https://covenantfund.org.uk/>.

■ **Business Interests****Florence Eshalomi:**[\[98493\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to update the business appointment rules.

Michael Ellis:

The Cabinet Office is leading the programme of work to improve the Business Appointment Rules, in collaboration with the Advisory Committee on Business

Appointments. The work will encompass the scope, clarity and enforcement of the Rules. Since last summer, there have been a number of reports and recommendations relevant to the Rules and we will carefully consider them all as part of this work.

■ **Cobra: Meetings**

Ruth Jones: [\[97117\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the attendee lists from the last three COBRA meetings.

Michael Ellis:

As a matter of policy, the Government does not comment on the details of COBR meetings.

■ **Honours: Newport West**

Ruth Jones: [\[99066\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people in Newport West constituency received an award in the Birthday Honours or New Years Honours in (a) 2015, (b) 2016, (c) 2017, (d) 2018, (e) 2019 and (f) 2020.

Michael Ellis:

The Government publishes honours transparency data broken down by both town/city and county. Data is collected using the county the recipient gives as their correspondence address. This is usually their home address rather than their place of origin. This data relates only to the main Prime Minister's List and does not include data from the Defence List or the Overseas and International List, neither of which are administered by the Cabinet Office. The transparency data for the New Year Honours and Birthday Honours Lists between 2008 and 2022 can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/honours-reform-and-operation#honours-lists>

The Government does not collate data against political administrative areas and, therefore, we cannot provide information regarding honours awarded in Newport West or any other individual constituency.

■ **Infected Blood Inquiry**

Damien Moore: [\[97058\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of proposing a timeline to respond to Sir Robert Francis QC's report in relation to the infected blood inquiry, following its publication no later than 14 March 2022.

Michael Ellis:

Sir Robert Francis QC is conducting a study that looks at options for a framework for compensation for people infected and affected by infected blood. The study will report

to the Paymaster General with its recommendations before the Infected Blood Inquiry reports. Sir Robert will deliver his study no later than 14 March 2022. The Government will give full consideration to Sir Robert's study - which is separate from the independent public inquiry.

■ **KPMG: Contracts**

Nick Smith: [\[96838\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many contracts the Government awarded to KPMG in the last two years; what the value of those contracts is; and which Department awarded those contracts.

Nick Smith: [\[96839\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason a review has been conducted into KPMG by his Department; and what his timetable is for (a) concluding and (b) publishing that review.

Michael Ellis:

Details of Government contracts above £10,000 are published on Contracts Finder: <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Search>

We closely monitor the financial health and performance of all our strategic suppliers and have regular discussions with KPMG's senior management. We are looking carefully at the measures put in place by KPMG to address issues raised by the Financial Reporting Council; this forms part of the ongoing Cabinet Office monitoring process.

■ **Ministers: Ethnic Groups**

Florence Eshalomi: [\[98490\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many Black Senior Cabinet Secretaries are employed by the Government.

Michael Ellis:

Biographical information about the Cabinet Secretary and departmental Permanent Secretaries can be found on GOV.UK.

■ **Senior Civil Servants: Ethnic Groups**

Florence Eshalomi: [\[98491\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to increase the number of black permanent secretaries within the civil service.

Michael Ellis:

The Declaration on Government Reform commits the Government to drawing on talent from all backgrounds. There are a number of initiatives aimed at supporting

Senior Civil Service ethnic minority talent including the Future Leaders Scheme, Senior Leaders Scheme and Accelerate. The latter programme brings together high performing ethnic minority Directors with aspirations to become future Permanent Secretaries.

The Declaration also emphasises the importance of drawing on talent from different sectors and encouraging movement in and out of the Civil Service. Our Public Leaders Programme is open to CEOs from across the public sector and brings together high performing deputy CEO-level public sector leaders from an ethnic minority background with aspirations to reach the highest levels of public service.

Representation of civil servants from an ethnic minority background is at an all-time high, having increased from 13.2% in 2020 to 14.3% in 2021. This is higher than the proportion of those aged 16-64 in the economically active population who are from an ethnic minority background (13.6%). Representation in our SCS is also at an all-time high at 10.6%. However, we know there is still more to do. For example, representation of ethnic minority colleagues at Director level is 6%, Directors General level is 5% and we currently have no Permanent Secretaries from an ethnic minority background. To build on the progress made over recent years and target where improvement is still needed, the Government will take a holistic approach to SCS recruitment to identify and remove barriers to underrepresented groups entering and progressing in the SCS.

■ Sick Leave: Coronavirus

Florence Eshalomi: [\[98489\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department plans to publish contingency plans made to deal with workplace absences as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Florence Eshalomi: [\[98492\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Minister has the authority to impose contingency plans in the event of severe staff shortages as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michael Ellis:

The Prime Minister has tasked ministers to work closely with their respective sectors to test preparations and contingency planning so that disruption caused by increased COVID-19 infection is minimised in public services and supply chains.

Public and private sector leaders are best placed to manage their workforces. The Government is working with sector leaders to ensure that robust plans are in place and any disruption to services is minimised, as far as possible.

The Government has already deployed a number of interventions and will continue to monitor developments.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ Clergy: Discipline

Rachael Maskell:

[\[96970\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, whether the Ecclesiastical Committee has been kept informed of the progress of the review of the Clergy Discipline Measure.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[96972\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, when a presentation of proposals to reform the Clergy Discipline Measure will be made available to members of the Ecclesiastical Committee.

Andrew Selous:

The Ecclesiastical Committee have not, as yet, been formally apprised of the recommendations made either by the Lambeth Working Group or the Implementation Group. The Implementation Group would be very happy to present their proposals to the Ecclesiastical Committee as part of the ongoing work over reforming clergy discipline. The Group envisage being in a position to do this from May 2022.

COP26

■ Climate Change: Developing Countries

Owen Thompson:

[\[93816\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps are being taken to ensure that the Government meets the COP26 goal of developed countries doubling their collective provision of climate finance for adaptation to developing countries by 2025.

Alok Sharma:

Under the UK's Presidency, 95% of the largest developed country climate finance providers made new, forward-looking commitments, delivering significant progress towards the \$100 billion goal, which will be reached by 2023 at the latest.

Record amounts of adaptation finance were pledged at COP26, both to the Adaptation Fund and the Least Developed Countries Fund, and the doubling of adaptation finance is the first time an adaptation-specific financing goal has ever been agreed globally.

We are working with developed countries and multilateral development banks (MDBs), including through the Champions Group on Adaptation Finance launched at the UN General Assembly in 2021 on the scaling-up of adaptation finance to meet the collective doubling by 2025.

DEFENCE

■ **Afghanistan: Refugees****Dan Jarvis:**[\[98304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 16 November 2021 to Question 72440 on Afghanistan: Refugees, how many of the of the 981 locally employed staff that were relocated to the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme during August 2021 were (a) civilians locally employed by his Department with LSU numbers, (b) Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office local staff, (c) Afghan National Security Forces personnel and (d) other personnel.

James Heappey:

The information requested is contained in the table below.

| BREAKDOWN OF THE LES RELOCATED TO THE UK | TOTAL NUMBER OF PRINCIPLES |
|---|----------------------------|
| Civilians Locally Employed by MOD | 495 |
| FCDO | 242 |
| British Council | 43 |
| Afghan National Security Forces Personnel | 0 |
| All other personnel | 111 |

In collating this information, we have uncovered an error in the previous answer of 10 September 2021 for which I apologise to the House. The figure of 981 given in that answer should be 891. This was a transcription error rather than an error in the underlying data.

■ **Ajax Vehicles: Costs****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[96805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 21 December 2021 to Question 91857 on Ajax Vehicles: Finance, what the CADMID costs for the (a) AJAX Armoured Fighting Vehicle and (b) Armoured Cavalry Programme are.

Jeremy Quin:

The forecast cost for the Armoured Cavalry Programme is £5,915 million, from Assessment phase through to the end of the initial support contract. This includes the GDLS-UK firm price contract of £5.5 billion for the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicles as well as wider costs such as infrastructure. CADMID costs include future support costs and these will be agreed prior to the in-service date.

■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[96783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 16 December 2021 to Question 91858 on Ajax Vehicles: Procurement, how many and what proportion of those Ajax Hulls passed quality assurance.

Jeremy Quin:

All of the 296 hulls delivered to the General Dynamic's UK factory in Wales have been subject to their internal Quality Assurance processes and have been accepted by the company.

■ Ajax Vehicles: Safety

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[93722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which office in his Department was responsible for acting upon the MOD Safety Notice in December 2018 in relation to the AJAX Armoured Fighting Vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

Safety Notices via Email (SNvE) are issued by Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S) to support the safe operation of equipment where any necessary change to an operating envelope is identified.

Safety Notice 425 issued by DE&S in December 2018 in relation to Capability Drop 0 ARES vehicles advised the mitigation actions required to protect users against the effects of vibration, whilst further work was undertaken to characterise the issue and establish what design modifications might be appropriate. Within the MOD this was the responsibility of DE&S, working in conjunction with General Dynamics UK as the prime contractor and Army Command as the user representative.

■ Apache AH-64 Helicopters: Guided Weapons

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[98225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the purchase of the Joint Air-to-Ground Missile to furnish the UK's newly-purchased AH-64Es was made as part of (a) the same agreement to buy the platform or (b) through a separate agreement.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence has not yet committed to a stockpile purchase of Joint Air to Ground Missiles. Any future procurement will be through a new Foreign Military Sales mechanism with the US Government.

■ Armed Forces Bill

Mark Fletcher: [\[904835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of provisions in the Armed Forces Bill on (a) defence personnel and (b) the Armed Forces Covenant.

Leo Docherty:

Defence has delivered the Armed Forces Act 2021 to ensure Armed Forces personnel, veterans and their families are better supported when accessing key public services.

The Act enshrines the Armed Forces Covenant in law for the first time to help prevent service personnel and veterans being disadvantaged when accessing essential services like healthcare, education and housing.

■ **Armed Forces: Skilled Workers and Technology**

Andrew Jones: [\[904834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to invest in technology and skills relevant to the armed forces throughout the UK.

Joy Morrissey: [\[904839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to invest in technology and skills relevant to the armed forces throughout the UK.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence is investing more than £6.6 billion in research and development over the next four years to ensure our Armed Forces have the technologies and skills they need to meet new and emerging threats.

In addition, the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy includes commitments to work with industry to nurture and develop relevant skills in the sectors.

■ **Army: Staff**

John Healey: [\[96766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many trained regular army soldiers there were in each of the Army's regiments and corps in each year since 2010.

James Heappey:

The number of trained Regular Soldiers as at 1 April, each year from 2017 to 2021, broken down by Arm/Service, is shown in the table below. Information for years 2010 - 2016 has already been provided as part of a previous parliamentary question and can be found at the following link: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2016-09-15/46584>

| ARM/SERVICE | 1 APR 2017 | 1 APR 2018 | 1 APR 2019 | 1 APR 2020 | 1 APR 2021 |
|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Total | 75,619 | 74,070 | 71,869 | 70,445 | 73,446 |
| Staff | 704 | 715 | 723 | 726 | 752 |
| Household Cavalry/Royal Armoured | 4,486 | 4,399 | 4,313 | 4,241 | 4,431 |

| ARM/SERVICE | 1 APR 2017 | 1 APR 2018 | 1 APR 2019 | 1 APR 2020 | 1 APR 2021 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Corps | | | | | |
| Royal Regiment of Artillery | 5,922 | 5,727 | 5,466 | 5,228 | 5,506 |
| Corps of Royal Engineers | 7,245 | 7,092 | 6,892 | 6,689 | 7,500 |
| Royal Corps of Signals | 5,658 | 5,739 | 5,623 | 5,433 | 5,676 |
| Infantry | 19,018 | 18,053 | 17,121 | 17,057 | 18,023 |
| Army Air Corps | 1,628 | 1,591 | 1,502 | 1,510 | 1,542 |
| Royal Army Chaplain's Department | 131 | 126 | 118 | 117 | 120 |
| The Royal Logistic Corps | 10,448 | 10,406 | 10,140 | 9,982 | 9,941 |
| Royal Army Medical Corps | 2,950 | 3,024 | 3,008 | 3,060 | 3,095 |
| Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers | 7,464 | 7,309 | 7,275 | 7,012 | 7,358 |
| Adjutant Generals Corps Staff & Personnel Support | 3,223 | 3,218 | 3,107 | 2,958 | 3,033 |
| Adjutant Generals Corps Royal Military Police | 1,509 | 1,463 | 1,437 | 1,355 | 1,320 |
| Adjutant Generals Corps Military Provost Service | 175 | 178 | 165 | 149 | 141 |

| ARM/SERVICE | 1 APR 2017 | 1 APR 2018 | 1 APR 2019 | 1 APR 2020 | 1 APR 2021 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Adjutant General's Corps Educational and Training | 274 | 275 | 285 | 280 | 302 |
| Adjutant General's Corps Army Legal Services Branch | 99 | 99 | 88 | 89 | 91 |
| Royal Army Veterinary Corps | 354 | 353 | 341 | 337 | 350 |
| Small Arms School Corps | 147 | 146 | 143 | 142 | 142 |
| Royal Army Dental Corps | 227 | 212 | 201 | 188 | 182 |
| Intelligence Corps | 1,693 | 1,676 | 1,648 | 1,618 | 1,689 |
| Royal Army Physical Training Corps | 443 | 435 | 429 | 433 | 435 |
| Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps | 871 | 880 | 913 | 927 | 949 |
| Royal Corps of Army Music | 697 | 690 | 674 | 675 | 646 |
| Senior Soldier Continuity Posts | 247 | 242 | 249 | 219 | 213 |

Source: Analysis Army

Notes/Caveats:

1. Figures are for the Trade Trained Regular Army only and therefore exclude Gurkhas, Full Time Reserve Service, Mobilised Reserves, Army Reserve and all

other Reserves, but includes those personnel that have transferred from GURTAM to UKTAP.

2. Figures represent personnel's Arm/Service, regardless of the Unit they are serving in.

3. At any one situation date in the above table, there are less than circa 20 people who according to the Joint Personnel Administration System (JPA), do not have a known Arm/Service attributed to them. Whilst they are included in the total, they have not been included in the breakdown.

4. All Officers of Paid Rank Colonel and above are included in Staff, regardless of previous Arm/Service.

■ **Defence: Employment**

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[904842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the availability of employment opportunities in the defence manufacturing sector.

Jeremy Quin:

Drawing on employment and turnover data taken from ONS business surveys we estimate the Ministry of Defence supports over 200,000 direct and indirect jobs with UK industry.

Our £24 billion of additional investment in Defence will help generate greater employment opportunities as will our focus in DSIS of working with industry on future opportunities and Research and Development.

■ **Maritime Patrol Aircraft: Weapons**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[96792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what armaments are the UK P-8 permitted to carry as of 4 January 2022.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[96795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what role the P-8A supports as of 4 January 2022.

Jeremy Quin:

As at 4 January 2022 the Poseidon MRA1 has been cleared for Anti-Submarine Warfare, Anti-Surface Warfare and Search and Rescue in support of submarines. It is assisted in these roles by its sophisticated suite of radar and data gathering equipment. The Mk 54 Torpedo has been cleared for use on the aircraft.

■ Military Aid: Care Homes

John Healey: [\[96775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether armed forces personnel deployed to support care homes are included within the current mandatory vaccination regime for care home staff.

James Heappey:

It is mandatory for all Service personnel deploying to patient-facing hospital or care home roles to be up to date with all applicable COVID-19 vaccinations/boosters. As at 5 January 2022, there are no military personnel currently deployed in support of care homes.

■ Military Aid: Coronavirus

Dr Luke Evans: [\[904838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the role of the armed forces in the covid-19 booster vaccination roll-out.

James Heappey:

The role of the Armed Forces has been critical in supporting the NHS to deliver the national booster vaccination programme. Service personnel have been deployed as vaccinators and planners at extremely short notice in support of the roll-out and have worked at pace over the Christmas period. By 30 December 2021, Defence had delivered c. 521,700 of booster vaccines in England, Scotland, and Wales.

■ Ministry of Defence: Information Officers

John Healey: [\[98212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many press officers have been employed by his Department in each year since 2015.

Leo Docherty:

The current number of media relations officers (press officers) within the Directorate of Defence Communications, the central lead for Defence Communications within the MOD is 18 posts. The number has remained broadly consistent since financial year (FY) 2016-17 as per the table below. Data for FY 2015-16 is not held.

| FY | DDC MEDIA RELATION OFFICERS |
|---------|-----------------------------|
| 2016-17 | 17 |
| 2017-18 | 18 |
| 2018-19 | 18 |
| 2019-20 | 18 |
| 2020-21 | 17 |

FY

DDC MEDIA RELATION OFFICERS

2021-22

18

■ Nuclear Submarines: Repairs and Maintenance**Kirsten Oswald:**[\[96924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Defence Committee's Third Report of Session 2021–22, We're going to need a bigger Navy, HC 168, published on 14 December 2021, what investigation has taken place to determine whether the twice replaced reactor core on HMS Vanguard is evidence of a generic defect affecting other vessels.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the written statement laid in the House on 5 November 2018 by the then Secretary of State for Defence, the rightt hon. Gavin Williamson, HCWS1065.

Attachments:

1. Refuel of HMS Victorious [HCWS1065.docx]

■ Rolls Royce: Recruitment**John Healey:**[\[96769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many highly skilled jobs (a) in total and (b) at Rolls Royce's Filton facility will be created as a result of the agreement between the UK and Japanese Governments to develop a joint jet engine demonstrator.

Jeremy Quin:

The UK is delighted to work with Japan, a close and highly capable partner, on plans to develop a combat air engine demonstrator. Work on the joint engine demonstrator will kickstart early this year, with the UK initially investing £30 million in planning, digital designs and innovative manufacturing developments. A further £200 million of UK funding is expected to go towards developing a full-scale demonstrator power system, supporting hundreds of highly skilled jobs, including many at Rolls-Royce's Filton facility in Bristol.

Rolls Royce have indicated that the first stage of this work is expected to support up to 50 jobs, to establish the demonstrator design requirements and associated collaboration arrangements. The total number of highly skilled jobs at the Filton facility will be subject to the output of this phase but is expected to increase from 2023.

The demonstrator will support the broader FCAS programme, which already employs over 2,000 highly skilled personnel including engineers and programmers. The FCAS programme entered the Concept and Assessment Phase last year and our industry partners are increasing their recruitment of highly skilled personnel to support this

work. The development of innovative technologies critical to the future of the Defence aerospace industry will bring together some of the very best design and manufacturing engineers, programme managers, and commercial specialists in the UK Defence industry.

■ **Sub-Saharan Africa: Radicalism**

Theo Clarke: [\[904841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to tackle violent extremist organisations in sub-Saharan Africa.

James Heappey:

The hon. Lady will have noted a similar question raised in the Topicals and in a recent PQ. The UK is committed in east, west and southern Africa, against not just the rise of violent extremism, which concerns us enormously, but also increasingly how our competitors and adversaries are using countries to develop their influence. We see that as a bad thing in the long term, and we are seeking to counter it.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Broadband: South West Hertfordshire**

Mr Gagan Mohindra: [\[97170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support the rollout of superfast fibre broadband in South West Hertfordshire constituency.

Julia Lopez:

Over 98% of premises in South West Hertfordshire can access superfast speeds (>=30Mbps). This compares with a UK average of 97%, and includes coverage provided by the Connected Counties superfast broadband project as part of the government's Superfast Broadband Programme, which provided superfast access to over 50,000 premises in Hertfordshire.

The Government is now investing £5 billion through Project Gigabit to support gigabit broadband coverage at the same time as commercial rollout so that rural communities are not left behind. The regional supplier procurement for Hertfordshire, along with Buckinghamshire and the East of Berkshire, is scheduled to commence between May and July 2022, with a contract commencement date of April - June 2023.

67 premises in Hertfordshire have also gained gigabit coverage through the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS), which helps communities and businesses in rural areas not in line for commercial rollout or other government-funded projects to get more immediate help with the costs of installing gigabit broadband. A further 147 premises are awaiting connection, giving a combined total value of £440,445.

■ Educational Visits

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[98356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the number of short-stay educational visits to the UK from EU schools; and what steps she is taking to encourage more visits from EU schools to the UK.

Nigel Huddleston:

As set out in the government's Tourism Recovery Plan, we are committed to supporting the tourism industry's return to pre-pandemic levels across England, including tourism for educational purposes.

So far, the government has provided over £35 billion in support to the tourism, leisure and hospitality sectors over the course of the pandemic in the form of grants, loans and tax breaks.

The continuing desirability of English language skills drives the UK's soft power on the world stage. The Tourism Recovery Plan recognises educational travel as an important part of the visitor economy and highlights the 2021 updates to the International Education Strategy, which sets out how we will promote English Language Training in the UK.

■ Football Governance Fan-led Review

Julie Elliott:

[\[96882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of recommendation 45 in the Fan-Led Review of Football Governance on a review of women's football; and whether she has plans to implement that recommendation.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government welcomes the Independent Fan Led Review of Football Governance and has endorsed in principle the primary recommendation of the review, that football requires a strong, independent regulator to secure the future of our national game.

The Government will now work at pace to review the report in full, including the recommendations made on a dedicated review of women's football.

The Government will continue to engage with stakeholders as we work towards issuing a full response to the report in the Spring.

■ Gambling: Compensation

James Wild:

[\[97151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make it her policy to introduce an individual right of redress for consumers who suffer harm under social responsibility obligations on gambling operators.

Chris Philp:

The Government's Gambling Act Review is taking a close look at the effectiveness of the regulatory framework and whether further protections are needed to ensure that all those who choose to gamble can do so safely. As part of its broad scope, the Review is looking at the suitability of existing consumer redress arrangements and we called for evidence on whether changes are needed to better support individuals who feel they have been treated unfairly or harmed by gambling operators in breach of their social responsibility obligations. We will publish a White Paper outlining our conclusions and proposals for reform in the coming months.

Mobile Phones: East Riding**Sir Greg Knight:**[\[98221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, which locations in the East Riding of Yorkshire will receive improved mobile coverage under the Shared Rural Network.

Julia Lopez:

We are unable to give specific details of where the Shared Rural Network (SRN) will deliver mobile coverage uplifts at this stage. However, we can confirm that, by the end of the programme, Yorkshire and The Humber will see 4G connectivity from all four mobile network operators increase to 90% from 81%, and from at least one mobile network operator expand from 95% to 99%.

The SRN is not the only focus for infrastructure investment for mobile connectivity. Mobile network operators independently invest around £2 billion annually in enhancing and improving their networks.

Music: Trade Unions**Ruth Jones:**[\[97064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when she last met the General Secretary of the Musician's Union.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

I regularly meet with a wide range of representatives of the music industry, including the Musicians' Union. I met the General Secretary of the Musicians' Union earlier this month.

Scots Gaelic Language: Broadcasting**Ian Murray:**[\[96847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what consideration has been given to support for Gaelic broadcasting in the forthcoming Broadcasting White Paper.

Julia Lopez:

The UK 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.

Minority language broadcasting has an important role to play in the UK's broadcasting ecology, providing not only an opportunity for speakers to access content in a language familiar to them, but as a means of cultural expression for communities across the UK.

The Government has been undertaking a strategic review of public service broadcasting. This will include the important role of minority language broadcasting to audiences such as Gaelic speaking community. The conclusions from that review will be set out in the Broadcasting White Paper.

EDUCATION**■ Apprentices and Education****Matt Western:**[\[93867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent comparative assessment he has made of the levels of demand among 18 to 25 year olds for (a) apprenticeships and (b) traditional further and higher education full time provision.

Alex Burghart:

Apprenticeships provide young people with the opportunity to earn and learn the skills needed to start an exciting career in a wide range of industries, everything from artificial intelligence, archaeology, data science, business management and banking. There are currently over 640 employer-designed apprenticeship standards available at all levels, ensuring a wide variety of options for young people.

Prospective apprentices can search for employer advertised apprenticeship opportunities through the 'find an apprenticeship' (FAA) service on gov.uk and create an account to manage their applications and be alerted about new apprenticeships. Employers can advertise their apprenticeship vacancies through various other commercial services, or their own in-house channels, instead of, or in addition to FAA.

Latest published figures show over 15,000 vacancies on FAA available for prospective apprentices of all ages to apply for. Although we do not routinely publish data on apprenticeship demand through FAA, figures from the 12 months to 15 July 2021 show a ratio of roughly three applicants under 25 to one vacancy.

We are supporting employers to offer more apprenticeships to young people through encouraging more flexible training models such as front-loaded training, accelerated apprenticeships, and flexi-job apprenticeships. In addition, we continue to encourage more young people to consider apprenticeships through our Apprenticeship Support

& Knowledge programme which reached over 600,000 students across England in the last academic year.

We recognise the need for skills from employers and learners, and in January 2021 we published the Skills for Jobs White Paper. This is focused on giving people the skills they need, in a way that suits them, so they can get great jobs in sectors the economy needs and boost this country's productivity.

The White Paper supports delivery of my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister's, Lifetime Skills Guarantee which is aimed at giving people the opportunity to upskill and reskill at different points in their life. This includes funding people for their first advanced level (A level equivalent) course through Free Courses for Jobs, short, flexible ways to train through employer-led Skills Bootcamps, and a Lifelong Loan Entitlement to be introduced from 2025.

It is also focused on putting employers at the heart of the skills system so education and training meets their needs and local areas planning what skills they need through Local Skills Improvement Plans.

Together with other key reforms, such as the introduction of T Levels as a high-quality alternative to A levels, employer led apprenticeships and boosting level 4 and 5 technical provision, we are ensuring that there are a wide range of opportunities available for people of all ages to get the skills they need and meet demand.

In respect of higher education (HE), 2021 has been a record year for UK students in HE admissions, not just in terms of the number of applications, but also in terms of those who have been accepted onto university courses. The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service publishes data on the number of applicants and acceptances by age to full-time undergraduate higher education. Figures for the 2021 application cycle show the number of UK domiciled 18 to 24 year old applicants was 505,880, and the number of UK domiciled 18 to 24 year old acceptances was 423,270.

■ Apprentices: Degrees

Matt Western:

[\[94475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the take-up of degree apprenticeships against his Department's initial targets for take-up.

Alex Burghart:

Apprenticeships at levels 6 and 7, including degree apprenticeships, are an important and growing part of our education and skills system and we are encouraged by the take-up so far. We have seen year on year growth since their inception, and in the last academic year there were 58,760 starts on apprenticeships at levels 6 and 7, that is 74.4% growth in 2020/21 compared to 2018/19.

Our apprenticeship reforms have put employers firmly in the driving seat and a market led approach ensures that apprenticeships are responsive to business needs both in terms of the content of the apprenticeship and availability. Employers take the

decisions about who they recruit as an apprentice, and which type and level of apprenticeship they offer.

Employers, working in partnership with providers, have already developed over 150 apprenticeship standards available at levels 6 and 7, of which over 100 include a degree. As these are jobs with training, they directly address skills shortages for employers. They are available in a wide range of sectors such as aerospace, automotive, digital, engineering, financial, health, leadership, legal, manufacturing, nuclear and protective services.

Higher and degree apprenticeships support productivity, social mobility and widening participation in higher education and employment. So, whilst we have seen positive growth of degree apprenticeships, we would like to see even more.

We continue to encourage more employers to consider using these apprenticeships to meet the skills needs of their industries. Education providers, including universities, have a vital role to play in working with employers to offer these apprenticeships wherever there is employer demand.

Attachments:

1. 94475_table [94475_apprenticeship_starts.xls]

■ **Arts and Humanities: Degrees**

Matt Western:

[\[94476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the contribution of arts and humanities degrees to the UK economy.

Matt Western:

[\[94477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the contribution of history graduates to the UK economy.

Michelle Donelan:

The government values high-quality provision in a range of subjects, including in the creative arts and humanities, that lead to positive outcomes critical for both our economy and society.

A variety of data is published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and the department on the contributions graduates make to the UK economy disaggregated by their subject of study.

HESA publishes details of graduates' employment and further study, industry, occupation, and salary fifteen months after leaving higher education in the 'Higher Education Graduate Outcomes' survey. Latest statistics refer to graduates who left their courses in 2018/19 and are available here: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/graduates>.

Graduate employment and further study by subject area is available here: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb260/figure-10>.

Industry of employment is available to view here: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb260/figure-11>.

Occupation of employment is available to view here: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb260/figure-12>.

Salary is available to view here: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/graduates/table-25>.

The department publishes employment and earnings statistics one, three, five and ten years after graduation in 'Graduate Outcomes'. Latest statistics refer to the financial year 2018/19 and are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/graduate-outcomes-leo/2018-19>.

Subject information is included in Tables 6 and 18, available to view here: <https://content.explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/api/releases/e9c9770d-3c30-4708-8cd9-6e123966f070/files/ce665e1c-4f8a-447d-e169-08d8ee096a35> and here: <https://content.explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/api/releases/e9c9770d-3c30-4708-8cd9-6e123966f070/files/52c26406-04c3-4ea9-e16e-08d8ee096a35>.

■ Further Education: Finance

Bridget Phillipson: **[94341]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the change in the level of financial reserves held by Further Education colleges between 1 March 2020 and 31 December 2021.

Alex Burghart:

The department monitors further education colleges' financial health on a regular basis and uses this information to determine where support and intervention from the Education and Skills Funding Agency and Further Education Commissioner can help colleges to improve their position.

Where colleges are at risk of running out of cash, emergency funding is considered on a case-by-case basis. This is based on a thorough assessment of each college's circumstances and the minimum funding needed to minimise disruption to learners.

■ Israel: Education

Theresa Villiers: **[96809]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the teaching and learning about Israel in UK schools.

Mr Robin Walker:

Schools can teach pupils about Israel as part of a broad and balanced curriculum, including in history and geography. For example, at key stage 3, history encompasses the study of Britain, Europe and the wider world from 1901 to the present day, and must include the Holocaust. At key stage 4, there are GCSE specifications that include Israel, in the context of the study of the Middle East.

However, we do not specify how schools should teach the curriculum and we trust teachers to use their professional judgement and understanding of their pupils to develop the right teaching approach for them.

We are aware of unfortunate issues around bias and imbalance in teaching about Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On 28 May 2021, my colleague and the former Secretary of State for Education, wrote to all schools to reiterate that they are subject to legal duties on political impartiality which are relevant to teaching about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This intervention was a clear message that this government is committed to upholding the principle of political impartiality in our schools and will act where necessary to do so. The department is also developing further guidance on political impartiality in schools, and we continue to work with the sector and others across government to ensure schools are adequately supported in this area. We hope this guidance will offer clarity to the sector and support teachers to cover sensitive political issues and topics in an appropriate manner.

■ National Tutoring Programme

Stephen Morgan: [\[93887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what due diligence his Department did on Randstad prior to being awarded the contract to run the National Tutoring Programme; and if he will make a statement.

Stephen Morgan: [\[93888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent conversations he has had with Randstad on the delivery of the National Tutoring Programme.

Stephen Morgan: [\[93889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to publish enrolment figures on the three strands of the National Tutoring Programme; and if he will make a statement.

Stephen Morgan: [\[93890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he had discussions with representatives of Randstad prior the awarding of the contract for the National Tutoring Programme.

Stephen Morgan: [\[93891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he expects the National Tutoring Programme to meet its enrolment target of 524,000 for 2020-21.

Stephen Morgan: [\[93892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he will take with Randstad to improve the online delivery platform for the National Tutoring Programme.

Stephen Morgan: [\[93893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of people enrolled on the National Tutoring Programme in 2020-21 were in receipt of free school meals.

Mr Robin Walker:

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) is on track to reach hundreds of thousands more pupils this year, as part of a significant expansion to give schools more flexibility to deliver tutoring that works for them and ensure no child is left behind.

The department has set high standards for the programme and feedback from schools shows the positive impact it is having in helping pupils to catch up. Building on the success of last year, we are confident of reaching our ambitious target to provide tutoring to up to 6 million pupils over the next three years.

Randstad Education was awarded the contract to run the tutoring partner and academic mentors element of the NTP for the 2021/22 academic year following a fair, open competition in accordance with government procurement regulations. As part of this process, the department undertook open market engagement to get feedback from a range of stakeholders, including tuition providers.

The department is working closely with Randstad to build on the successes of year one. The delivery and performance of the NTP is monitored closely through a comprehensive governance process. As part of this process, the department regularly meets with senior Randstad colleagues, including the Randstad UK CEO, to highlight and address issues.

To ensure continuous improvement, Randstad is working with schools and tuition partners on improvements to the digital platform. This includes changes to allow tuition partners to undertake the admin work on behalf of the school when placing orders and making the overall ordering process simpler for schools.

NTP participation data has not yet been published. The department continues to collect data from schools for all three strands of the programme (school-led tutoring, tuition partners and academic mentors) and data on progress will be published shortly.

An independent evaluation of the programme for the current academic year is being undertaken by the National Foundation for Educational Research.

■ Non-teaching Staff: Pay**Rachael Maskell:**[\[93805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of steps to improve the pay of teaching support staff.

Mr Robin Walker:

Teaching support staff, and all school staff, have shown their professionalism and dedication throughout the COVID-19 outbreak to make sure children continue to receive an excellent education.

The department does not set pay for teaching and non-teaching support staff in schools. Instead, employers have the freedom to set pay and conditions to suit their circumstances.

Most schools use the local government pay scales and employers are required to pay at least the statutory minimum wage. The department encourages employers to pay more when they can afford to do so.

■ Out-of-school Education

Kim Leadbeater:

[93926]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential adequacy of penalties faced by those prosecuted for operating illegal schools; and if they will make a statement.

Mr Robin Walker:

It is a criminal offence under section 96 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 to conduct an independent educational institution unless it is registered. Those found guilty of this offence can be fined an unlimited amount or face up to 6 months in prison.

The Department for Education and Ofsted continue to investigate any settings where intelligence or evidence suggest the operation of an unregistered school. Section 97 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 permits no-notice inspections of settings believed to be operating in breach of the registration requirement.

Between 1 January 2016 and 31 August 2021, 114 settings inspected under section 97 were identified as operating as an unregistered independent school. Joint work between the Department for Education and Ofsted has led to 101 of these settings changing their provision to no longer operate unlawfully, in breach of the 2008 Act. In that time, 5 successful prosecutions have been brought against groups responsible for operating illegal schools. Anyone who suspects that an unregistered school may be operating may make a referral via our dedicated web page here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-an-unregistered-school>.

The department's policy statement sets out the factors we consider when considering whether to proceed with a prosecution, and we will always pursue a prosecution when this is in the public interest:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/826588/Prosecuting_unregistered_independent_schools_policy_statement_21_August.pdf.

The department has committed to taking forward measures to make it easier to investigate and prosecute unregistered schools, and these will be introduced when a suitable legislative opportunity arises.

■ Out-of-school Education: Discrimination

Kim Leadbeater:

[93927]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he plans to take steps to prevent children who receive all their education in (a) unregistered and (b) unregulated religious schools from being exposed to homophobia, sexism and extremism.

Mr Robin Walker:

It is a criminal offence under section 96 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 to conduct an independent educational institution unless it is registered. The Department for Education and Ofsted continue to investigate any settings where intelligence or evidence suggest the operation of an unregistered school. Section 97 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 permits no-notice inspections of settings believed to be operating in breach of the registration requirement.

All unregistered schools present a safeguarding risk to the children attending since they are not regulated by the department. This means that these schools are not subject to inspection and so assurances cannot be made as to the quality and appropriateness of the education provided, the safety of the premises or the suitability of the adults responsible for the setting. The department will take regulatory action against any school found to be operating without registration, in breach of section 96 of the 2008 Act. This action can include the prosecution of those conducting and responsible for such settings.

Between 1 January 2016 and 31 August 2021, 114 settings inspected under section 97 were identified as operating as an unregistered independent school. Joint work between the Department for Education and Ofsted has led to 101 of these settings changing their provision to no longer operate unlawfully, in breach of the 2008 Act. In that time, 5 successful prosecutions have been brought against groups responsible for operating illegal settings.

The department has committed to taking forward measures to make it easier to investigate and prosecute unregistered schools, and these will be introduced when a suitable legislative opportunity arises.

■ Remote Education**Stephanie Peacock:**[\[93011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure online home-learning options remain available for children who are unable to attend school for health reasons post the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Robin Walker:

COVID-19 continues to be a virus that we learn to live with and the imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's education remains. Our priority is for schools to deliver face-to-face, high-quality education to all pupils. The evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, mental and physical health.

School attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age and it is a priority to ensure that as many children as possible regularly attend school. However, the department's current guidance for remote education states that schools affected by the remote education temporary continuity direction must provide remote education for state-funded, school-aged pupils whose attendance would be contrary

to public health advice or government guidance or law relating to COVID-19 during the 2021/22 academic year.

This means that from September 2021, schools should offer remote education to pupils who test positive for COVID-19 or present with COVID-19 symptoms, where they are well enough to be educated from home.

In terms of considering home education options for children who are unable to attend school for health reasons beyond the COVID-19 outbreak, the department is carefully considering the role that remote approaches could play in the education system longer-term, recognising the opportunities that remote education has presented, alongside the challenges.

The department recognises that technology in education has been essential for continuing to teach remotely during the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent school and college closures. We are building on the department's significant investment in devices, platforms, training and digital services to develop a sustainable strategy for digital technology in education.

■ School Leaving

Matt Western:

[93866]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the proportion of students who left school in summer 2021, aged 18, who did not go onto further and higher education.

Alex Burghart:

The sustained destinations of students who completed 16-18 study in summer 2021 are not yet available. The latest available data is for those students who completed 16-18 study in summer 2019. To be counted as having a sustained destination, the student must have had six contiguous months of activity in their destination year. The main destinations for this cohort are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/477e260e-ac3a-40d5-a7a9-b1e7a596c2c8>.

Of the 55.2% of students that did not sustain a further or higher education destination: 2.6% were in other education, 24.9% in employment, 8.4% in apprenticeships, 13.8% did not sustain a destination, and activity was not captured for the remaining 5.5%.

In addition to destination measures, the participation in education and training and employment publication may also be of interest: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/participation-in-education-and-training-and-employment>.

This release provides official measures of participation and not in education, employment or training (NEET) for 16-18 year olds. The estimates relate to a snapshot of activities at the end of the calendar year, and proportions are given as that of the population. Estimates for end 2021 will be published in June 2022.

■ Schools: Admissions

Caroline Lucas:

[\[94316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to add to the criteria by which local authorities can make changes to Published Admission Numbers proposals for maintained schools to include consideration of (a) fairness for disadvantaged communities and (b) decisions to re-distribute pupil places based on the number of children living near their local school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Robin Walker:

A school's admission authority is responsible for setting the published admission number (PAN) for each year in which children normally enter the school. This is usually the reception year in primary school and year 7 in secondary school. They must do so in line with the requirements of the school admissions code.

The local authority is the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools. For voluntary aided and foundation schools, the school's governing body is the admission authority and is therefore responsible for setting the PAN.

Once they have determined their PAN, an admission authority may admit above that number but must notify the local authority of this in time to allow it to deliver its co-ordination responsibilities effectively. They may also admit above their PAN at any time through in-year admissions.

Where an admission authority proposes to decrease their PAN, they must first consult locally in accordance with the requirements set out in the school admissions code. This includes consulting with parents and all other admission authorities within the relevant area.

Community and voluntary controlled schools have the right to object to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator if the PAN set for them by the local authority is lower than they would wish. The decision of the Adjudicator is binding and enforceable.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[97172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing targeted financial assistance to schools in response to the omicron covid-19 variant to support the (a) implementation of additional covid-19 safety measures on their premises and (b) purchase of air filtration devices where natural ventilation is limited due to design and capacity of buildings.

Mr Robin Walker:

The measures in place day-to-day in schools, colleges and nurseries to tackle COVID-19 are based on the latest scientific advice and strike a balance between managing transmission risk and reducing disruption to children and young people's education.

The priority is for schools, colleges and nurseries to deliver face-to-face, high-quality education to all children, pupils and students. The evidence is clear that being out of

education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, and mental and physical health. To manage COVID-19 transmission, education providers continue to ensure good hygiene for everyone, maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, keep occupied spaces well ventilated and follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation, face coverings and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.

To support schools with these measures, the department provided carbon dioxide monitors to all state-funded education providers, including nurseries, schools and further education colleges, backed by £25 million in government funding. We have now delivered on our public commitment with over 353,000 monitors delivered in the autumn term. Feedback following this roll out shows that in most schools, colleges and nurseries existing ventilation measures are sufficient.

For the very few cases where maintaining good ventilation is not possible, the department is supplying up to 7,000 air purifiers cleaning units. This is on top of the 1,000 funded units for special educational needs and disabilities and alternative provision providers that we announced in November. We have also made over £100 million of funding available to secondary schools, colleges, and specialist providers to support them with the workforce costs associated with delivering on-site testing, and continue to do so, in line with departmental testing policy.

This should also be seen in the wider context of funding for schools. Overall, core schools funding will increase by £4 billion in financial year 2022/23 compared to 2021/22, a 5% real terms per pupil boost. This includes an additional £1.2 billion for schools in the new school supplementary grant for financial year 2022/23. This funding boost will rapidly give schools the resources they need to rise to the challenges of COVID-19 response and recovery, increase teacher pay, and meet the cost of the Health and Social Care Levy, while continuing their work to raise attainment and educational outcomes for all children and young people.

The vast majority of schools are operating with a cumulative surplus, with only a small percentage having a deficit. The latest published figures show that the percentage of both academy trusts and local authority maintained schools in surplus or breaking even increased compared to the previous reporting year. At the end of financial year 2020/21, 92% of local authority maintained schools were in cumulative surplus or breaking even, compared to 88% the previous year. At the end of the 2019/20 academic year, 96% of academy trusts were in surplus or breaking even, compared to 94% the previous year.

■ Schools: Finance

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[94342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance he provides to (a) primary and (b) secondary schools on the level of financial reserves that schools should have; what guidance his Department provides on the purposes for which schools can draw down on those reserves; and what the timescale are over which reserves should be rebuilt when below the recommended level.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department trusts schools to manage their own finances, and we do not produce guidance on what is an adequate reserve level for academy trusts or schools. The amount of reserves that is appropriate to set aside will depend on the type and size of the academy trust or school as well as the particular risks that they face.

Academy trusts and schools have the flexibility to make their own decisions on how to prioritise their spending to invest in a range of resources and activities that will best support their staff and pupils. They can draw on their reserves for a range of planned and sensible reasons, for example, to spend on capital projects.

Academy trusts are directly accountable to the department for their financial management. Any academy trust reporting a cumulative deficit must agree a recovery plan with the Education and Skills Funding Agency to put the trust back on a financially sustainable path.

Local authority maintained schools are accountable to their local authority for their financial management.

Schools: Staff**Rachael Maskell:**[\[94434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of requiring teaching and school staff to receive covid-19 vaccinations.

Mr Robin Walker:

Vaccines are the best way we can protect ourselves and help keep children and young people in face-to-face education.

People aged 18 years and over, and those aged 16 years and over who are at risk (including health and social care workers) will be offered a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. All eligible staff and students aged 12 and over are encouraged to take up the offer of the vaccine, including boosters where eligible.

However, unless an employee is unable to do their role as a result of being unvaccinated, which is unlikely to be the case in schools, then employers cannot set vaccination status as a condition of employment.

The government currently has no plans to make vaccinations mandatory for teachers in schools or colleges.

Schools: Ventilation**Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[98435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many air cleaning units have been provided to (a) primary and (b) secondary schools in (i) City of Durham constituency and (ii) County Durham as at 4 January 2022.

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[98436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which schools in the City of Durham are yet to receive air cleaning units.

Mr Robin Walker:

During the autumn term, we provided carbon dioxide monitors to all state-funded education providers, including early years, schools, and further education providers, backed by £25 million in government funding.

We have now delivered on our public commitment with over 353,000 monitors delivered in the Autumn term. Feedback suggests that schools are finding the monitors helpful to manage ventilation and, in most schools, colleges and nurseries, existing ventilation measures are sufficient.

The department will also make up to 8,000 air cleaning units available for poorly ventilated teaching spaces in state-funded education providers, where quick fixes to improve ventilation are not possible.

Deliveries will start from next week to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision schools, colleges, and nurseries. These were allocated in the first application round announced in November 2021.

The second round of applications is open until 9am on 17 January 2022. All state funded schools, colleges and nurseries can apply. Special and alternative provision providers that were not successful or did not apply in the first round are also eligible to apply in this round. Once applications have closed, all applications will be assessed against strict criteria and allocated to providers based on need. Schools, colleges and nurseries with successful applications will be contacted individually to arrange delivery, with deliveries expected from February 2022.

For those providers that are not eligible for funded units, the online marketplace provides a route to purchasing air cleaning units directly from suppliers at a suitable specification and competitive price. Further information is available here:

<https://s107t01-webapp-v2-01.azurewebsites.net/list/air-cleaning>.

■ Schools: Vocational Guidance

Stephen Morgan:

[\[93880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of the number and proportion of schools that have access to a professional careers advisor.

Stephen Morgan:

[\[93881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of schoolchildren who have had access to a professional careers advisor in each of the last five years.

Stephen Morgan:**[93882]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of children who took part in work experience through their schools in each of the last five years.

Alex Burghart:

The government's careers statutory guidance sets out that all schools and colleges should use the internationally recognised Gatsby Benchmarks of good career guidance, to develop and improve their careers provision. The benchmarks define eight elements of an excellent careers programme, including experiences of workplaces and personal guidance.

Careers leaders in England can measure how well their school or college is doing against the benchmarks by using Compass, a digital tool provided by the Careers and Enterprise Company. This data is published annually by the Careers and Enterprise Company, most recently in the Trends in Careers Education report, published in December 2021.

Gatsby Benchmark 6, experiences of workplaces, states that every pupil should have first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities and expand their networks. The criteria for achieving the benchmark are that every pupil should have an experience of the workplace by the age of 16, with a further such experience by age 18. Compass data shows the proportion of schools (including special schools and alternative provision) that had either achieved or partially achieved benchmark 6 in each of the last five years:

- End of 2020/21 academic year - 92.76%
- End of 2019/20 academic year - 96.16%
- End of 2018/19 academic year - 95.51%
- End of 2017/18 academic year - 64.11%
- End of 2016/17 academic year - 67.8%

Gatsby Benchmark 8, personal guidance, states that every pupil should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a careers adviser, who could be internal (a member of school staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level (guidance which can be found on page 38 of:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1002972/Careers_statutory_guidance.pdf). The criteria for achieving

the benchmark are that every pupil should have at least one such interview by the age of 16, and the opportunity for a further interview by the age of 18. Compass data shows the proportion of schools (including special schools and alternative provision) that had either achieved or partially achieved benchmark 8 in each of the last five years:

- End of 2020/21 academic year – 92.98%

- End of 2019/20 academic year – 91.38%
- End of 2018/19 academic year - 91.08%
- End of 2017/18 academic year - 69.94%
- End of 2016/17 academic year - 65%

Recent data is affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, which made it more challenging for schools to deliver their careers programmes. The Careers and Enterprise Company supported the delivery of virtual activities.

The level of school access to a professional careers adviser is good. According to Trends in Careers Education 2021, Gatsby Benchmark 8, personal guidance, continues to be the strongest performing benchmark among schools and colleges. 80% of secondary schools reported providing most of their students with an interview with a qualified careers adviser by the end of year 11.

■ **Sex and Relationship Education: Endometriosis**

Ben Bradley:

[\[93894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including information on endometriosis in the RSE curriculum.

Mr Robin Walker:

From September 2020, relationships education became compulsory for all primary school-aged pupils, relationships and sex education compulsory for all secondary school-aged pupils, and health education compulsory for all pupils in state-funded schools in England.

Statutory guidance on the new curriculum has been published and is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>. This guidance states that pupils should be taught key facts about the menstrual cycle, including what is an average period, the range of menstrual products and implications for emotional and physical health.

To support schools further the department developed teacher training modules which are freely available to download from GOV.UK. We worked closely with Endometriosis UK when drawing up the 'changing adolescent body' module which references endometriosis.

■ **Skilled Workers: Vacancies**

Matt Western:

[\[93865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment has he made of trends in the level of skills shortages in sectors of strategic importance across the UK economy.

Alex Burghart:

We know that a lack of access to skills is one among a number of possible barriers preventing employers from being able to access the workforce they need, alongside others such as pay, progression opportunities or working conditions.

Where there is a genuine skills shortage affecting a key sector, the Department for Education will work with partners in industry and across government to take action. For example, we are delivering training to become an HGV Driver to 11,000 people via new Skills Bootcamps, as part of a wider package which also includes increasing testing capacity to help more people get out onto the road more quickly.

To help inform government and industry action, we gather data through different sources, including the Employer Skills Survey. The most recent version of this survey highlighted skills shortages in construction and manufacturing, where 36% of vacancies were proving hard to fill because of applicants lacking the appropriate skills, qualifications or experience (compared to an average of 24%). We are helping employers to address these shortages through our programme of skills reforms, which is leading to a growing number of new apprenticeship starts, the creation of new Skills Bootcamps up and down the country, and the introduction of new T Levels to help more young people get the technical skills they need to thrive in the world of work.

We are also drawing on analysis undertaken by groups and organisations including Construction Industry Training Board, Engineering Construction Industry Training Board and the Green Jobs Taskforce, which point, for example, to the need for 35,000 heat pump installers to be trained by 2028. We are working with industry to address these gaps through the Construction Skills Delivery Group and, in 2022, a new cross-cutting delivery group on green jobs.

■ Supply Teachers: Coronavirus**Rachael Maskell:****[93803]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will seek to increase the number of agency teaching staff as a result of shortages of teachers due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department knows that in areas with high absence, schools have found it difficult to recruit supply staff. We want to make sure that as many supply staff as possible are available to schools and colleges.

The government has asked former teachers who have the skills and time to return to the classroom to sign up. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to all school leaders before Christmas and targeted communications went out to encourage those who are eligible to sign up via the Get Into Teaching website.

At the same time, the government continues to offer financial support to schools and has extended the COVID-19 Workforce Fund until February half term. Funding covers the cost of staff for schools facing significant staff absences and financial pressures.

■ Supply Teachers: Vetting

Stephen Morgan: [\[97031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many people have signed up to a supply teaching agency in response to his appeal of 16 December 2021 to date.

Stephen Morgan: [\[97032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many applicants to supply teaching agencies have applied for a Disclosure and Barring Service check in each of the last six months.

Stephen Morgan: [\[97033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many applicants to supply teaching agencies have received a successful Disclosure and Barring Service check in each of the last six months.

Mr Robin Walker:

We are extremely grateful to all the teachers who are responding to our call to return temporarily to the classroom to support our schools whilst cases of the COVID-19 Omicron variant continue to rise.

We are in close contact with supply agencies to monitor the interest they receive to help schools during this time. However, supply agencies are private employment businesses operating independently of the department. Therefore, the department is not able to provide data on the numbers of supply teachers or which agencies they are working with. The department does not hold the information requested regarding pre-employment checks since the Disclosure and Barring Service is a non-departmental public body of the Home Office.

■ Teachers: Labour Turnover

Rachael Maskell: [\[93804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) assessment he has made of the adequacy of the number of teachers and (b) steps he is taking to improve teacher retention.

Mr Robin Walker:

The number of teachers remains high, with 461,088 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff working in schools across the country. This is approximately 20,000 more than in 2010.

The 2020/21 academic year saw an increase of more than 7,275 in FTE teachers in state-funded schools in England. This equates to a 1.6% growth on the year before, the largest observed in the last 10 years, and has resulted in the largest qualified teacher stock since the school workforce census began in 2010/11.

We have provisionally recruited 37,069 new entrants to initial teacher training (ITT) in the 2021/22 academic year compared to 40,377 (revised) in 2020/21, and 33,799 in

2019/20 before the COVID-19 outbreak. This is a decrease of 8% compared to 2020/21, but an increase of 10% compared to 2019/20.

In terms of retention, over two-thirds of teachers who started 5 years ago are still teaching today, and of those who started 10 years ago, nearly 3 in five 5 still teaching.

However, we recognise more needs to be done. One of our top priorities is to ensure that we continue to attract, retain and develop the highly skilled teachers we need to inspire the next generation, attract more people into teaching and enable them to succeed.

We are creating an entitlement to at least 3 years of structured training, support, and professional development for all new teachers, to bring teaching into line with other prestigious professions such as law, accountancy, and medicine. Underpinning this is the ITT core content framework and the early career framework. Together, these ensure that new teachers will benefit from at least 3 years of evidence based training, across ITT and into their induction.

Teacher retention is key to ensuring effective teacher supply and quality, and we are taking action to support teachers to stay in the profession and thrive. We have published a range of resources to help address teacher workload and wellbeing, and support schools to introduce flexible working practices. These include the staff wellbeing charter and the workload reduction toolkit.

We remain committed to increasing teacher starting salaries to £30,000 so that teaching remains an attractive graduate option.

Additionally, we are offering tax-free bursaries worth £24,000 and scholarships worth £26,000 to encourage talented trainees into physics, chemistry, mathematics, and computing, as well as bursaries worth £15,000 in languages, geography and design and technology, and £10,000 in biology. We have also recently announced a levelling up premium worth up to £3,000 tax-free for maths, physics, chemistry, and computing teachers in years 1 to 5 of their careers. This will support recruitment and retention of specialist teachers in these subjects and in the schools and areas that need them most.

■ Teachers: Recruitment

Munira Wilson:

[\[98521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much the Government spent on the campaign to bring retired and ex-teachers back to teaching to cover covid-19 absences in December 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

As of 5 January, the spend relating to marketing and communications in support of the national appeal for former teachers to return to the profession is £3,882.69. This amount consists of:

- Design work for a toolkit of assets to be used by partners of the department: £2,227.80.
- Paid Search Advertising: £1,654.89.

■ Teachers: Training

Stephen Morgan:

[94500]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many teachers left Initial Teacher Training before earning their Newly Qualified Teacher status in each of the last five years.

Mr Robin Walker:

Data on new entrants starting initial teacher training (ITT) is published annually in the ITT Census and the latest publication is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/initial-teacher-training-census>.

Data on the outcomes of final year trainees is published annually in the ITT Performance Profiles publication. The latest publication is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/initial-teacher-training-performance-profiles-2019-to-2020>.

These datasets are not directly comparable where they cover different cohorts of trainees.

Luke Pollard:

[94522]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what representations his Department has received on the introduction of initial teacher training bursaries for religious education teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Luke Pollard:

[94523]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he made of the potential effect on levels of recruitment of the introduction of initial teacher training bursaries for religious education teachers when developing that policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department offers bursaries for initial teacher training (ITT) to incentivise applications for ITT courses. The bursaries on offer are reviewed each year to take account of factors including historic recruitment, forecasted economic conditions, and teacher supply need in each subject. This provides flexibility in responding to the need to attract new teachers, meaning money is spent where it is most needed.

In the 2020/21 academic year, the department exceeded the postgraduate ITT target in religious education at 129% of the original target. In the 2021/22 academic year, the equivalent target was extremely close to being met, at 99% of the target. As a result, we have focused the bursaries on subjects where it is hardest to attract sufficient applicants. We will review the need for financial incentives across all subjects again, using the latest available data, before announcing the bursaries for the 2023/24 academic year.

Luke Pollard:

[\[94524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what advice his Department has given to Teaching School Hubs on working with subject teacher associations such as the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education in making links with their local teacher network groups and offering wider training for serving teachers.

Mr Robin Walker:

The key priorities of teaching school hubs are delivery of the early career framework, national professional qualifications, initial teacher training, the appropriate body role, and wider continuing professional development (CPD), in that order. The department has not provided specific advice to teaching school hubs on working with subject teacher associations in developing their wider CPD. Any subject-specific CPD must be aligned with relevant subject-specific programmes funded by the department, such as mathematics hubs.

■ Universities: Antisemitism

Peter Gibson:

[R] [\[93902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to tackle rising levels of antisemitism on university campuses.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is clear that antisemitism is abhorrent and we expect higher education (HE) providers to be at the forefront of tackling the challenge of it.

We have pushed for several years for greater action from HE providers to address antisemitism. We have encouraged HE providers to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism to give clarity of what constitutes antisemitic behaviour. This will enable providers to better understand and recognise incidences of antisemitism and take action to address them.

In October 2020, the former Secretary of State for Education, my right hon. Friend for South Staffordshire, wrote to all HE providers urging adoption of the IHRA definition, stating that we would consider further action if HE providers did not adopt. The former Secretary of State for Education also sent a follow-up letter in May 2021, reinforcing the government's expectation that providers adopt the IHRA definition, stressing the even greater importance of doing so considering increased numbers of antisemitic incidents recorded as a result of the conflict in the Middle East.

In response to this, on 10 November 2021, the Office for Students published a list of HE providers who have adopted the definition. I am pleased to report good progress in the last year: an increase from around 30 to over 200 providers having adopted. This includes the vast majority of universities. I will continue to urge all HE providers to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism

Adoption of the IHRA definition is only a first step towards ridding HE of antisemitism. While the government considers that adoption of the definition is crucial, it is not enough on its own. As my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has

previously announced publicly, we are leading a summit later this month specifically focused on tackling antisemitism in HE. This event will include key stakeholders from the sector to examine what more can be done to make Jewish students and staff feel safe on campus.

■ Workforce Development Fund

Naz Shah:

[\[96915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Workforce Development Fund will be extended to (a) maintained nurseries and (b) early year settings.

Will Quince:

The Workforce Development Fund is funding from the Department of Health and Social Care to support the continuing professional development (CPD) of staff across the adult social care sector. There are no plans to extend it to maintained nursery schools or early years settings.

Separately, the Department for Education is investing up to £180 million to build a stronger, more expert workforce in the early years sector, where we know that the COVID-19 outbreak has exacerbated the outcomes gap and set back children's learning and development, particularly in language and maths, hitting those from disadvantaged backgrounds the hardest. This funding comprises the Early Years Education Recovery Programme, the Nuffield Early Language Programme and a further investment in the Professional Development Programme.

These initiatives complement our reforms to the Early Years Foundation Stage to accelerate and embed real change for young children, which is more important than ever in light of the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. This recovery package aims to target disadvantaged areas and will largely be available to maintained nursery schools and childminders.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Air Pollution

Geraint Davies:

[\[98183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with stakeholders on updating the Daily Air Quality Index to align it more closely with the new World Health Organisation air quality guidelines published in September 2022.

Jo Churchill:

We are conducting a holistic review of the way we communicate air quality information and advice. The Daily Air Quality Index is included in the scope of this review.

A steering group comprised of specialists in the fields of air quality science, public health, behavioural science and digital communications, along with representatives

from vulnerable communities, the general public and central and local Government has been appointed to advise on the scope and nature of the review.

The steering group met for the first time in December 2021.

We will shortly be setting targets to improve air quality under the Environment Act which will be tailored to our domestic context.

Geraint Davies: [\[98195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which measures in the National Air Pollution Control Programme, published March 2019, relating to the emission reduction commitments for fine particulate matter (PM2.5) have been implemented.

Jo Churchill:

The National Air Pollution Control Programme (NAPCP), published in March 2019, refers to legislation to prohibit the sale of the most polluting fuels used in domestic burning. The Air Quality (Domestic Solid Fuels Standards) (England) Regulations 2020 were made on 7 October 2020, and most measures came into force on 1 May 2021.

The NAPCP also refers to reducing PM2.5 levels. The Environment Act, which gained Royal Assent on 9 November 2021, establishes a duty to set a target on PM2.5.

■ **Ammonia: Pollution Control**

Geraint Davies: [\[98196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the National Air Pollution Control Programme published in March 2019, which measures that were considered in order to comply with emission reduction commitments for ammonia have been implemented as of 5 January 2022.

Jo Churchill:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 5 January 2022 to PQ [93691](#).

■ **Clean Air Zones: Greater Manchester**

Navendu Mishra: [\[98465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the impact of the Greater Manchester Clean Air Zone on jobs in (a) Stockport and (b) across Greater Manchester.

Jo Churchill:

It is for local authorities to develop local plans that will achieve statutory NO₂ limit values within the shortest possible time. Research from 2012 indicated that the burden associated with a range of pollutants, including NO₂, had a total cost of up to £2.7bn nationally through its impact on productivity. High levels of air pollution will

continue to have a significant impact on productivity, alongside its significant impact on public health.

Work on developing the underpinning evidence for the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) has been undertaken by Greater Manchester authorities including an assessment of the effects and impacts on local residents and businesses. This takes account of employment factors. The latest publicly available analysis published by Greater Manchester authorities is available at: <https://cleanairgm.com/technical-documents>. Greater Manchester have identified in their analysis that there were 224 points predicted to remain in exceedance of NO₂ levels in 2021 without further action, with a maximum predicted in 2022 of 53 µg/m³ NO₂. The Government has provided Greater Manchester authorities with £168 million funding to support delivery of the CAZ.

■ Deposit Return Schemes

Andrew Percy:

[\[96842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to encourage deposit return schemes for cans and bottles.

Jo Churchill:

A second consultation on introducing a deposit return scheme for drinks containers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland was held last year. The Government is analysing the responses to that consultation, with a view to publishing a Government response early this year.

■ Litter

Andrew Percy:

[\[96844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to increase enforcement against littering.

Jo Churchill:

In recent years we have bolstered councils' enforcement powers by almost doubling the maximum fixed penalty for littering from £80 to £150 and giving councils in England (outside London) new civil penalty powers to tackle littering from vehicles. Councils also have powers to prosecute anyone caught littering which can lead to a fine of up to £2,500. It is up to local councils to decide how they use their enforcement powers

We have published improved guidance to councils and others on the use of their fixed penalty powers for littering. New powers under the Environment Act will allow us to ensure these powers are always used with a high degree of professionalism.

We will continue to review any new evidence regarding the effectiveness of the current enforcement regime.

■ Wood-burning Stoves

Geraint Davies: [\[98187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending the emission limits for appliance exemptions for wood burning stoves after the implementation of the Ecodesign regulations on 1 January 2022.

Geraint Davies: [\[98192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how Ecodesign regulations for wood burning appliances that came into force on 1 January 2022 will complement and interact with the requirements of the Clean Air Act 1993.

Jo Churchill:

Ecodesign regulations are now in force and the Clean Air Act 1993 requirements in smoke control areas will remain, as the two regulate different things. The Ecodesign regulations will raise emission and efficiency standards for stoves across the whole of the UK whilst allowing additional smoke emission assessment to remain in place for smoke control areas under the Clean Air Act.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: British Nationals Abroad

Dan Jarvis: [\[98303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the UK government held (a) formal or (b) informal agreements with the Afghan National Directorate of Security on the delivery of work (i) for or (ii) with UK personnel in Afghanistan.

James Cleverly:

Before the fall of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Government supported efforts to build the capacity of Afghan institutions, including the National Directorate of Security, Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army to help counter security threats to Afghanistan and the United Kingdom.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[98386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 17 September 2021 to Question 51022, if he will provide an update on the number of British Nationals who have registered their presence in Afghanistan with his Department that live in Slough constituency.

James Cleverly:

We strongly encourage all British nationals in Afghanistan to check Travel Advice and Confirm their Presence, however we are unable to provide constituency data as address information is not requested on the Confirm Your Presence registration system.

■ Afghanistan: Home Country Nationals

Dan Jarvis:

[\[98302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 16 November 2021 to Question 71332 on Afghanistan: Home Country Nationals, how many Afghan nationals with UK visas who served (a) as interpreters and (b) in other locally employed staff roles are in Afghanistan as of 5 January 2022; and what steps her Department is taking to facilitate the return of those people to the UK.

James Cleverly:

Of the 311 principals who had been approved for resettlement under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme who we were not able to evacuate before the end of OP PITTING, 160 are currently known to be in Afghanistan and 50 in neighbouring Third Countries. Helping all those who want to leave Afghanistan and who are eligible to come to the UK remains a priority. The Joint Afghanistan Casework Unit, staffed by officials from the Home Office, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and Ministry of Defence, is taking forward the UK's commitment to resettle those eligible to come to the UK. The ARAP scheme remains open.

■ Afghanistan: Politics and Government

Chi Onwurah:

[\[96877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the relative effectiveness of the different approaches to the withdrawal from Afghanistan of the UK and French Governments; and whether those different approaches were the result of different policies or different intelligence.

James Cleverly:

The FCDO worked closely alongside our diplomatic and military allies throughout the end of the Resolute Support Mission and the withdrawal of our diplomatic staff from Afghanistan and we continue to learn lessons from events there over the last few months. The UK and France share many interests in Afghanistan. Our shared contribution to Afghanistan over the past twenty years has ensured that a generation of women and girls received an education and enabled significant development gains. We continue to stand for these values and to work closely with our allies to deliver our objectives.

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Hilary Benn:

[\[96779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the impact of the recent change to the eligibility rules for the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme on Afghan staff still living in the country who were contractors working for the British Council.

Hilary Benn: [\[96780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many staff who formerly worked as contractors for the British Council in Afghanistan will no longer be eligible for resettlement in the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme as a result of the recently announced changes to the eligibility rules.

James Cleverly:

In August 2021 the Government evacuated British Council employees and agreed to resettle more than 50 British Council contractors. Many have already arrived in the UK with their families, and the Government continues to assist those eligible to come to the UK to do so. The Government will continue to honour its commitment to consider further British Council contractors for resettlement. As Victoria Atkins MP announced to the House on 6 January, they will be considered for resettlement under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

Dan Jarvis: [\[98300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what financial support she is making available to Afghan nationals to cover living expenses, who have received their UK visa under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy but who are still waiting in a third-country as a result of travel restrictions.

James Cleverly:

If they are not being supported by others, the UK, through its Embassies and High Commissions, is able to provide reasonable real-life support to ARAP-eligible Afghan nationals in a third country awaiting relocation to the UK. Such support could include, for example, safe board and lodging and essential or urgent medical care.

■ Afghanistan: Repatriation

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[98388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the support available to British nationals who have fled from Afghanistan to neighbouring countries to enable them to return to the UK.

James Cleverly:

Since Operation PITTING ended, the FCDO has supported over 1,100 British nationals and their family members to leave Afghanistan safely. This includes over 200 British nationals and dependents that have departed on Qatari charter flights from Kabul to Doha. We are working closely with international partners to facilitate routes out of Afghanistan. Full diplomatic and consular services are available at regional Embassies and High Commissions outside of Afghanistan.

■ Arctic and Shipping

Stephen Doughty:

[\[98313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when she last discussed (a) the security of the Arctic polar regions and (b) freedom of maritime navigation with NATO counterparts.

James Cleverly:

Freedom of Navigation is a critical element of the rules-based international order and the UK plays an important role in upholding this principle. A clear example has been the global deployment of the HMS Queen Elizabeth Strike Group in 2021 - a joint deployment with NATO Allies which supported FCDO, Defence and International Trade objectives. We will continue to work with NATO Allies and other partners to safeguard Freedom of Navigation wherever it is under threat. In the margins of the NATO Foreign Ministerial in Riga in December 2021, The Foreign Secretary spoke with like-minded Allies including Canada about the importance of working together on issues affecting the Arctic, such as climate science and collective security. This was part of the Foreign Secretary's regular discussions with NATO counterparts covering regional security issues.

■ Belarus: Migrants

Stephen Doughty:

[\[98310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate she has made of the numbers of individuals being transported by or at the instigation of the Belarus regime to its borders to attempt to cross; and what assessment she has made of the humanitarian situation of people who are stranded in those circumstances.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government condemns the erratic and irresponsible behaviour of Lukashenko's regime in Belarus. Belarus' exploitation of irregular migration to apply pressure on Poland and others in the region shows Lukashenko's complete lack of respect for international rules. We continue to stand with our allies who have been targeted by this provocative use of irregular migration, including by deploying troops from the Royal Engineers to support our Polish partners. We are supporting humanitarian partners to alleviate suffering at the border. Through our contributions to the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund, organised by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies we have ensured support gets to those who need it. While we have not done a full analysis of the numbers involved, we have seen a decrease in the number of migrants entering Belarus and note that many of those who were stranded at the border have now returned to their countries of origin.

■ **Bosnia and Herzegovina: Peace Negotiations**

Stephen Doughty:

[\[98312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the level of adherence by relevant parties to (a) the Dayton Peace Accords principles and (b) other agreements on peace and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The UK takes seriously talk of secession and other threats to undo the progress of the last twenty-six years in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). These are clear challenges to the peace and stability envisaged by the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP). Those responsible must cease this destabilising and divisive rhetoric. As a member of the UN Security Council and Peace Implementation Council Steering Board, the UK is committed to upholding the GFAP in BiH. The recent appointment of Sir Stuart Peach as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to the Western Balkans shows our strong commitment to the region. The UK works closely with our partners to support BiH's territorial integrity and to maintain the peace stabilisation force (EUFOR) and the Office of the High Representative. We work closely with various multinational bodies such as the Council of Europe, NATO, the OSCE and UN to encourage the authorities in BiH to meet their obligations to those who elected them. On 13 December, the Foreign Secretary hosted Western Balkans Foreign Ministers at Lancaster House, and took forward discussions on how to support stability in BiH.

■ **Cameroon: Football**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[98236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the potential risk of violence at the 2022 CAF Africa Cup of Nations in Cameroon.

Vicky Ford:

The Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) will run from 9 January to 6 February 2022 in Cameroon. Our High Commission will continue its engagement with the Government of Cameroon throughout the tournament.

Matches will take place in Yaoundé, Douala, Bafoussam, Limbe and Garoua. The FCDO currently advises against all but essential travel to Limbe and Garoua, due to ongoing tensions. There is also a heightened risk of petty crime in all the host cities during this period. Separatist armed groups have also announced publicly their intentions to disrupt the AFCON tournament: we advise that any travellers exercise extra caution when visiting locations that are associated with the tournament. Our latest Safety and Security advice for Cameroon can be found on the GOV.UK website.

■ China: Aviation

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[98264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions (a) she and (b) her officials have had with Chinese counterparts on the suspension of all direct flights from the UK to China by the Chinese authorities.

Amanda Milling:

The UK Government recognises the importance of people-to-people links with China and is fully aware of the impact of the suspension of direct flights has on the business, academia and tourism sectors, as well as those separated from family and friends. The Department for Transport, and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office have been working together to seek agreement from the Chinese Government to allow the resumption of direct scheduled passenger services. We have raised this in Beijing and London at the highest levels.

■ China: Foreign Relations

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[\[98338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when the Minister for Asia met with the Chinese Ambassador Zheng Zeguang on 15 December 2021, whether she discussed the Uyghur Tribunal's verdict of genocide with the Ambassador; what the outcome of that meeting was; and who was present at that meeting.

Amanda Milling:

In my meeting with Ambassador Zheng on 15 December 2021, I raised the UK's serious concerns regarding human rights in Xinjiang, noting these concerns are widely shared by the international community. I urged the Chinese Government to engage with the evidence provided by the Uyghur Tribunal. I also raised the unacceptable and unwarranted sanctions imposed upon UK Parliamentarians by the People's Republic of China. I emphasised the importance of freedom of speech and Parliamentary independence in the UK, as well as the necessity for Parliamentarians to be able to raise their legitimate concerns.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[\[98339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when the Minister for Asia met with the Chinese Ambassador Zheng Zeguang on 15 December 2021, whether she raised the cases of Parliamentarians who have been sanctioned by the People's Republic of China; and what the outcome of that meeting was.

Amanda Milling:

In my meeting with Ambassador Zheng on 15 December 2021, I raised the UK's serious concerns regarding human rights in Xinjiang, noting these concerns are widely shared by the international community. I urged the Chinese Government to engage with the evidence provided by the Uyghur Tribunal. I also raised the

unacceptable and unwarranted sanctions imposed upon UK Parliamentarians by the People's Republic of China. I emphasised the importance of freedom of speech and Parliamentary independence in the UK, as well as the necessity for Parliamentarians to be able to raise their legitimate concerns.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[\[98340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Minister for Asia has met with the Parliamentarians and academics who were sanctioned by the People's Republic of China.

Amanda Milling:

The Foreign Secretary is clear that the freedom to speak out in opposition to human rights violations is fundamental, and the Government stands firmly with those who have been sanctioned.

The Prime Minister and former Foreign Secretary held meetings with the Parliamentarians named in China's announcement in March 2021, and Lord Ahmad has met other individuals and entities targeted. Through this engagement we have provided guidance and ongoing support, including a designated FCDO point of contact, and specialist briefing from relevant Government departments. We continue to offer our full support to those affected.

■ Commonwealth: Foreign Relations

Ruth Jones:

[\[93898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when she last met with the Secretary General of the Commonwealth.

Amanda Milling:

The Foreign Secretary last met the Commonwealth Secretary-General when she chaired a virtual Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting (CFAMM) on 16 September, her first full day in office. Ministers discussed vital issues including building better from COVID-19.

■ Developing Countries: Female Genital Mutilation

Catherine West:

[\[97009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to help support international collaboration to ban FGM in other countries.

Amanda Milling:

The UK has a proud record in supporting and accelerating the Africa-led movement to end FGM for which international collaboration is central. Building on a successful first five-year phase (2013-2018), the UK is funding the next phase of our support for the Africa-led movement. This includes funding to the United Nations to get laws and policies in place banning FGM, as part of a multi-year UKaid package working with communities, activists and grassroots organisations, reinforced by global, national

and local advocacy and communications to break taboos, promote discussion and amplify changing social attitudes. Through the World Health Organisation the UK has also supported doctors, midwives and nurses to help end FGM and care for survivors, and in Sudan UK aid has driven trailblazing community engagement and national advocacy efforts. Since 2013, UK aid programmes have helped over 10,000 communities, representing over 27 million people, pledge to abandon FGM.

■ **Developing Countries: Research**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[98276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of Official Development Assistance was spent on research and development in the financial year 2020-21.

James Cleverly:

The proportion of FCDO Official Development Assistance spent on research and development in the financial year 2020-21 was 5.47 per cent. This information can be found in Annex A Page 259 of the FCDO's 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts.

■ **Ethiopia: Peace Negotiations**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[98243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help support parties to the conflict in Ethiopia in establishing a (a) stable ceasefire and (b) path towards a negotiated peace following developments in the conflict since 21 December 2021.

Vicky Ford:

We are extremely concerned by the ongoing conflict in Ethiopia and the implications it has for the country as a whole. The UK is working to bring an end to the violence. I have called on all parties to urgently agree a ceasefire and allow humanitarian aid through. I spoke to Ethiopian Minister of Justice Gedion on 6 December and pressed for an end to the fighting and for peace talks. I have continued to emphasise the need for a ceasefire through calls with my African counterparts, including from Kenya and the African Union (AU). We have spoken with a variety of international partners about the situation in Ethiopia, and have urged them to support a ceasefire and support the efforts of AU High Representative Obasanjo to bring an end to the violence.

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

Emily Thornberry:

[\[98227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the cost to the public purse was of the acquisition of video clips from Getty Images, Inc. for use in the film of highlights from 2021 published by her Department on 31 December 2021.

James Cleverly:

No additional costs were incurred in the creation of the end of year highlights video. Video clips used in the highlights video were licensed as part of an annual content contract the FCDO has with Getty Images. The FCDO regularly produces video content to explain the work of the department using in-house content and footage from Getty.

■ **India: Oxfam****Catherine West:**[\[97008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with the government of India on the refusal to renew Oxfam India's licence to receive funds from outside India.

Amanda Milling:

We are aware some non-governmental organisations have faced difficulties in India due to the use of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act by the Indian Government. We support a wide range of local NGO partners in India, including through programmes.

Where we have concerns, we raise them directly with the Indian Government. We have noted the important role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in a democracy during our representations. The British High Commission in New Delhi will continue to monitor developments, and engage with religious representatives and run projects supporting minority rights.

■ **Kazakhstan: Politics and Government****Stephen Doughty:**[\[98309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the security situation in Kazakhstan; and what advice she is providing to UK nationals present or planning to travel to that country.

James Cleverly:

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs is following developments in Kazakhstan closely and is very concerned by the violent clashes witnessed in recent days. It is deeply regrettable that lives have been lost and many others injured. We have called for calm and condemned the acts of violence and destruction of property. Protests should be peaceful and law enforcement responses proportionate and in line with Kazakhstan's international commitments. We are also concerned by the withdrawal of internet services. At the beginning of the protests, President Tokayev signalled his intention to engage with the legitimate demands of peaceful protestors, a fact that we welcome. FCDO Ministers and the British Embassy team in Nur-Sultan are in contact with the Kazakhstan authorities to establish the latest information. The situation is changing quickly, so any British Nationals in Kazakhstan or planning to travel should check the

latest advice on the FCDO website, which is kept under regular review. We will also continue to respond promptly to consular enquiries.

■ Malawi: Drugs

Patrick Grady:

[\[96938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will publish a response to EDM 784, on Shortage of Medicines in Malawi.

Vicky Ford:

As recently covered in international media, Malawi faces regular stock-outs of essential drugs, exacerbated by the global impact of Covid-19 on the cost of commodities including drugs. The UK is helping to address the underlying causes by working with the Government of Malawi and development partners to help make better and more efficient use of limited resources. We are advocating, through the Health Donor Group, for Malawi's Government to increase budgetary allocations and per-capita spending on health, and are working with the Government on their next Health Sector Strategic Plan and Health Financing strategy.

The UK funded Umoyo Wathu (Our Health) programme in Malawi aims to improve the health and survival of the most vulnerable, focusing on women and children. It helps to improve the quality of life-saving primary and community healthcare services; improve equitable resourcing and management of services; and strengthen accountability in district-level health service delivery. Through this programme, we are supporting the Ministry of Health to upgrade health facilities and provide cost free access to health services, including drugs, in remote areas. We are also working with UN partners to improve integration and quality of maternal, neonatal and child health services at district level.

■ Palestinians: Non-governmental Organisations

Patrick Grady:

[\[96939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her Israeli counterpart on Israel's classification of six Palestinian NGOs as terrorist organisations.

Patrick Grady:

[\[96940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the decision by Israel officials to designate six Palestinian NGOs as terrorist organisations.

James Cleverly:

The decision by the Israeli authorities to designate six Palestinian NGOs and the evidence which forms the basis of these designations is a matter for the Government of Israel. The UK maintains its own criteria for designation. We continue engagement with a number of these organisations on human rights issues and respect the role that NGOs and civil society organisations play in upholding human rights and democracy.

Patrick Grady:

[\[96941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of work carried out by NGOs in Palestine.

James Cleverly:

We have not attempted to assess the effectiveness of every NGO working in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We are clear that human rights and civil society organisations have a vital role to play in both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including those focused on Israel's conduct in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

■ **Palestinians: Schools**

Theresa Villiers:

[\[96808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with the UN Relief and Works Agency on the Palestinian Authority's school curriculum.

James Cleverly:

We strongly condemn all forms of violence and incitement to violence. We accompany our support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) with stringent attention to implementation of their neutrality policy, including how they apply this to textbooks and other learning material to ensure they reflect UN values. In Gaza and the West Bank, UNRWA uses the Palestinian Authority's (PA's) curriculum in their schools after rigorously reviewing that it is in line with UN values. Officials from the British Consulate General Jerusalem regularly discuss the curriculum with counterparts in UNRWA and the PA.

■ **Russia: Ukraine**

Stephen Doughty:

[\[98311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when she last had discussions with her Ukrainian counterpart on the situation on the Russia-Ukraine border; and what steps the Government is taking to contribute to US-Russia diplomatic dialogue.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As the Foreign Secretary set out in her statement to Parliament on 7 January, we are working closely with international partners to push back against Russia's threatening behaviour and to make clear the severe costs to Russia of any military incursion. The Foreign Secretary spoke to Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kuleba on 4 January, after welcoming him to London for high level talks on 8 December. She spoke bilaterally to US Secretary of State Blinken on 22 December and again with the Foreign Ministers of France and Germany on 29 December. The Foreign Secretary also joined an extraordinary meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers on 7 January to discuss Russia's military build-up and broader European security issues.

■ Rwanda: Politics and Government

Ruth Jones:

[\[93897\]](#)

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

Vicky Ford:

We remain concerned about civil and political rights in Rwanda, and the space for opposition voices. We firmly believe that a strong opposition and vibrant civil society is vital for a healthy and well-functioning democracy and that civil society and opposition parties must be able to operate freely, holding the Government to account and contributing to the debate on how Rwanda should be governed. We regularly raise specific cases of human rights concern with the Government of Rwanda and the Rwanda Investigation Bureau, both through the British High Commission in Kigali and at Ministerial level.

The UK continues to have a strong relationship and wide-ranging political engagement with Rwanda, including on important priorities such as open societies, girls' education, building back from COVID-19, climate, security and trade. Rwanda has made significant progress on social and economic rights since the genocide, and on delivering development: UK support has helped lift over 2 million Rwandans out of poverty since 2005, and Rwanda is one of the only countries where women make up more than 50% of parliamentarians.

■ Somalia: Politics and Government

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[98237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the risk of renewed civil war in Somalia as a result of escalation in the dispute between Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo and Mohamed Hussein Roble.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[98238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help prevent the use of violence in the dispute between Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo and Mohamed Hussein Roble in Somalia.

Vicky Ford:

We are concerned by the political situation in Somalia and have strongly urged Somalia's leaders to take immediate steps to de-escalate political tensions. It is vital for Somalia's stability that its leaders conclude the electoral process as soon as possible in a way that ensures the confidence of the Somali people.

In a statement on 26 December, I called for all parties to refrain from provocative actions that could exacerbate tensions or lead to violence. On 30 December, I spoke with Prime Minister Roble to underline the UK's support for an urgent National Consultative Council (NCC) meeting as the appropriate forum to resolve fundamental issues and address observed electoral shortcomings, and we welcome the

commencement of an NCC meeting with Federal Member State (FMS) leaders on 3 January. The UK's Ambassador in Mogadishu continues to engage with all parties. With international partners, we continue efforts to support a swift and credible conclusion to the electoral process to aid long-term peace, security and stability in Somalia.

■ South Sudan: Diseases

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[94310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support she is offering to the World Health Organisation in the identification of the unidentified disease reported in the Fangak County of Jonglei State in South Sudan.

Vicky Ford:

We are concerned at the increased incidents of disease and deaths in Fangak County. Following investigations, the Government of South Sudan has ascribed these primarily to an upsurge in malaria cases. These investigations have identified that illness and deaths have been exacerbated by flooding, which impacted treatment and restricted access to healthcare, including the prompt treatment of life-threatening malaria. We are in contact with the Government of South Sudan and international partners, notably the World Health Organisation (WHO), to better understand this and other health challenges in South Sudan as part of our work to help address the humanitarian crisis in the country.

As a leading donor to South Sudan the UK is helping to provide life-saving access to quality health, food, nutrition, water, sanitation and other services throughout the country. As part of this the UK has contributed to a number of funds helping those impacted by recent flooding. This includes the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), which the UK was the third largest donor to globally in 2021. CERF has allocated \$13 million in flood-affected areas, including \$2 million to WHO to support 260,000 people with medical supplies and improved water and sanitation support to reduce the risk of disease. In addition the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund, of which the UK is a donor, allocated \$20 million for issues such as flooding, including \$1 million to WHO for the flood response.

■ South Sudan: Humanitarian Situation

Ruth Jones:

[\[94525\]](#)

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

Vicky Ford:

The humanitarian crisis in South Sudan is deeply concerning with 8.3 million people in need of some form of humanitarian assistance and famine conditions likely occurring in some areas of the country. Repeated cycles of conflict, flooding and economic hardship have added to this urgent humanitarian need leaving 60% of the population at crisis, or worse, levels of food insecurity. This crisis is at a scale that

cannot be met by any individual donor, but the UK remains a leading supporter of South Sudan and was the third largest donor in 2021. From 2021-22 the UK aims to provide humanitarian assistance sufficient for an estimated 2 million people through the provision of life-saving services such as food, water, sanitation, health and nutrition. The UK will also help 400,000 girls to access education and improve the learning environment for all South Sudanese children; and provide life-saving access to quality health services in 800 facilities across eight states.

■ Sudan: Politics and Government

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[98239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help secure (a) effective civilian leadership for Sudan's transition to democracy and (b) consensus-building between pro-democracy movements and the military following the resignation of Abdalla Hamdok on 2 January 2022.

Vicky Ford:

Sudan has been on a delicate path from oppressive autocratic rule to potential freedom and democracy following the August 2019 Constitutional Declaration, signed by the Sudanese military and the civilian Forces of Freedom and Change political movement. Despite progress on economic reforms and peace talks since then, fractures between different political actors, including relating to the role of the military in government, have led to a political crisis, including the military coup of 25 October 2021, significant protests against the military, and the resignation of Abdallah Hamdok as Prime Minister on 2 January.

Abdallah Hamdok has played a major role in leading Sudan's democratic and economic reforms. His resignation underscores the urgent need for all Sudanese political actors to re-commit to the country's democratic transition, to work together, and to deliver the civilian rule millions continue to call for. The Troika (UK, Norway, US) and EU issued a statement on 4 January urging the Sudanese military and other actors to engage in an immediate, Sudanese-led and internationally facilitated dialogue to secure a lasting solution to the political crisis. Since the coup, British Embassy staff in Khartoum, the UK Special Representative to Sudan and South Sudan and FCDO officials have engaged with all parties to encourage dialogue and demonstrate UK support for the democratic transition. With our international partners, we will continue to urge all parties to work on the basis of the 2019 Constitutional Declaration to overcome the political crisis and deliver the Sudanese people's demands for freedom, peace and justice.

■ Tigray: Humanitarian Aid

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[94309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate she has made of the number of humanitarian aid trucks entering Tigray province in Ethiopia in each of the last 10 weeks.

Vicky Ford:

The delivery of humanitarian assistance into Tigray remains hugely constrained. The de facto blockade of Tigray imposed by the Government of Ethiopia since July remains a principal driver of humanitarian suffering across the region. According to the latest available information from the UN, no humanitarian aid trucks entered Tigray during the period 14 December 2021 - 5 January 2022. We assess that in the six weeks prior to this period less than 10 per cent of the required humanitarian cargo was successfully delivered to Tigray.

The UK calls on all warring parties to ensure the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid across all regions of northern Ethiopia affected by fighting.

The UK has committed £76 million to the crises response - making the UK the second largest donor globally. FCDO officials speak regularly with representatives from the UN and other humanitarian agencies on contingency planning for an increase in needs inside Ethiopia as well as for further displacement of refugees into neighbouring states. Our priority is to ensure that all Ethiopians in need receive life-saving aid and that humanitarian access to areas affected by insecurity is maintained. I raised my concerns with State Minister Redwan in November and Justice Minister Gedion in December, and pushed for an end to the blockade.

■ Turkey: Economic Situation and Politics and Government**Ruth Jones:**[\[97073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the (a) political and (b) economic situation in Turkey.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The UK is working to strengthen our economic and security partnership with Turkey and make both countries safer and more prosperous. That means working together on the response to coronavirus and for regional stability and security, partnering on counter terrorism, and growing our bilateral trade and investment. Ministers and senior officials hold regular discussions, both internally and with the Turkish government on these issues, as well as the political and economic situation, and will continue to engage closely with Turkey.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust: Finance****Darren Jones:**[\[98383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Support (CAMHS) funding to the Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust.

Gillian Keegan:

The majority of Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust's income derives from local commissioners. Funding during the COVID-19 pandemic has been maintained at pre-pandemic levels. All providers have been funded at cost and the Trust reported a small surplus in 2020/21 with all costs covered either through commissioner income or system allocations.

NHS England and NHS Improvement's funding for children and young people's mental health services for the South West has now transferred in full to the local provider collaborative. It is anticipated that this will allow for planned reinvestment in better service provision over the next three years.

■ Cancer: Health Services**Dr Luke Evans:**[\[97141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support efficient cancer diagnosis and referral services while the NHS tackles the omicron covid-19 variant and strategically prepares for the future.

Maria Caulfield:

Between March 2020 and October 2021, general practitioners referred over 3.8 million people with suspected cancer and over 487,000 patients started cancer treatment, with 95% of patients starting treatment within a month.

National Health Service systems have been asked to maintain rapid access, including tests and checks for patients with suspected cancer and screening services. Cancer pathways have been adapted with advice on streamlining cancer diagnostic pathways and protecting against COVID-19 infection. The use of independent sector capacity for cancer services is being maximised, where clinically appropriate. Patients are involved in decisions on their care, including where it may be rescheduled. Anyone with concerning symptoms is encouraged to come forward, in line with our 'Help us, help you' campaign.

■ Care Homes: Visits**Matt Vickers:**[\[97178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that care home visitations are able to take place (a) in a safe manner and (b) with minimal restrictions to residents or their families in the context of the spread of the omicron covid-19 variant.

Gillian Keegan:

We expect care homes to ask visitors to take steps including booking appointments, taking a test on the day of their visit, wearing a mask throughout the visit and washing their hands thoroughly on arrival. This is in addition to having received COVID-19 vaccinations, including booster doses, when invited. Care homes are asked to develop a dynamic risk assessment for how visits are managed, including consideration of infection prevention and control measures and ventilation.

All care home residents are able to nominate an essential care giver, who can visit during a COVID-19 outbreak. In addition, residents can nominate up to three visitors for regular visits inside the care home, including in residents' rooms, and additional measures have been put in place to protect residents and staff from incursion of infection following visits out of the care home, such as increased testing.

■ Carers: Vetting

Rachel Reeves: [\[96860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to require (a) DBS checks and (b) other robust scrutiny measures for private carers.

Gillian Keegan:

There are currently no Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check or other pre-employment check requirements for private carers. Individual employers can choose to carry out recruitment checks, such as DBS, on potential private carers before offering a contract. We have no plans to bring forward requirements or regulations for private carers.

■ Contraceptives

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[80245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recommendations in the report by the all-party Parliamentary group on Sexual and Reproductive Health, entitled Women's lives, women's rights, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of (a) allocating funding to and (b) expanding the community sexual and reproductive health training programme to enable local areas to meet specialist and primary care contraceptive workforce needs.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: The Department is currently developing a Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy, which will be published in 2022. As part of the development of the Strategy, we are conducting a review of the sexual and reproductive health workforce. This includes working with Health Education England who are responsible for the funding and running of speciality programmes, such as community sexual and reproductive health.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[80246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recommendations in the report by the all-party Parliamentary group on Sexual and Reproductive Health, entitled Women's lives, women's rights, whether his Department has plans to evaluate data collection processes, including GUMCAD, SHRAD and routinely entered GP SNOMED data, to examine the use of contraception.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: There are currently no plans to evaluate SHRAD or SNOMED data collection processes to examine the use of contraception. GUMCAD is a sexually transmitted infection surveillance system and therefore does

not include data on contraception use. Issues related to sexual and reproductive health data collection processes are being considered as part of the development process of the forthcoming Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy.

■ Contraceptives: Health Education

Dame Diana Johnson:

[80248]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recommendations in the report by the all-party Parliamentary group on Sexual and Reproductive Health, entitled Women's lives, women's rights, what steps he is taking with the Secretary of State for Education to ensure that teachers are able to access a single national source of medically accurate, up-to-date and evidence-based information on contraception.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: The Department for Education has provided a range of resources to support effective teaching of the new statutory relationships and sex education curriculum, including a teacher training module on Intimate and Sexual Relationships, which includes information on contraception. This module signposts teachers to the National Health Service guide to contraception, which provides medically accurate, up-to-date and evidence-based information.

■ Coronavirus

Emma Hardy:

[97028]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data he holds on the number of people who have been reinfected with covid-19 in the UK; and whether reinfections are included in the daily figures released by Public Health England.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) monitors weekly COVID-19 cases, including numbers and rates of COVID-19 reinfections in England, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports-2021-to-2022-season>

As of 19 December 2021, 127,282 possible reinfections had been identified in England during the pandemic since the first recorded case of a reinfection. As of 21 December 2021, a total of 9.8 million first positive COVID-19 test results had been recorded in England. The weekly rates of possible reinfections per 1,000 first infections closely follow the profile for first infections.

Reinfections for the Omicron variant are published in 'SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern and variants under investigation in England Technical briefing 33', which reports that as of 17 December 2021, 9.5% of cases of the Omicron variant had a previous confirmed infection. This data is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1043807/technical-briefing-33.pdf

Daily COVID-19 dashboard data for the United Kingdom does not currently include reinfections for England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Those who test positive more than once are counted at the time of their first test.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Mr Steve Baker:

[R] [46977]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the two-monthly report on the status of the provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 published on 21 July 2021, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits and demerits of maintaining powers under (a) section 51 and (b) Schedule 21 of that Act.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 15 September 2021]: Section 51 and Schedule 21 enabled the enforcement of a number of public health measures relating to potentially infectious persons to control the spread of COVID-19 in the United Kingdom. The provision was used minimally and has not been applied since October 2020. In 2021, a review of all remaining temporary provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020 took place, with those no longer deemed necessary and proportionate recommended for expiry. The outcome of the review was set out in the ninth two-monthly report on the Act and was set out in the Winter Plan published on 14 September 2021. The Government recommended the expiry of section 51 and Schedule 21 of the Act as it pertains to England. The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Early Expiry) (No.2) Regulations 2021 came into force on 9 December 2021 which expired section 51 and Schedule 21 in relation to England and on behalf of Northern Ireland.

Rachael Maskell:

[80365]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department's contracts with national (a) contact tracing and (b) testing programmes for covid-19 are due to end.

Maggie Throup:

We are unable to provide the information requested as it is commercially sensitive.

NHS Test and Trace remains critical to the Government's plan for managing the virus. The Department is under contract with a number of businesses in relation to the provision of COVID-19 related services. Decisions on the continuation of these services will be made in due course.

Rachael Maskell:

[90450]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of covid-19 transmission in venues that have introduced requirements for proof of vaccination and testing in the context of the outbreak of that virus at York Racecourse.

Maggie Throup:

The level of COVID-19 transmission in venues which have introduced requirements for proof of vaccination and testing were assessed through the government's Events Research Programme (ERP). The ERP considered transmission risk across a range of social, cultural and sporting venues and the findings are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/events-research-programme-phase-ii-and-iii-findings>

The ERP studies demonstrate that environmental and behavioural risk factors associated with COVID-19 transmission at events are complex and contextual. Individual risk while attending an event is dependent on social interactions, on the interaction with the environment and on the individual journey through an event. The mitigation measures put in place for such venues, such as voluntary certification, have to consider and be informed by the local context and risk assessments.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) continues to investigate outbreaks of infectious disease, including COVID-19 as and when they occur. Local outbreaks are managed by the UKHSA's regional health protection teams in collaboration with local authority partners. The UKHSA has not made a specific assessment at York Racecourse, as local businesses are advised to do their own risk assessment.

John Redwood:**[96739]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will model the potential impact of the omicron covid-19 variant on NHS England hospital admissions based on South African levels of serious cases relative to total cases.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has no plans to do so as demographics, co-morbidities, past-infection and immunisation statuses in the two countries differ. However, the UKHSA is currently estimating the severity of the Omicron variant related infections in England to understand the likely ongoing demand for healthcare. This is in its early stages as a reasonable period of observation is required to fully understand the evolution of the Omicron variant in sufficient numbers of people across all ages and immunity status over time.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing**Wendy Chamberlain:****[97125]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much personal protective equipment (PPE) the Government has purchased that has not been used as a result of being (a) unwanted and (b) unusable since 1 January 2020; what the total cost is of that PPE; and what the daily cost is of storing that PPE.

Edward Argar:

The personal protective equipment (PPE) programme has ordered over 36.4 billion items since March 2020. Of this, approximately 3.4 billion units are currently identified

as potential excess stock. The estimated purchase price for those items is £2.2 billion.

In addition, a total of 6.96 billion items are not currently provided to frontline services. This can be for a variety of reasons, including new stock that has not yet cleared assurance processes or where a different product is preferred. Of these, 1.2 billion items are deemed to be not fit for use. The purchase price for these items was £458 million. Data on the specific storage costs is not held in the format requested. However, on 13 December 2021 weekly storage costs for all stock was £4.5 million.

Angela Rayner: [\[98323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 December to Question 78415 on Coronavirus: Protective Clothing, when his Department plans to complete the comprehensive review of stock.

Edward Argar:

The Department is undertaking a comprehensive review of stock to determine the efficacy of equipment before it is distributed. This review is ongoing and will consider new stock as it continues to arrive, therefore we are unable to provide a completion date. However, as of 6 December, we had assessed approximately 87% of current stock.

Angela Rayner: [\[98324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the total value of personal protective equipment that was procured during the covid-19 outbreak but expired before use.

Edward Argar:

There are approximately 303 million items of personal protective equipment which have passed their estimated expiry date at a total purchase cost of £299 million.

However, in many cases recorded expiry dates refer to the original documentation or assumed life of the product when it was delivered. We are currently exploring whether these expiry dates can be extended to allow the products to be used.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Daisy Cooper: [\[79490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the US Food and Drug Administration communication on 10 June 2021, whether he has requested or received any advice on the efficacy of Innova Medical Group's SARS-CoV-2 Antigen Rapid Qualitative Test.

Maggie Throup:

Following the safety notice issued on 10 June, the Medicines and Healthcare product Regulatory Agency (MHRA) requested briefing from the United States Food and Drug Administration, which confirmed it had no additional information.

NHS Test and Trace investigated whether the United Kingdom could be affected by any of the concerns raised and provided information to the MHRA. The MHRA confirmed it was satisfied with proposed actions to mitigate any risks.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[81006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of free lateral flow test kits issued in England in each week to date since 1 August 2021.

Maggie Throup:

The following table shows the number of lateral flow device tests dispatched in England in each week since 1 August 2021.

| WEEK COMMENCING | NUMBER OF TESTS DISPATCHED |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 2 August 2021 | 17,960,791 |
| 9 August 2021 | 17,389,240 |
| 16 August 2021 | 18,779,998 |
| 23 August 2021 | 26,567,961 |
| 30 August 2021 | 22,026,148 |
| 6 September 2021 | 24,938,138 |
| 13 September 2021 | 24,938,138 |
| 20 September 2021 | 22,022,613 |
| 27 September 2021 | 19,666,937 |
| 4 October 2021 | 21,799,478 |
| 11 October 2021 | 23,554,088 |
| 18 October 2021 | 23,554,088 |
| 25 October 2021 | 14,625,627 |
| 1 November 2021 | 21,422,729 |
| 8 November 2021 | 18,433,336 |
| 15 November 2021 | 22,120,400 |
| 22 November 2021 | 22,900,000 |

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[81007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason some covid-19 test sites have stopped providing free home lateral flow test kits for collection.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[81008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 test sites have stopped providing free home lateral flow test kits for collection.

Maggie Throup:

Lateral flow device (LFD) tests are no longer available from local tests sites in England, as home testing has become the preferred method. As with polymerase chain reaction test kits, these are sent free of charge to the home or the address specified. Home testing enables those who are shielding, self-isolating, have mobility issues, live in very rural areas or are waiting for elective surgery and key workers, to order LFD tests from GOV.UK to take in their own home.

Anne Marie Morris: [\[87682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason employers are no longer able to order covid-19 lateral flow tests for their business on gov.uk; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reinstating that service.

Maggie Throup:

The offer of tests directly to most workplaces ended in England in July 2021 and employers were encouraged to direct their employees to order home tests from GOV.UK, collect from local pharmacies or order via 119. Workplace testing was therefore no longer required, as employees are able to order tests to use at home.

Justin Madders: [\[87710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of allowing those unable to use swab based-covid tests to use LAMP tests.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is currently trialling the use of direct LAMP for individuals with special educational needs and disabilities in a small number of restricted pilots. It is also being considered for other appropriate settings. In addition, the UKHSA is undertaking a review into alternatives to swab-based testing including all saliva-based options and other emerging technologies, in all vulnerable settings and populations.

Rachael Maskell: [\[90452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will specifically encourage people to take a covid-19 test ahead of seeing family over the Christmas period.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 14 December 2021]: During the Christmas period, people are encouraged to take a test before they mix with people in crowded enclosed places and visit someone who is at higher risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19, such as an elderly relative. The Government's current advertising campaign will support our testing guidance throughout December.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[94304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to develop contingency plans for use in the event that covid-19 PCR testing capacity is exceeded.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 5 January 2022]: We are keeping COVID-19 testing capacity under close review and actively considering options in the event that the system struggles to meet demand. We are also working with our existing providers to increase capacity in the current network further over the coming weeks.

Justin Madders:

[\[96927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many lateral flow tests were held in stock by the UKHSA on (a) 1 October, (b) 1 November, (c) 1 December and (d) 13 December 2021.

Maggie Throup:

The following table shows the number of lateral flow tests device tests of all types held in stock by the UK Health Security Agency on the dates requested.

| 1 OCTOBER 2021 | 1 NOVEMBER 2021 | 1 DECEMBER 2021 | 13 DECEMBER 2021 |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 119 million | 161 million | 155 million | 147 million |

Ruth Jones:

[\[97071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what date he asked the Welsh Government for assistance in securing lateral flow covid-19 test kits for use in England.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) procures lateral flow device (LFD) tests on behalf of the four United Kingdom nations, which are allocated according to the Barnett Formula. To ensure continuity of LFD tests at a time of unprecedented demand, the UKHSA requested a short-term loan from the devolved administrations on 14 December 2021.

Steve McCabe:

[\[98208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of people who took a covid-19 PCR test received their results within (a) 24, (b) 48, (c) 72 and (d) 96 hours of taking their test in December 2021.

Maggie Throup:

The information is not available in the format requested.

However, weekly statistics for the number of COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction test results received within 24, 48, 72 hours in England is available on Weekly NHS Test and Trace report, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-test-and-trace-statistics-england-weekly-reports>

Steve McCabe: [98210]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of people who took a covid-19 PCR test received their results within (a) 24, (b) 48, (c) 72 and (d) 96 hours of taking their test in August 2021.

Maggie Throup:

The information is not available in the format requested.

However, weekly statistics for the number of COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction test results received in England within 24, 48, 72 hours is available in the Weekly NHS Test and Trace report, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-test-and-trace-statistics-england-weekly-reports>

Daisy Cooper: [98440]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any steps have been taken to limit the availability of covid-19 PCR test appointments available to the public.

Maggie Throup:

NHS Test and Trace has made 100,000 additional polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test appointments available per day since mid-December. However, where there is exceptional demand for PCR testing, the booking portal may be temporarily paused to control the flow of tests into our laboratories and maintain the highest possible operational capacity.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Ms Lyn Brown: [79312]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that current UK residents previously vaccinated in Germany with MHRA-approved vaccines, regardless of nationality, are treated in the same way as those vaccinated in the UK.

Maggie Throup:

Vaccines administered in Germany can be recorded in vaccination records and displayed in the NHS COVID Pass. This allows individuals resident in England but vaccinated in Germany to demonstrate their status and avoid self-isolation regulations in the same way as those vaccinated under the United Kingdom programme.

Henry Smith: [83308]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of immunocompromised or immunosuppressed people have received (a) a Moderna third covid-19 vaccine dose and (b) the correct quantity of Moderna as a third dose.

Maggie Throup:

The information is not held in the format requested. Whilst data for Moderna vaccine administrations is collected, information by clinical risk groups is not held centrally.

Rachael Maskell:[\[90447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will he make it his policy to not make vaccines mandatory due to the effect on trust between a clinician and their patient.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 14 December 2021]: There are no plans to introduce compulsory vaccination. Regulations to make the COVID-19 vaccination a condition of deployment for any individual working or volunteering in a Care Quality Commission-regulated care home came into force on 11 November. These regulations require care home providers to deploy only those people who have received a complete course of their COVID-19 vaccination unless they are exempt. Ensuring anyone entering a care home is vaccinated, subject to specific exemptions, is the most effective way to prevent outbreaks and protect everyone who lives in, works in or visits a care home.

Dr Julian Lewis:[\[91824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that the database of the booking system for booster vaccinations administered by NHS England includes records of initial vaccinations administered by NHS Scotland; for what reason the vaccination records of people inoculated in Scotland have hitherto been unavailable within the booking system when those people seek booster vaccinations after relocating from Scotland to England; what the average additional time taken to get a booster vaccination has been for those people as a result of that lack of data; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 16 December 2021]: Data sharing agreements are in place across the United Kingdom to ensure health records of individuals are updated if they receive a dose of a COVID-19 vaccine in another part of the UK.

Should an issue with an individual's vaccine record occur, this will not prevent them from receiving their booster vaccination. They can attend a walk-in site to be vaccinated for either their booster or primary course of vaccination. In addition, individuals can call 119 for the Vaccine Data Resolution Service. Given the measures in place to resolve such issues, information on any additional time incurred is not held.

Theresa Villiers:[\[91869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to prioritise police officers for the covid-19 booster vaccine.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 16 December 2021]: All adults over 18 years old are now eligible for a COVID-19 booster vaccine and the booster dose will now be given no sooner than three months after completion of the primary course. The booster vaccine is being offered in order of descending age groups, with priority given to the vaccination of older adults and those in at-risk group. This includes all those aged over 16 years old with underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk of severe COVID-19. Police officers will be invited for a booster dose according to their age and/or clinical risk. They are not currently prioritised according to their occupation.

Rachael Maskell:[\[92020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to ensure that covid-19 vaccine supplies reach vaccine centres in a timely manner during the booster campaign.

Maggie Throup:

Stock levels are closely monitored at regional, system and site level and deliveries are adjusted accordingly. Throughout the COVID-19 vaccination programme, deliveries have been carefully managed in line with site capacity, population density and available supply, to ensure that any vaccine being delivered is used within as short a timeframe as possible.

Rachael Maskell:[\[92021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that people who are yet to be vaccinated against covid-19 will be prioritised over people who are seeking their covid-19 booster vaccination; and what assessment he has made of which groups should be vaccinated as a priority.

Maggie Throup:

The offer of COVID-19 vaccination remains open to every eligible person. We are encouraging everyone eligible to come forward for their first, second or booster jab without delay.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) do not currently advise the operational prioritisation of primary doses over booster doses. The JCVI will review available data related to durability of protection against severe COVID-19 in all age groups and will develop further advice in due course as necessary.

Rachael Maskell:[\[92026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to recruit more volunteers and paid staff to deliver the covid-19 booster programme.

Maggie Throup:

The National Health Service has reopened recruitment for around 10,000 paid and 40,000 volunteer roles to join existing vaccine teams. The roles are all flexible and range from vaccinators and registered healthcare professionals to healthcare support workers, administrators and steward volunteers. All roles receive full training with appropriate supervision.

The NHS continues to partner with St John Ambulance and the Royal Voluntary Service, which runs the NHS Volunteer Responder programme, to help coordinate the training and deployment of volunteers.

Layla Moran:

[\[92067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of housebound people eligible for a covid-19 booster jab; and what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the booster rollout reaches people who are housebound.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 16 December 2021]: No specific estimate has been made. The identification of those who are housebound is managed at a local level as it requires access to detailed patient information. General practitioners determine the best approach to vaccination alongside community teams, based on their knowledge of the individual patient's circumstances. For those unable to leave their homes, Primary Care Networks (PCNs) have established mobile or roving vaccination teams.

To ensure housebound patients receive a home visit, National Health Service regions, PCNs and community pharmacy-led local vaccination services are monitoring progress and identifying whether further interventions are required to increase uptake of all doses, including boosters, to those who are housebound.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[92081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will update the NHS Booking Service so that children who have recently turned 12 and are eligible for a dose of covid-19 vaccination can book an appointment via the NHS Booking Service.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[92082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what processes are in place to ensure that the National Booking system 119 gives out the correct advice, so that all children who have recently turned or are due to turn 12 can book their first covid-19 vaccination through that system.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 16 December 2021]: The National Booking System was updated on 22 October 2021 to allow parents or guardians to book a COVID-19 vaccination appointment for 12 to 15 year olds. This is available as soon as the child reaches 12 years of age. This complements the existing schools-based offer. All vaccination services provided through the National Booking System are required to have the appropriate staffing and resources in place to facilitate appointments for this age group.

NHS England and NHS Improvement issued guidance to all health systems in England initially on 19 October 2021, with updated guidance provided on 13 December 2021 in light of the updated advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on the offer of a second dose to all those aged 12 to

15 years old. Additionally, the 119 service has processes in place to ensure that updated advice is provided.

Children under the age of 12 years old are not eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. There is currently no COVID-19 vaccine authorised in the United Kingdom for children under 12 years old, therefore only children who are 12 years old on or before the date of vaccination can receive this dose.

Michael Fabricant: [\[96759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to initiate a fourth mass covid-19 vaccination programme.

Maggie Throup:

We have no current plans for a fourth mass COVID-19 vaccination programme.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has stated that it is not known whether recurrent boosters will be required in the long term. The current advice on booster vaccinations applies to this highly active phase of the pandemic. We will continue to be informed by the latest scientific advice from the JCVI on whether further action is required.

Hilary Benn: [\[96778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what advice he has received on any potential link between myocarditis or myopericarditis and the covid-19 vaccine being injected accidentally into the blood stream; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is currently investigating all potential causes for events reported following COVID-19 vaccination. However, the MHRA has not provided specific advice on any potential link with myocarditis or myopericarditis. As COVID-19 vaccines are used via intramuscular injections in the upper arm, it is extremely unlikely that they will be injected into a blood vessel. The MHRA has not identified any evidence of an association with errors of administration in the United Kingdom with reports of suspected myocarditis.

Mr Nicholas Brown: [\[96782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that there is capacity at local GP practices or other providers to deliver covid-19 vaccines to people who are housebound.

Maggie Throup:

Every adult in England has now been offered a COVID-19 booster vaccination, including all those who are housebound. To ensure these patients can access vaccines and booster doses, general practitioners work alongside community teams, based on their knowledge of the patient and circumstances. Some patients may be able to attend Primary Care Network (PCN) designated sites with assistance and discussions should be held with families and/or carers to facilitate this. For those who

are unable to travel, vaccinations will be delivered via roving units directly to an individual's home.

Julian Sturdy:

[\[96869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to create the necessary infrastructure and staff capacity to allow for annual covid-19 vaccination of the general population, in the event that annual vaccination is required.

Maggie Throup:

At present, it is not known whether recurrent booster doses will be required annually. The current advice on COVID-19 booster vaccinations applies to this highly active phase of the pandemic so that individual protection is maximised in response to the Omicron variant. We continue to monitor the situation informed by the latest scientific evidence and we will plan for all eventualities, such as annual vaccinations.

■ **Dementia: Air Pollution**

Ruth Jones:

[\[97116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential link between toxic air levels and women over 70 developing dementia.

Gillian Keegan:

Air pollution has been identified as a risk factor for dementia in those aged 65 years old and over. The Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants is currently evaluating the evidence for this risk. The UK Health Security Agency has contributed to a review of the epidemiological evidence of effects of air pollution on cognitive disorders in the adult population. This concluded that air pollution can contribute to cognitive decline and dementia in older people. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities is contributing to the development of the new dementia strategy which will include a focus on prevention and risk reduction.

■ **Dementia: Research**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[96878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the £375 million fund for neurodegenerative disease research will be spent on dementia.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government will provide this funding 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, therefore specific details of allocations are not currently available. All applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality.

■ Dentistry: Labour Turnover**Gill Furniss:**[\[98367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to encourage NHS dentists to remain in the profession.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England and NHS Improvement and Health Education England are working on programmes to make National Health Service dentistry more attractive to the profession and retaining current dentists. Health Education England's Advancing Dental Care Education and Training Review programme is exploring opportunities for flexible core and specialty training pathways to improve career progression and retention. The programme will also offer opportunity to develop new capabilities and competence, including in leadership, management and research.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are developing proposals for new NHS contractual arrangements, which will be designed with the support of the profession.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Radox Laboratories**Angela Rayner:**[\[78414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what outstanding Freedom of Information requests the Department is processing for documents relating to the meeting between the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Innovation and Radox on 9 April 2020; on what dates those requests were received; and when his Department plans to answer them.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 24 November 2021]: The Department has eight outstanding cases relating to the meeting between the former Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Innovation (Lord Bethell) and Radox on 9 April 2020. They were received on the following dates:

4 November 2020;

12 August 2021;

29 October 2021;

4 November 2021;

6 November 2021;

9 November 2021;

9 November 2021; and

18 November 2021.

These are being progressed and we aim to answer them as soon as possible.

Owen Thompson:

[\[78453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the value of contracts given by the Department to Randox since 2010.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 24 November 2021]:

The Department has placed contracts with Randox with a total value of £619,625,315.00. There have been no contracts awarded prior to 2020.

■ Eating Disorders: Mental Health Services

Catherine West:

[\[97007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on improving community services specialising in eating disorders in children.

Gillian Keegan:

We have had no specific discussions.

Since 2016, we have provided additional funding for children and young people's community eating disorder services every year, with £53 million annually from 2021/22. This will enhance the development of more than 70 new or improved community eating disorder teams. We have announced an additional £79 million in 2021/22 to expand children's mental health services to allow a further 2,000 children and young people to access eating disorder services. NHS England and NHS Improvement have announced a further £40 million in 2021/22 to address the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health, including eating disorders.

■ Gambling: Health Services

Rachael Maskell:

[\[75034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding he will make available for gambling addiction services.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[75036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department has spent on tackling gambling and gambling addiction in each of the last 10 years.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 18 November 2021]: In 2019, the NHS Long Term Plan committed up to £15 million allocated over five years until 2023/24 to support the creation of 15 specialist problem gambling clinics. The following table shows the National Health Service committed annual spend for problem gambling mental health support in each of these financial years.

| 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| £1 million | £1 million | £3 million | £4 million | £6 million |

Source: NHS Mental Health Implementation Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24

The data on spending to tackle gambling addiction before 2019 is not held centrally.

Rachael Maskell: [\[75037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to produce a gambling addiction strategy alongside the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's gambling strategy.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 18 November 2021]: We have no plans to do so.

■ **General Practitioners: Recruitment**

Dan Carden: [\[97029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the recruitment and retention of GPs.

Maria Caulfield:

We are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement, Health Education England and the profession to increase recruitment, address the reasons why doctors leave and encourage them to return to practice. We have increased the number of general practitioner (GP) training places, with 4,000 trainees accepting a place this year – an increase from 2,671 trainees in 2014.

The updated GP Contract Framework announced a number of new retention schemes alongside continued support for existing schemes for the general practice workforce. These include the GP Retention Scheme, the International Induction Programme, the Return to Practice Programme, the Fellowship Programme, the New to Partnership Payment and Supporting Mentors Scheme.

■ **Genito-urinary Medicine: Females**

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[80247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recommendations in the report by the all-party Parliamentary group on Sexual and Reproductive Health, entitled Women's lives, women's rights, whether the forthcoming Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy will consider the integration of sexual and reproductive health care into existing NHS women's healthcare pathways.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: It is not within scope of the forthcoming Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy to set out changes to existing commissioning arrangements for sexual and reproductive health services. However, as part of the

development process of the Strategy, we are considering issues related to collaborative commissioning, including the opportunities which new models of care can offer, such as women's health hubs.

■ Health Services: Females

Jane Hunt:

[97177]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish (a) the outcome of the Women's Health Strategy call for evidence and (b) the Women's Health Strategy.

Maria Caulfield:

On 23 December 2021, we published 'Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England', which is informed by the call for evidence. This sets out our ambitions to improve the health and wellbeing of women in England and reduce disparities and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-vision-for-the-womens-health-strategy-for-england>

We also published the results of the call for evidence survey, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/womens-health-strategy-call-for-evidence>

We will publish the analysis of the over 400 written submissions in due course and the Women's Health Strategy in spring 2022.

■ Health Services: Private Sector

Ruth Cadbury:

[96892]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department provides to GPs on the cost of providing non-NHS services.

Maria Caulfield:

National Health Service-commissioned general practices are required to provide services which are free at the point of use to meet the reasonable needs of patients. If a practice also chooses to provide private paid-for services which are permitted under the terms of their contract, they may decide how much to charge patients. The British Medical Association provides guidance for practices on which services they may charge patients for, including how much practices may wish to charge for completing specified medical certificates not included in the general practitioner contract.

■ Health Visitors: Pilot Schemes

Tim Loughton: [\[74881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the innovative health visiting workforce pilots announced in the Spending Review 2021 will test the value of specialist perinatal or infant mental health health visitors within health visiting services.

Maggie Throup:

We are investing in developing a diverse and highly skilled workforce by trialing and evaluating innovative workforce models. Funding will be available to five local authorities to establish teams with a range of skills under the clinical leadership of health visitors. These new roles within teams will be provided with specialist training where specific needs have been identified, such as perinatal mental health needs. The investment in trialing, evaluating and testing the value of different approaches will identify best practice models and ensure families receive the support they need.

Tim Loughton: [\[74882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the innovative health visiting workforce pilots announced in the Spending Review 2021 will run for long enough to allow approaches to be applied across families' five health visitor contacts and to evaluate the impact of workforce models on children's wellbeing and outcomes.

Maggie Throup:

The workforce trials will run for two years. We will design a robust approach to evaluate the impact of this approach against key metrics, including the impact on the experience and wellbeing of families and babies. A range of areas will be selected to improve our understanding of what approaches work in different settings.

Tim Loughton: [\[74883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the innovative workforce pilots announced in the Spending Review 2021 will test the value of continuity of care in health visiting services.

Maggie Throup:

'Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days' recognised the importance of continuity of care to improve outcomes. The Government has announced £10 million to trial innovative workforce pilots in a small number of local authorities. Funding will be available to selected authorities to establish teams with a range of skills, under the clinical leadership of health visitors. As part of the design and evaluation of the trials, continuity of care will be considered to ensure there is a key point of contact for each family within the multidisciplinary team.

■ Healthy Start Scheme: Migrants

Afzal Khan: [\[97059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons there has been a delay in granting Healthy Start vouchers to newly eligible families subject to no recourse to public funds.

Afzal Khan: [\[97060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to begin issuing Healthy Start vouchers to newly eligible families subject to no recourse to public funds.

Afzal Khan: [\[97061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to back date Healthy Start vouchers for newly eligible families subject to no recourse to public funds in response to delays in issuing those vouchers.

Maggie Throup:

There is no delay in granting and issuing Healthy Start benefits to families with no recourse to public funds with British children under four years old, where they can demonstrate they meet all the eligibility criteria. Over 700 application forms have been sent to families. Of those returned to date, nine families have demonstrated they meet all the criteria. All eligible families have the benefit backdated to their first contact with the Department.

■ **Hepatitis: Disease Control**

Alex Norris: [\[72571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer to Question 38398 on 6 September 2021 on Hepatitis: Disease Control, if he will make it his policy to support NHS England and Improvement's goal to eliminate Hepatitis C by 2025.

Maggie Throup:

The Government is supporting NHS England and NHS Improvement to deliver the hepatitis C elimination programme in England and the goal to eliminate hepatitis C by 2025.

■ **Immensa Health Clinic: Contracts**

Daisy Cooper: [\[67271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department followed its standard procurement processes when awarding covid-19 testing contracts to Immensa.

Maggie Throup:

Following a competitive process in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, Immensa Health Clinic Ltd were selected as one of a number of laboratory suppliers onto Public Health England's National Microbiology Framework.

Subsequently, the Department awarded a contract to Immensa Health Clinic Ltd in accordance with the terms of a smaller competition under this Framework and in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Due diligence is carried out for all Government contracts and appointments and all suppliers undergo a rigorous regulatory and validation process.

■ Influenza

Rachael Maskell: [\[88784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the level of winter flu (a) infection, (b) hospitalisation and (c) mortality.

Maggie Throup:

From 29 November to 5 December 2021, the Respiratory DataMart laboratory surveillance data found that influenza positivity remained very low at 0.7%, with 42 of 6,267 samples testing positive. In the same period, the Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Watch sentinel surveillance data showed that the rate of hospitalisation with influenza was 0.24 per 100,000 population, which was below baseline threshold. All weekly influenza hospitalisation rates have remained below this threshold so far this season.

No recent assessment of flu mortality has been made. Data on excess deaths attributable to influenza were last published in the annual flu report for 2019/2020.

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Justin Madders: [\[85301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many over-65s were still awaiting their flu vaccine as at 1 December 2021.

Maggie Throup:

The information requested is not held centrally.

Justin Madders: [\[85302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment she has been made of the availability of flu vaccine for the over-65 in (a) GP surgeries and (b) pharmacies in England.

Maggie Throup:

No assessment has been made as general practitioners and community pharmacists are responsible for ordering flu vaccines from suppliers. The Department is in regular contact with flu vaccine manufacturers to ensure sufficient supplies are available to vaccinate eligible cohorts.

■ Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation

Dr Philippa Whitford: [\[96888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 10 December 2021 to Question 86579 on Chickenpox: Vaccination, what data his Department holds on the number of modellers available to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI); what plans he has to increase the JCVI's routine immunisations modelling capacity; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

Data on the number of modellers is not held. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation formulates advice and recommendations based on appraisal of the best scientific and other evidence available and has no specific allocated modelling resource. Modelling is commissioned from a range of resources as and when required.

There are no plans to increase the routine immunisations modelling capacity at present. Modellers from academic institutions, public bodies and the Government have been focused on supporting efforts against COVID-19 through the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies.

Malnutrition: Health Services**Alex Norris:**[\[81113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will produce guidance on how Integrated Care Partnerships can improve services for people at risk of malnutrition through improved partnerships, joint working, and improved planning of services.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 29 November 2021]: We have no current plans to do so.

Integrated care partnerships will work collaboratively to coordinate health and care services, to improve population health and reduce inequalities.

Alex Norris:[\[81114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will increase (a) its policy focus on and (b) the funding allocated to tackling malnutrition in Integrated Care Systems.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 29 November 2021]: Each integrated care board (ICB) will be required to establish an integrated care partnership, which will be responsible for developing a plan to address identified health, social care and public health needs. Many of the duties which previously applied for clinical commissioning groups will apply to ICBs, which may include issues relating to health inequalities such as malnutrition. Each ICB will be allocated funding and will decide how to allocate its resources appropriately.

Members: Correspondence**Rosie Cooper:**[\[96819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 29 October 2021, reference ZA58120, on the roll out of the booster vaccine.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 5 January 2022.

Robert Lorgan:[\[98474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the enquiry from the hon. Member for High Peak of 27 October 2021, referenced RL29885.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 4 November 2021.

■ Mental Health**Fleur Anderson:**[\[97152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that each local NHS area is taking steps towards parity of esteem between mental and physical health.

Gillian Keegan:

The NHS Mandate states that NHS England must seek to treat mental health with the same urgency as physical health. This is monitored through three metrics:

- Mental health services real terms expenditure growth;
- Number of people accessing Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services; and
- Number of children and young people accessing National Health Service-funded mental health services.

In October 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement published '2021/22 priorities and operational planning guidance: October 2021 – March 2022' which states that local areas must continue to meet the mental health investment standard, continue to increase access to children and young people's NHS-funded community mental health services and NHS-funded talking therapies for adults.

■ Mental Health Services: Coronavirus**Adam Holloway:**[\[96816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made additional funding available for mental health provisions during the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

The Mental Health Recovery Action Plan was published in 2021, supported by an additional £500 million in 2021/22. The Plan aims to respond to the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of the public, specifically targeting groups that have been most affected including those with severe mental illness, young people, and frontline staff. This is in addition to a further investment of £2.3 billion a year in mental

health services by 2023/24 through the NHS Long Term Plan. We have also provided more than £10 million to national and local mental health charities.

■ **Mental Health Services: Gravesham**

Adam Holloway:

[\[96815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) steps his Department has taken and (b) additional resources his Department has made available to support mental health in Gravesham constituency and surrounding areas during the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

In March 2021, we published the Mental Health Recovery Action Plan, supported by an additional £500 million in 2021/22, to address waiting times and ensure more people can access mental health services. The majority of the funding has been allocated to local National Health Service systems, including those in Kent and Medway.

■ **Motor Neurone Disease: Medical Treatments**

Ronnie Cowan:

[\[57138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with industry stakeholders on the adequacy of funding for the treatment of Motor Neurones Disease ahead of the upcoming Spending review.

Gillian Keegan:

There have been no specific discussions.

NHS England and NHS Improvement commission the specialised care and treatment that patients with Motor Neurone Disease may receive from the specialised neurological treatment centres across England. Funding decisions for these are made in line with local priorities. The Department continues to engage with stakeholders including a recent meeting between ministers and the MND Association on ways to significantly boost further research on MND and access government funding for research within existing routes.

■ **NHS Test and Trace: Telephone Services**

John Howell:

[\[90388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is aware of problems with the 119 helpline to resolve covid-19 vaccine data inaccuracies; and what steps he is taking to help people whose data is incorrect.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 14 December 2021]: We are not aware of any specific issues. If an individual believes that their COVID-19 vaccine data is inaccurate, this can be resolved with the Vaccination Data Resolution Service (VDRS) via 119. The VDRS will contact the individual within 21 days. Where vaccine data does not appear on

records in England, this will not prevent people from receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. Individuals affected can attend a walk-in site for either their booster or primary course of vaccination.

■ NHS: Coronavirus

Navendu Mishra: [\[98466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of staff shortages in the NHS in (a) Stockport constituency, (b) Greater Manchester and (c) the North West due to the omicron variant of covid-19.

Edward Argar:

The information is not held in the format requested as while data for COVID-19 related absences is collected, it does not distinguish whether this is related to the Omicron variant.

However, the following table shows the number of staff absences due to COVID-19 related reasons, including self-isolation, in the week to 2 January 2022 for the acute trusts in Stockport constituency, Greater Manchester and the North West National Health Service region.

| REGION/NHS TRUST | COVID-19 ABSENCES PER DAY |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Stockport NHS Foundation Trust | 215 |
| Greater Manchester: | |
| Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust | 590 |
| Bolton NHS Foundation Trust | 336 |
| Stockport NHS Foundation Trust | 215 |
| Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust | 164 |
| Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust | 315 |
| Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust | 1,293 |
| North West | 6,426 |

Source: NHS England and NHS Improvement Urgent and Emergency Care Daily Situation Reports 2021-22 for acute trusts.

■ NHS: Pensions

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[98257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the temporary suspension under the Coronavirus Act 2020 of the regulations governing the administration of NHS pensions, including the 16 hour rule.

Edward Argar:

Pension abatement in the National Health Service applies to nurses, midwives, physiotherapists and mental health officers with a retained legacy right to retire at 55 years old without a reduction in their pension. Between the ages of 55 years old and 60 years old, these pensions plus earnings in NHS employment cannot exceed NHS earnings before retirement. The abatement recognises that this a significant benefit not available to other staff in the NHS, including many nurses. Other staff are not subject to abatement after taking their pension.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 suspended the rule to enable this group of staff to increase their work for the NHS should they wish. It is due to expire on 25 March with other provisions, including the 16 hour rule. These staff can continue working for the NHS, typically at least half time. The 16 hour rule limits the amount of NHS work that can be done in the first month after returning from retirement, with no restriction thereafter. However, the Department will keep this under review.

Gill Furniss:

[\[98364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the temporary suspension of the NHS abatement rules past March 2022.

Edward Argar:

Pension abatement in the National Health Service applies to nurses, midwives, physiotherapists and mental health officers with a retained legacy right to retire at 55 years old without a reduction in their pension. Between the ages of 55 years old and 60 years old, these pensions plus earnings in NHS employment cannot exceed NHS earnings before retirement. The abatement recognises that this a significant benefit not available to other staff in the NHS, including many nurses. Other staff are not subject to abatement after taking their pension.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 suspended the rule to enable this group of staff to increase their work for the NHS should they wish. It is due to expire on 25 March with other provisions. The NHS Business Services Authority are writing to all pensioners under 60 years old in this group who may be affected, to advise how much they can earn before their pension is abated. These nurses and any who subsequently retire should continue to be able to work for the NHS. However, the Department will keep this under review.

■ NHS: Recruitment**Gill Furniss:**[\[98365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure neuro-diverse people are treated fairly and equally in the NHS recruitment process.

Edward Argar:

Under the Equality Act 2010 it is unlawful for employers to discriminate against people because of a disability. Neuro-diverse people should receive fair and equal treatment as part of the National Health Service recruitment process, which includes making workplace adjustments.

The 2020 NHS People Plan includes commitments to increase the representation of colleagues with a disability and states that employers must overhaul recruitment practices by creating accountability, agreeing diversity targets and addressing bias. Senior leaders must be accountable for developing and delivering urgent plans to eliminate inequality in their organisations. The NHS Workforce Disability Equality Standard set out metrics to enable organisations to understand the experiences of disabled staff. This will ensure a more inclusive environment for disabled people seeking employment in the NHS. Disability and Wellbeing Networks in the NHS support the recruitment of people with disabilities and NHS Employers has created a toolkit to assist disabled individuals through the recruitment process.

■ NHS: Software**Justin Madders:**[\[93775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to update the NHS Covid App to allow differentiation between positive cases from the delta and omicron covid-19 variants.

Maggie Throup:

The National Health Service (NHS) COVID-19 app cannot currently provide differentiated advice between positive cases of the Delta and the Omicron variants. Where the app notifies an individual that they have had close contact with someone with COVID-19, it provides advice based on the information the user provides about their age and vaccination status. We are currently exploring whether the underlying technology the NHS COVID-19 app uses for contact tracing could enable the app to provide differentiated messages to users based on the probable COVID-19 variant of the person they were recently in close contact with.

■ Osteoporosis: Females**Rachael Maskell:**[\[96955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of osteoporosis on women's (a) health, (b) quality of life and (c) economics.

Maria Caulfield:

We know that osteoporosis disproportionately affects women and can have a significant impact on their health, quality of life and ability to participate in economic activity.

On 23 December 2021, we published 'Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England', informed by the call for evidence. This sets out our ambitions to improve the health and wellbeing of women in England and reduce disparities. We have committed to explore areas of healthcare in which disparities between men and women are greatest, including long-term conditions such as osteoporosis. We will publish the Women's Health Strategy in spring 2022.

■ Parkinson's Disease: Research**Helen Hayes:**[\[98352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 19 November 2021 to Question 75943 on Parkinson's Disease: Research, what estimate he has made of the proportion of the £375 million in funding that will be spent on specific research into Parkinson's disease; and what the level of that funding will be each year.

Maria Caulfield:

This funding will be provided 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, therefore details of allocations and timescales are not currently available. 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.

■ Pharmacy: Disclosure of Information**Helen Hayes:**[\[98351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) legal repercussions and (b) methods of enforcement available are for pharmacies in the UK failing to uphold the statutory duty of candour.

Maria Caulfield:

Pharmacy regulators have standards for registered pharmacies to establish a culture of openness, honesty and learning. This is in addition to professional standards that stipulate that registered pharmacy professionals have a 'duty of candour', which includes an obligation to be open and honest and report and raise concerns. This is in line with other healthcare professionals.

The General Pharmaceutical Council supports pharmacy owners to meet the standards for registered pharmacies and has a number of enforcement options to secure compliance. These range from improvement action plans to statutory enforcement powers including improvement notices and conditions on registered

pharmacy premises and fitness to practise hearings for individual pharmacy professionals.

■ Physician Associates: Prescriptions

Jessica Morden: [\[96826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to enable physician associates to prescribe mortality-reducing medication.

Jessica Morden: [\[96827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to enable physician associates to attend advanced trauma training.

Jessica Morden: [\[96828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to enable physician associates to authorise x-rays and related scans.

Jessica Morden: [\[98235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to introduce statutory regulation of all medical associate professions.

Edward Argar:

Statutory regulation should be used proportionately and only where risks to public and patient protection cannot be effectively addressed through other means of professional assurance. In 2017, the Department consulted on proposals to bring four medical associate professions into regulation:

- physician associate (PA);
- anaesthesia associate (AA);
- surgical care practitioner (SCP); and
- advanced critical care practitioner (ACCP).

In October 2018, we announced that PAs and AAs would be regulated but not SCPs or ACCPs. This is because training for SCPs and ACCPs is open to regulated healthcare professionals and therefore there is no direct entry route into these roles. Once trained, SCPs and ACCPs need to retain their base professional registration with their regulatory bodies in order to practise.

On 6 January 2022, we published a consultation on the criteria for determining when statutory regulation of a healthcare profession is appropriate.

The consultation will run for 12 weeks until 31 March 2022.

Whilst there is no legal requirement, all healthcare professions with prescribing responsibilities in the United Kingdom are regulated due to the high-risk nature of prescribing activities. Work to bring PAs into regulation is underway and the Department plans to consult on draft legislation later this year.

We are also working with the professions, NHS England and NHS Improvement, the devolved administrations and professional bodies to develop the case for extending appropriate prescribing responsibilities to PAs after regulation. Should the decision be made by the Commission on Human Medicines to extend prescribing responsibilities to the role, a separate legislative process would be required to implement this. This would be subject to a further public consultation.

The Department is not aware of any legislative reason why PAs cannot access advanced trauma training courses. Eligibility criteria for training courses is set by course providers. The Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations 2017 require a profession to be regulated before it can request X-rays and ionising radiation. Registered healthcare professionals can then request these procedures as 'non-medical referrers' (NMRs) provided they have been entitled as an NMR by their employer and have undergone the appropriate training.

■ **Public Health: Greater London**

Helen Hayes:

[\[93831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the resourcing of public health departments in London to respond to the spread of the omicron covid-19 variant.

Maggie Throup:

Since June 2021, local outbreak planning and response is undertaken through the Local Outbreak Management Plans. The development of Local Outbreak Management Plans is led by Directors of Public Health, on behalf of Upper Tier Local Authorities (UTLA) which have statutory responsibility for public health. The Plans are regularly reviewed and assessed by the local National Health Service, general practitioners, employers, voluntary organisations and other community partners.

Each UTLA has a local outbreak plan developed in line with the Association of Directors of Public Health's guiding principles. One of the core principles is to be sufficiently resourced, both financially and with the appropriate expertise.

■ **Refugees: Afghanistan**

John Healey:

[\[79276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when Afghan refugees in the UK and housed in bridging hotels will be offered the covid-19 vaccine; and what proportion of Afghan refugees have received (a) a single dose and (b) two doses of the vaccine.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 25 November 2021]: We have provided £3 million to the National Health Service to support an enhanced healthcare offer for people and their families arriving through Afghan resettlement schemes. The NHS was asked to ensure individuals were offered COVID-19 vaccination in line with national guidelines. Vaccinations are being offered to individuals in all 72 bridging hotel sites.

Information on the proportion of refugees who have received a single and two doses of the vaccine is not available, as general practice data does not record whether individuals have been resettled through the Afghan resettlement scheme.

■ Sexual Assault Referral Centres: Standards

Anneliese Dodds: [\[97047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the provision of Sexual Assault Referral Centres in England.

Gillian Keegan:

The Department commissions 47 sexual assault referral centres (SARCs) through NHS England and NHS Improvement, which provide an integrated response to sexual violence and rape. These are geographically split across counties in England to enable access to a SARC service closer to home.

The provision of services is monitored regularly by regional SARC commissioners in partnership with local police and police crime commissioners. Each commissioner will perform regular assessments of its population to ensure services are commissioned to meet local needs. NHS England has increased the investment into sexual assault and abuse services and continues to review patient pathways and provide new services to meet the needs of the victims and survivors who access them.

■ Smoking: Health Education

Bob Blackman: [\[91931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department spent on campaigns to promote the cessation of smoking in 2020-21.

Maggie Throup:

The Department spent an estimated £1.32 million on smoking cessation promotion in 2020/21.

This figure includes expenditure for advertising on television, radio, national and regional press, outdoor, social and digital advertising. However, it does not include other expenditure on recruitment advertising, media partnerships and paid searches.

■ Smoking: Health Hazards

Mark Pritchard: [\[96832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will commission further research on the health impacts of nicotine on babies breastfed by mothers who continue to smoke.

Maggie Throup:

We have no current plans to do so.

■ Social Media: Mental Health

Fleur Anderson:

[\[94560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of allocating funding for research into the impact of social media on mental health.

Gillian Keegan:

The Department has funded a systematic review through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) to explore the relationship between social media and other online content and body image and disordered eating in children and young people. The review is being led by the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centres. The NIHR also funds the Mental Health Policy Research Unit, which in collaboration with McPin Foundation and the Centre for Mental Health, conducted research into screen use and adolescent mental health from the perspective of young people, their parents and educators.

■ Social Security: Fees and Charges

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[82023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of how long it will take for working age disabled people with no assets and who are unable to work to reach the cap on social care costs.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[82026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of (a) how much a working-age disabled person (i) who does not have savings and (ii) whose only income comes from means-tested benefits would keep after paying for social care as of 25 November 2021 and (b) how much that person would keep following the introduction of reforms to social care announced in November 2021.

Gillian Keegan:

The Government will introduce an £86,000 cap on the amount needed to pay for personal care from October 2023. How quickly somebody reaches the cap will depend on their weekly personal contribution towards the cost of their care. For people without any assets and who are unable to work, this will be a means-tested contribution following an assessment by local authorities of what they can reasonably afford to pay. The means testing ensures that it will take some years to reach the cap. Nevertheless, individuals are likely to be better off, and no-one will be worse off, in comparison to the system in place on 25 November 2021 as there is currently no cap on the amount needed to contribute.

Guidance to local authorities states that individuals must have at least a minimum income guarantee if they are receiving care in their own home or a personal expenditure allowance if they are receiving care in a care home. In September 2021, the Government also announced these allowances would be unfrozen in April 2022 and rise in line with inflation.

■ Sugar: Consumption**Damian Green:** [\[79256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress has been made towards publishing the final report on the impact of the UK voluntary sugar reformulation programme; and if he will make a statement.

Damian Green: [\[79257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to introduce further measures to support the reformulation of food and drink products to reduce the content of sugar; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

The fourth progress report for the sugar reduction programme will be ready for publication in early 2022. Analytical work is underway of the programmes food categories, drinks subject to the Soft Drinks Industry Levy and a second year of progress in juice and milk-based drinks.

There are no current plans to introduce further measures. We will continue to review expert advice and next steps are being considered.

■ Surgery: Greater Manchester**Navendu Mishra:** [\[98467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what measures his Department is putting in place to alleviate the backlog of elective treatments in light of their recent pause across Greater Manchester.

Edward Argar:

The National Health Service in Greater Manchester is prioritising the safety of patients and staff and the treatment of patients who need urgent and emergency care, including cancer treatment. The Christie and Rochdale Infirmary will continue to provide cancer care and surgery. The temporary pause in elective activity aims to prevent further spread of the Omicron variant.

We are providing £2 billion this year and a further £8 billion in the following three years to increase elective activity and tackle backlogs in elective services in England. The NHS will maintain services wherever possible, with cancer and urgent care such as cardiac and vascular surgery and transplantation unaffected. Diagnostic services, including endoscopy, and the majority of out-patient services will continue wherever possible.

■ Travel Requirements: Coronavirus**Sir Desmond Swayne:** [\[98177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will extend the life of paper covid-19 vaccination certificates beyond 30 days to enable longer overseas travel for people without smart phones.

Maggie Throup:

The travel NHS COVID Pass letter is currently valid for a period of 30 days as a protection measure against fraud. Expiration dates on the travel NHS COVID Pass letter will be kept under review. Alternatively, the travel NHS COVID Pass can be downloaded at NHS.UK and printed.

Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**Mr Ben Bradshaw:**[\[46927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for South Africa's status as a covid-19 red list country of data and genetic sequencing from that country showing the relative prevalence of the Beta and Delta variants of covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

All countries, including South Africa, are continually monitored. The Joint Biosecurity Centre's (JBC) assessments which inform Ministers' decisions on red, amber and green categorisation are reviewed every three weeks. The JBC uses a range of factors in its assessments, such as variant prevalence, genomic surveillance capability, virus transmission risk and variants of concern and variants under investigation. The methodology for international travel risk assessment is available at the following link:

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

Travel: Coronavirus**Wes Streeting:**[\[87766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the basis was for the decision to screen incoming passengers on day 2 after arrival for the omicron variant.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 10 December 2021]: Our objective is to slow ingress of Omicron cases through our measures at the border. The polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test required on or before day two test has a minimum standard of reporting of no more than 48 hours. Current estimates suggest that the majority of PCR travel test laboratories are able to test for S-gene target failure, which can be used as a proxy for identifying Omicron. In many cases we will have an indication whether a case is the Omicron variant at the same time the laboratory reports a positive PCR test result, allowing us to notify contacts that they need to self-isolate as soon as possible.

Wes Streeting:[\[87768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of travellers arriving daily in the UK are exempt from day 2 PCR tests.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 10 December 2021]: The information requested is not held centrally in the format requested as individual Departments are responsible for managing exemptions relevant to their responsibilities.

Wes Streeting:**[87769]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many day 2 PCR covid-19 tests following international travel are being completed each day.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 10 December 2021]: We do not hold data in the format requested. However, weekly data on the number of tests taken by people returning from overseas is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-test-and-trace-statistics-england-weekly-reports>

Wes Streeting:**[87770]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many day 2 PCR covid-19 tests for international travel are booked and then not completed each day on average.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 10 December 2021]: The information requested is not held centrally as tests can be obtained from a number of companies. We are unable to determine the number of tests not completed as this information will not be reported to NHS Test and Trace.

Wes Streeting:**[88809]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) private and (b) NHS Test and Trace labs conducting day two travel tests are able to conduct S-gene target failure (SGTF) assay.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 13 December 2021]: Seventeen private laboratories have reported they can detect S-gene target failure (SGTF). There are nine National Health Service pillar 2 laboratories with the primary assays which test for the presence of the S gene and can report SGTF.

■ Travel: Quarantine**Rachael Maskell:****[83420]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people travelling from countries added to the covid-19 red list will be required to pay for quarantine accommodation in the event that they booked flights before the travel restrictions were announced and must return to the UK.

Maggie Throup:

People returning from countries added to the red list are required to pay for quarantine accommodation where flights were booked before the travel restrictions were announced.

Travellers may qualify for hardship arrangements, which includes repayment plans in monthly instalments and in exceptional circumstances, fee reductions and waivers may be granted.

Rachael Maskell:[\[88780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to assist travellers who are required to hotel quarantine as a result of returning to the UK from a covid-19 red list country in the event that those people have insufficient funds to pay the full cost of that quarantine upfront.

Rachael Maskell:[\[88781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what payment options are available to travellers who are required to quarantine in a hotel on returning to the UK from a covid-19 red list country.

Maggie Throup:

Payments can be made using debit or credit cards via the booking portal administered by Corporate Travel Management (CTM). CTM also provides a call centre for travellers having difficulty or need additional assistance in making their booking.

For those who will suffer severe financial hardship as a result of paying for the full cost of managed quarantine in advance, hardship arrangements may be available. This includes repayment plans, where the cost of managed quarantine is paid for in monthly instalments and in exceptional circumstances, fee reductions or waivers may be granted.

■ Travel: USA**Daisy Cooper:**[\[88829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 December to Question 85389 on Travel: Coronavirus and with reference to the guidance of 2 December 2021 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention entitled Requirement for Proof of Negative COVID-19 Test or Documentation of Recovery from COVID-19, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of travel to the United States for families with children older than two but younger than 16 years where those children have recently recovered from covid-19 and therefore still produce a positive result on a PCR test, but cannot access a recovery certificate from his Department.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 10 December 2021]: In the United States of America, children under 18 years old are exempt from requiring vaccination but must show a negative COVID-

19 test result no more than one day before travel. Recent infection and associated immunity is not associated with a residual positive polymerase chain reaction test. There is no guarantee that a positive test outcome is not caused by a new COVID-19 infection and potentially a variant of concern. There are no plans to allow children to provide evidence of their recent recovery for overseas travel.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum: Afghanistan

Ruth Cadbury: [\[96893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many outstanding asylum applications there are for people from Afghanistan.

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](#)'. 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](#)'.

■ Asylum: Finance

Stuart C McDonald: [\[96895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the ONS's most recent data on consumer price inflation, published 15 December 2021, when her Department plans to review the rates of cash allowance for asylum seekers in response to the increased rate of inflation; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

The Government has been reviewing the level of cash support provided to asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute and expects to announce the outcome of the review shortly.

The review will take account of current levels of inflation.

■ Educational Visits: EU Nationals

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[98357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of accepting EU group passports or identity cards to increase bookings for school trips to the UK from EU countries.

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 citizens 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.

On group passports, the List of Travellers is an EU scheme and the EU announced in July 2020 the UK would no longer be part of it from 1 January 2021. The UK Government decided to continue accepting travel to the UK on the List of Travellers until 1 October 2021 to allow this change to be made at the same time as the change on the acceptance of EU, EEA and Swiss identity cards.

We continue to allow travel to the UK on collective passports for young people issued by Member States who have ratified the relevant 1961 Council of Europe treaty.

■ Extradition

Fleur Anderson:

[\[97153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that people's civil and political rights are not infringed by the Government's extradition arrangements with other countries.

Damian Hinds:

The Extradition Act 2003 is the legislative framework which contains the safeguards and protections available in UK courts to all persons requested for extradition to any overseas jurisdiction.

A requested person will not be extradited if doing so would breach their human rights (including the right to a fair trial) if the request is politically motivated, or if they would be at risk of facing the death penalty. The court can also bar a person's extradition if, according to a range of factors, including their health, it would not be in the interests of justice for the extradition to take place and can decide that it would be more appropriate to try the case in the UK than in the requesting state.

Additionally, a person cannot be surrendered if extradition would be disproportionate, or if they are likely to face long periods of pre-trial detention. These protections are also enshrined in our new extradition arrangements with the EU under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

■ Forensic Science Regulator Act 2021

Darren Jones:

[\[98381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to progress the implementation of the Forensic Science Regulator Act 2021.

Kit Malthouse:

We are fully committed to delivering statutory powers to the Forensic Science Regulator in accordance with the Act. Home Office officials are working closely and holding regular meetings with the Regulator, the UK Accreditation Service and other stakeholders to commence the measures in the Act as soon as possible.

■ Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority

Alison Thewliss: [\[96934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the reasons are for the (a) creation of the Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority on 8 November 2021 and (b) short timeframe for its creation.

Alison Thewliss: [\[96935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she will take to ensure that the existence of two trafficking and slavery decision makers does not result in differences in decision making based on immigration status.

Alison Thewliss: [\[96936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she will take to monitor the decision making of the Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority to ensure consistency of decision making across her Department's agencies.

Alison Thewliss: [\[96937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what training has been delivered to first responders on the creation of the Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority to ensure that adults identified as potential victims are able to give informed consent to a referral.

Tom Pursglove:

We are committed to having robust and victim-focused measures in place for addressing modern slavery. The Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority (IECA) was created to streamline decision-making and ensure, wherever possible, that the various factors which may be pertinent to decisions about an individual are taken by those who can consider their circumstances most fully.

Immigration Enforcement's immediate priority is always the welfare of the individual, and to ensure that all vulnerable migrants receive the support and assistance they need regardless of their immigration status. Immigration Enforcement already make decisions on key safeguarding and vulnerability matters such as the Adults at Risk policy and human rights decisions. Both the IECA and the Single Competent Authority (SCA) decision makers receive the same training on National Referral Mechanism (NRM) decision making and consistently apply the statutory guidance for potential victims of modern slavery.

Both competent authorities are held to account through existing quality assurance processes and the Multi-Agency Assurance Panels will continue to quality assure all negative Conclusive Grounds decisions.

The data on decisions taken by the IECA will be set out in the quarterly publication of NRM statistics and a breakdown by competent authority will be published once there is sufficient data to ensure individuals are not identifiable. We will regularly review this data to understand the impact of the change and ensure policies are being applied consistently.

This Government remains committed to identifying victims quickly, enhancing the support they receive and improving the training given to First Responders, who are responsible for referring potential victims into the NRM.

The Home Office has produced e-learning to help First Responders to identify potential victims of modern slavery and make referrals into the NRM when appropriate to do so. The e-learning is available through the Modern Slavery Organised Immigration Crime (MSOIC) website here:

<https://www.policingslavery.co.uk/transforming-our-response/training-delivery/first-responder-training/> .

■ Knives

Preet Kaur Gill:

[97012]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to (a) commence section 66 of the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 which allows the issue of statutory guidance and (b) publish the finalised statutory guidance on possession of the Kirpan.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government intends to publish the final version of the statutory guidance and the Government response to the consultation on the draft guidance shortly. The statutory guidance will be published in advance of section 66 of the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 being commenced so that interested parties are aware of the contents of the final version of the statutory guidance prior to commencement. We intend to commence section 66 and the other remaining provisions of the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 in Spring 2022. The final version of the statutory guidance will cover section 47 of the 2019 Act which introduced new defences for the possession in private of Sikh kirpans and to allow the ceremonial gifting of Sikh kirpans.

■ Members: Correspondence

Julie Elliott:

[96879]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average time taken is for her Department to respond to correspondence on passport applications from hon. Members representing a constituent.

Kevin Foster:

Data about intake and performance in answering Hon. Members Correspondence are published quarterly with the latest Quarter available at: [Customer service operations data: Q2 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/customer-service-operations-data-q2-2021) and this includes data up to and including the end of quarter 2 - 2021.

Further performance data will be published in due course.

Julie Elliott: [\[96880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average time was for her Department to respond to correspondence from hon. Members and members of the House of Lords in the last 18 months.

Damian Hinds:

Data about intake and performance in answering Hon. Members and Members of the House of Lords correspondence are published quarterly with the latest Quarter available at: [Customer service operations data: Q2 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/customer-service-operations-data-q2-2021) and this includes data up to and including the end of quarter 2 - 2021. We are proposing the release of data for quarter 3 in due course.

■ Offshore Industry: Immigration Controls

Kenny MacAskill: [\[97136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what checks Border Force carry out on offshore supply vessels operating in UK waters.

Tom Pursglove:

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

The Government provides guidance and codes of practice to help employers prevent illegal working, as well as similar guidance specific to offshore working.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[98448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2021 to Question 94543 on Offshore Industry: Conditions of Employment, what information her Department holds on the number of recorded incidents of Border Force identifying people entering the UK for the purposes of offshore employment who (a) do not have the right to do so and (b) do not hold relevant entry clearance in the latest period for which figures are available.

Tom Pursglove:

Border Force does not hold the data in an easily accessible format on those entering the UK for the purposes of offshore employment who do not have the right to do so and/or do not hold relevant entry clearance.

However, the Home Office published data on how many people are detained or returned on gov.uk. The latest publication can be found at: [How many people are detained or returned? - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/how-many-people-are-detained-or-returned)

■ Offshore Industry: Undocumented Migrants

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[97135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many incidents of illegal labour being used on offshore service ships there have been in the (a) oil and gas and (b) wind sector in each year since 2015.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 10 January 2022]: The Home Office does not hold data on the number of incidents of illegal labour being used on offshore service ships to the oil and gas, or wind, sectors.

The Government expects that all employers will comply with UK employment law.

■ Pets: Theft

Steve Reed:

[\[98319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many cases of pet theft were reported to the police in each year since 2015.

Kit Malthouse:

Information on the scale pet theft was gathered as part of the recent Pet Theft Taskforce which engaged a number of key organisations and experts in the field to shine a light on the existing evidence, considered the issue from end to end, and set out a package of specific recommendations to tackle this crime.

The evidence included data from 33 police forces in England and Wales on trends in reported dog thefts since 2015 and is available here:

[Pet theft taskforce report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/104444/pet-theft-taskforce-report.pdf)

The Government is acting on the recommendations of the Task Force which includes introducing a new dog abduction offence which has been added by the Government to the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill, bolstering the raft of measures it already includes to further protect pets, livestock and kept wild animals.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

John Healey:

[\[96767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghans who (a) are and (b) are not eligible for the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy are being housed in bridging hotels as of 4 January 2022, by local authority.

John Healey:

[\[96768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the letter from the Minister for Resettlement of 29 October 2021, how many Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy eligible Afghans are being housed temporarily at each bridging hotel.

Victoria Atkins:

There are currently over 12,000 Afghan evacuees in bridging hotel accommodation at the present time.

Our current estate includes approximately 84 hotels and over 12,000 individuals – some of whom are British Nationals and some of whom are Afghans who may be eligible for ARAP or the ACRS.

The numbers in hotels is contingent on offers of support from local authorities, so we urge all Honourable members to speak to their local authorities about what more they can offer.

Ruth Cadbury:[\[96889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether people arriving from Afghanistan with temporary leave to remain will have their status updated before their existing leave to remain expires.

Kevin Foster:

Those who entered were granted limited leave to enter with access to public funds and employment. This status is not a bar to them being permanently housed or to starting their life in the UK, including taking employment.

The Home Office has started the process to support those currently in the UK with 6 months leave to apply for and be granted Indefinite Leave to Remain. Our aim is to conclude this process before individuals' leave to remain expires.

Communications have been issued advising individuals of next steps to progress permanent residence in the UK. They also provide links to guidance and information on how prospective employers and landlords can contact the Home Office to confirm individuals' right to take employment and rented accommodation.

Ruth Cadbury:[\[96891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that individuals arriving from Afghanistan with temporary leave to remain can apply for indefinite leave to remain before their status expires.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office has established a dedicated caseworking team, which is working jointly with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Ministry of Defence. This team will contact all those who arrived to discuss their leave arrangements and ensure they get the right form of leave.

Those who are here with limited leave under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy can apply to convert this to indefinite leave to remain at any time before their limited leave expires. This application is a free application and can be applied for online.

Details of the type of leave to be granted to those arriving from Afghanistan, and how they will be supported in obtaining that leave, can be found in the Afghanistan Resettlement and Immigration policy statement.

The policy statement can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement-accessible-version#afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy>(opens in a new tab)

Further information regarding Locally employed staff, can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-locally-engaged-staff>

Munira Wilson:

[97140]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with (a) the Department for Health and Social Care and (b) other specialist psychological services to provide (i) specialist and (ii) culturally sensitive mental health support for newly-arrived Afghan refugees.

Victoria Atkins:

Under Operation Warm Welcome, all those evacuated from Afghanistan to the UK have access to healthcare via the NHS, free of charge.

To further support this cohort, the UK government announced £3 million of additional NHS funding to support them to access an initial healthcare assessment - including mental health support and assessment of any trauma and safeguarding concerns - whilst in temporary accommodation.

Paul Blomfield:

[98267]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghans (a) have arrived in the UK in total under Operation Warm Welcome, (b) have arrived under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme, (c) were British citizens, and (c) were neither British citizens or did not qualify under the Policy and will be allocated places under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme since August 2021.

Victoria Atkins:

C.15,000 people were evacuated from Afghanistan during Operation Pitting, with a further c.1,500 brought to the UK from neighbouring countries since then.

We will not give a running commentary on statistics due to the continuing flow of people being welcomed. We will include this data within published resettlement statistics in 2022.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[98387]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on which date in January will the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme commence.

Victoria Atkins:

As set out to Parliament in an oral statement on 6 January, the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) is now open. You can find the statement here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/oral-statement-on-the-afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

A Dear Colleague letter was also sent to Honourable Members on 23 December.

Layla Moran: [\[98392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the cost is to the public purse of bridging hotels under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Programme.

Victoria Atkins:

We are proud to have provided homes for more than 4000 Afghan evacuees so far. We continue to encourage councils that have not yet made offers or those that can perhaps offer more places, to do so.

Although we are working at considerable pace with Local Authorities to source appropriate accommodation for Afghan evacuees in bridging accommodation, the length of time that people spend in bridging accommodation depends upon Local Authorities who have pledged their ongoing support to house the Afghan people and the availability of housing in those areas.

The cost of bridging hotel accommodation to the tax- payer is commercially confidential.

Layla Moran: [\[98393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the (a) median and (b) longest waiting time in bridging hotels is for Afghans who have entered the UK as part of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 10 January 2022]: We are proud to have provided homes for more than 4000 Afghan evacuees so far. We continue to encourage councils that have not yet made offers or those that can perhaps offer more places, to do so.

Although we are working at considerable pace with Local Authorities to source appropriate accommodation for Afghan evacuees in bridging accommodation, the length of time that people spend in bridging accommodation depends upon Local Authorities who have pledged their ongoing support to house the Afghan people and the availability of housing in those areas.

The cost of bridging hotel accommodation to the tax- payer is commercially confidential.

■ Refugees: Employment

Chi Onwurah: [\[98278\]](#)

To ask Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to regularly publish figures on the efficacy of Government programmes which aim to help settled refugees into employment.

Kevin Foster:

Unemployed refugees receive employment support from the Department for Work and Pensions, with direct, personalised support available from experienced work coaches.

Data on the employment outcomes for refugees specifically is not available.

■ **Theft: Cars**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[96957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons victims of crime are required to pay for the police to take their cars for forensic examination by the police service after a car has been stolen; and why that cost is not met by the police service.

Kit Malthouse:

Whilst the police are empowered to charge vehicle owners prescribed sums for the recovery, storage, and disposal of their vehicles; victims of crime are not charged storage costs whilst vehicles are undergoing forensics examinations or for the cost for forensic examinations following the recovery of stolen vehicles.

■ **UK Border Agency: Patrol Craft**

Bob Seely:

[\[98411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Home Office has domestic procurement targets for Border Patrol vessels.

Damian Hinds:

The procurement for the new fleet of Border Force vessels has yet to be launched and as such decisions on issues such as that raised have yet to be made.

We can confirm however that the procurement will, consistent with the National Shipbuilding Strategy currently being refreshed, provide opportunities for UK suppliers to bid for contracts and ensure that best value for money is obtained.

■ **West Midlands Police: Finance**

Julian Knight:

[\[96916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the funding settlement will be for West Midlands Police in the financial year 2022-23; and whether that settlement represents an increase from the 2021-22 financial year settlement.

Kit Malthouse:

The provisional funding settlement for West Midlands Police will be up to £694.9 million in 2022-23; an increase of up to £39.4 million when compared to 2021-22.

■ **Windrush Compensation Scheme**

Patrick Grady:

[\[96942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress she has made with the Windrush Compensation Scheme; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

We publish information on the total number of claims submitted, claims paid, and the overall amount paid out by the Windrush Compensation Scheme on a monthly basis. The latest set of data can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-compensation-scheme-data-october-2021

We are processing claims as quickly as possible, but all claims are different, and the time taken will depend on many factors, including the complexity of the case. Wherever possible, we will make a preliminary payment as soon as someone applying on their own behalf, or on behalf of someone who has sadly passed away, can show any impact on their life under the terms of the Scheme. Individuals do not have to wait for their whole application to be assessed in order to receive a preliminary payment.

We have taken steps to encourage more people to submit a claim and to help those who already have. We have removed the end date of the Scheme to ensure no one is prevented from making a claim if they are eligible. We have also launched a package of support to help those making, or who have already made, claims on behalf of a relative who has passed away to obtain the legal documentation required to process their claims. In addition, we have published a redesigned primary claim form which is easier for people to complete, and refreshed casework guidance which sets out clearly how caseworkers should apply the balance of probabilities and go about gathering evidence, with the aim of reducing the time taken to process claims and improving peoples' experiences of applying to the Scheme.

We are also continuing to work extensively with communities and stakeholders to raise awareness of the Scheme and encourage affected individuals to apply. Since the launch of the Scheme we have attended or hosted approximately 200 outreach and engagement events, and in 2020 we carried out a national communications campaign to make sure those most affected around the UK are aware of the support available to them and how to apply. In addition, the £500,000 Windrush Schemes Community Fund provides for grassroots organisations and community groups to run their own outreach, promotional and support activity.

JUSTICE

■ Custodial Treatment: Domestic Visits

Anna McMorrin:

[97025]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many times he has visited a (a) secure training centre, (b) young offender institution (c) secure children's home; and if he will provide the dates of each of those visits.

Victoria Atkins:

The Deputy Prime Minister and I have been and are committed to visiting establishments across the youth estate in the coming months, subject to the "National Framework" which controls measures for preventing Covid transmission.

■ Family Courts: Greater London

Stephen Timms: [\[96753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 1 November 2021 to Question 67051, what progress he has made in reducing the delays at Westferry Family Court; and if he will make a statement.

James Cartlidge:

Work continues to be undertaken on the redistribution of work to help support East London Family Court. Capacity across the estate is being fully utilised and Financial Remedy and Public Law cases continue to be heard at the Royal Courts of Justice and the Nightingale Court at Petty France. Pilot Practice Directorate 36Q has also been implemented at East London Family Court (New **Pilot Practice Direction 36Q** came into force from 23 April 2020. Pilot PD36Q modifies PD12B (Child Arrangements Programme) to provide temporary local flexibility over procedures for progressing applications for Child Arrangements Orders).

As a result of the continuing exceptionally high receipts of Private Law work at East London Family Court, along with the continuing pressures on judicial recruitment and Cafcass resource, it has been agreed with the Senior Judiciary that some of this work will initially be heard at Central and West London Family Courts with a longer plan of transferring some of the East London postcodes to these courts to balance the waiting times across the region.

The impact of the rebalancing exercise is unlikely to show for several months due to the nature of how cases are listed. However, despite continuing pressures, outstanding cases remain fairly static with 2299 at the end of October and 2251 at the end of December.

[OPT Report - FamilyMan Private Law Workload and Performance \(BY CASE\)](#)

■ Necrophilia: Sentencing

Ms Nusrat Ghani: [\[98336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the Government's timescale is for the decision on whether to extend the maximum sentence for necrophilia.

Ms Nusrat Ghani: [\[98337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the Government plans to extend the maximum sentence for necrophilia from two years for cases that are consecutive.

James Cartlidge:

The government is reviewing the statutory maximum penalty available for the offence of sexual penetration of a corpse under section 70 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. This review is taking place alongside the independent inquiry into the events surrounding David Fuller's horrific offending in hospitals in Kent. That inquiry is due to publish interim findings shortly, with a final report published at a later date. Our review of available maximum penalties is likely to follow similar timescales, to ensure findings from the wider inquiry can be taken into account.

The current statutory maximum penalty is for one offence; where more than one offence is sentenced at the same time, each offence will be sentenced individually and the overall sentence passed will reflect the totality of offending behaviour, which may mean sentences being served consecutively. Our review of the statutory maximum penalty is considering instances of the commission of multiple, as well as single, offences.

■ **Pets: Theft**

Steve Reed: **[98318]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of convictions for pet theft in each year since 2015.

James Cartlidge:

Information on theft offences held by the Ministry of Justice does not identify if a pet, specifically, was stolen. The information may be held on court record but to be able to identify cases in which pets were stolen would require access to individual court records which would be of disproportionate cost.

The Ministry of Justice has published information on sentences for offenders convicted for more general theft offences, up to December 2020, available in the 'Outcomes by Offence' data tool, here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987715/outcomes-by-offence-2020.xlsx

■ **Prisoners' Release**

Ellie Reeves: **[98379]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 15 December 2021 to Question 90879, of those convicted offenders released in error from (a) courts and (b) prisons since 2010, how many have (i) not returned to prison and (ii) returned to prison; and for those returned, what duration of time elapsed before their return to prison.

Victoria Atkins:

A prisoner is released in error if they are released earlier than their correct release date, they will be unlawfully at large until and unless they are subsequently released correctly or returned to custody. If the person so released is not aware of the error and makes no attempt to evade arrest, then they have committed no offence and, in that sense, they may not be at fault.

Releases in error are monitored closely to analyse the frequency across the estate and identify any trends nationally, while taking into consideration the management of risk to the public.

Between 2010 and March 2021, 678 releases in error took place. I have asked officials to review methods of measuring rates of return, owing to the complexity of such data gathering. For example, if the prisoner was released one or two days early, they would not be recalled to prison, however, would be counted as still at large.

This data is not currently held, and information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Prisoners' Release: Electronic Tagging

Steve Reed: [\[98315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of prisoners that would be released under the electronic tags scheme to limit the spread and impact of covid-19 in the prison estate.

Steve Reed: [\[98316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many electronic tags were leased by his Department to limit the spread and impact of covid-19 in the prison estate in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Steve Reed: [\[98317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners were released with electronic monitoring tags under a scheme introduced as part of measures to limit the spread and impact of covid-19 in the prison estate.

Victoria Atkins:

In April 2020 we leased an additional 2,000 electronic monitoring tags to support our End of Custody Temporary Release scheme to limit the spread and impact of Covid-19 in prisons. This was based on early estimates that up to 4,000 prisoners could be eligible. Early release on tag was one element of our approach. Other measures included reducing numbers on remand, creating extra cells, limited prisoner movements, isolating prisoners with symptoms, shielding the vulnerable and quarantining new arrivals.

In considering these early releases, the priority of HM Prison and Probation Service was to put the safety of the public first, which is why offenders needed to meet strict eligibility criteria and pass a risk assessment to be released early.

Between April 2020 when the scheme was introduced and August 2020 when the scheme was paused, 262 prisoners were released with an electronic tag. A number of surplus tags were also used elsewhere in the criminal justice system in support of our ambition to make full use of the benefits of electronic monitoring technology.

We continue to keep the options for reducing the impact of Covid-19 in the prison estate under review. However, at this stage there are no plans to reintroduce the End of Custody Temporary Release scheme.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Buildings: Air Conditioning****Geraint Davies:**[\[98186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies on future building standards to protect occupants from infection with covid-19, including the omicron variant, of the study entitled The removal of airborne SARS-CoV-2 and other bioaerosols by air filtration on COVID-19 surge units, by Andrew Conway Morris and others, published by Oxford University Press for the Infectious Diseases Society of America on 30 October 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

It is through Part F of the Building Regulations that we set minimum ventilation standards for new buildings, or when work is done to an existing building. We have recently published our response to the Future Buildings Standard Consultation which sets out new guidance on Part F, to come into force in June 2022. COVID-19 has shown the importance of ventilation in reducing the spread of infection. The new guidance includes measures to mitigate the risks of airborne infection in new buildings, including CO₂ monitoring and updated specifications for systems that recirculate air between rooms.

The study by Andrew Conway Morris and others is among extensive recent and ongoing research carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic on the effect of ventilation on airborne transmission of infectious agents. This is a rapidly developing area of knowledge and understanding. We intend to continue to monitor and review the available evidence and research in the context of any future changes to Part F.

■ Evictions: Ethnic Groups**Sir Mark Hendrick:**[\[94299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the prevalence of potential racial disparities in eviction cases brought by private landlords against Black British people.

Eddie Hughes:

It is unlawful for a landlord to seek to end a tenancy based on an individual's ethnicity, or any other protected characteristic.

As private landlords are not required to record when they serve a notice of possession, it is not possible to break down the volume of notices served by ethnicity. Upon the expiry of a possession notice, a landlord can make a claim for possession in the county court if the tenant does not vacate the property. Landlords are not required to record the ethnicity of the tenant(s) against whom they are making a claim.

■ Members: Correspondence

Dan Carden: [\[98391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Liverpool Walton of 8 November 2021 on the Influence of Big Money in UK Politics - Alterations to the Elections Bill, which was transferred to his Department by the Cabinet Office.

Kemi Badenoch:

A response to the Hon Member's letter has been issued.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Members: Correspondence

Robert Largin: [\[98475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he plans to respond to the enquiry from the hon. Member for High Peak of 2 November 2021, referenced RL29389.

Conor Burns:

I can confirm to my hon. Friend that a response was issued from my office to the Hon. Gentleman on 10 December 2021.

PRIME MINISTER

■ 10 Downing Street: Meetings

Fleur Anderson: [\[97161\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, what the purpose of the meeting held in the gardens of Downing Street on 15 May 2020 was.

Fleur Anderson: [\[97162\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, which officials attended the meeting in the gardens of Downing Street on 15 May 2020.

Fleur Anderson: [\[97163\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, whether minutes were taken at the meeting held in the gardens of Downing Street on 15 May 2020.

Fleur Anderson: [\[97165\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, whether any cost to the public purse was incurred for the purchase of (a) food and (b) alcoholic beverages at the gathering held in the gardens of Downing Street on 15 May 2020.

Fleur Anderson: [\[97166\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, whether any non-pass holders attended the meeting in the gardens of Downing Street on 15 May 2020.

Boris Johnson:

I refer the Hon. Member to the Terms of Reference for the Cabinet Office investigation, which have been deposited in the Library of the House. It would not be appropriate to pre-empt that that process.

Independent Adviser On Ministerial Interests**Angela Rayner:**[\[98322\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, on what dates he has corresponded with the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests since 9 December 2021.

Boris Johnson:

I will place copies of my recent correspondence with the Independent Adviser in the Libraries of the House.

SCOTLAND**Broadcasting: Scots Gaelic Language****Ian Murray:**[\[96848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on support for Gaelic broadcasting in Scotland in the forthcoming Broadcasting White Paper.

Mr Alister Jack:

Ministers and officials from this Department are in regular contact with counterparts from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on a range of matters.

The UK 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.

The UK Government has been undertaking a strategic review of public service broadcasting, which includes the important role of minority language broadcasting to audiences such as Gaelic speakers. The conclusions from that review will be set out in the Broadcasting White Paper.

Fiscal Policy: Scotland**Ian Murray:**[\[94332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what progress has been made on negotiations between the Government and the Scottish Government on the Fiscal Framework.

Mr Alister Jack:

In October 2021, the UK Government reached agreement with the Scottish Government to jointly commission an independent report that will cover the Block Grant Adjustment arrangements. This independent report will inform a broader review of the Scottish Government's Fiscal Framework later this year.

We are currently working with the Scottish Government to finalise the arrangements for commissioning the independent report.

■ **Lord Advocate: Scotland**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[98454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what communications he has received from the Scottish Parliament regarding changes to the Scotland Act 1988 relating to the constitutional role of the Lord Advocate.

Mr Alister Jack:

I have not received any communications from the Scottish Parliament regarding changes to the role of the Lord Advocate.

■ **PAYE: Scotland**

Ian Murray:

[\[94333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, with reference to page 49 of Scotland's Economic and Fiscal Forecasts, published by the Scottish Fiscal Commission in December 2021, what assessment his Department has made of the reason for the increase in PAYE employees between February 2020 and October 2021 being substantially lower in Scotland than other regions and nations of the UK.

Mr Alister Jack:

The UK and Scottish economies have proven remarkably resilient during the pandemic, and whilst the pandemic is not over, it proves the UK Government's Plan for Jobs is working, with latest labour market data showing unemployment is down and the numbers of people on the payroll across Scotland above pre-pandemic levels.

The specific performance of Scotland relative to the rest of the UK in the PAYE data is complex. North Eastern Scotland significantly underperforms on this indicator and this is likely to be as a result of its industrial mix and reliance on the oil and gas sector as the Commission suggests. The Commission's analysis that the labour market impact of the recent upturn in oil prices is probably not reflected in this data release either is one with which the Scotland Office would agree. Moreover, the North East of Scotland's PAYE data probably dampens Scottish PAYE activity relative to the UK average and, therefore, this is likely to overstate the level of difference between Scotland and the other regions and nations of the UK.

SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

■ **Elections: Proof of Identity**

Ruth Jones:

[\[99061\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for City of Chester, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, what recent assessment the Electoral Commission has made

of the impact of introducing voter ID on turnout among Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities in (a) Newport West, (b) Wales and (c) the UK.

Christian Matheson:

The Electoral Commission's independent evaluation of the Government's pilots, held in 2018 and 2019, found no evidence that turnout was significantly affected by the trialled introduction of an ID requirement at polling stations.

However, the evaluations noted that the pilots were not representative of the UK population and it was therefore not possible to draw definitive conclusions, particularly about the likely impact at a national poll with higher levels of turnout.

The Commission will have significant responsibilities to raise public awareness about the new ID requirement. This will have a predominant focus on those demographics known to be less likely to have the necessary identification, including those from lower socio-economic groups, those with disabilities and the unemployed.

■ **Politics: Education**

Ruth Jones:

[\[99062\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for City of Chester, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, what steps are being taken to improve levels of political literacy among young people in Newport West.

Christian Matheson:

The Electoral Commission has an important duty to promote public awareness of the UK's electoral systems.

Following the extension of the franchise to 16 and 17 year olds in Wales, the Commission has been working with teachers and youth leaders to support citizenship education, and has shared new education resources for young people across the UK, including versions specific to Wales.

The Commission continues to develop further political literacy resources for young people across the UK, and will publish additional materials ahead of the upcoming elections in May 2022. It has also recently established a youth voice network to inform this work, which includes representation from young people in Wales.

The Commission is also promoting Welcome to Your Vote week to schools this month, to help young people to feel more confident and more prepared to engage in democracy.

TRANSPORT

■ **Country Parks: Liverpool**

Bill Esterson:

[\[96864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he will provide a response to the letter of 15 December 2021 from the Save Rimrose Valley campaign.

Trudy Harrison:

Department officials responded to the letter on 5 January 2022.

■ Hammersmith Bridge: Repairs and Maintenance**Sarah Olney:**[\[97011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason his Department has contributed (a) 80 per cent of the funding to the Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing and (b) 33 per cent of the total cost for the repairs to Hammersmith Bridge.

Trudy Harrison:

The Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing is part-funded by the Department as part of the wider Large Local Majors road funding scheme. Local authorities bid for funding from the Large Local Majors Fund and its successor, the Major Road Network Fund. Hammersmith Bridge is owned by the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. As it is not classed as a major road by Transport for London (TfL), it was not part of TfL's bid to that funding programme.

The Government agreed to providing funding to the Hammersmith Bridge project, of up to one third of the costs of repair, initially to pedestrians, cyclists and river traffic and, depending on cost, to motorists, as part of the TfL funding agreement of 01 June 2021.

■ High Speed 2 Line**Sarah Green:**[\[97181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure HS2 stations are closely integrated within existing transport infrastructure as recommended in the Oakervee Review of HS2.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Oakervee Review highlighted the importance of integrating HS2 stations with the existing transport network and the local area. Integrating HS2 stations with local and regional transport modes, including active travel options, is a key Sponsor's Requirement (as set out in Sponsor's Requirement no.13, in Annex 2 of the HS2 Development Agreement). By working with local and regional authorities and stakeholders HS2 Ltd must deliver integrated travel connections that promote sustainable travel. Work continues to ensure that HS2 stations across all phases are effectively integrated, through engagement with key partners such as Transport for London, Transport for the West Midlands, Transport for Greater Manchester, Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation, and relevant local planning and highways authorities.

■ High Speed 2 Line: Iron and Steel**Bill Esterson:** [\[96868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with trade unions and representatives from the UK's steel industry on setting targets for the use of British made steel in the construction of HS2.

Andrew Stephenson:

HS2 Ltd has engaged extensively with the British steel industry over the last five years to ensure that it is in the best position possible to compete for contracts to build Britain's new high speed rail network. Due to UK procurement law, public bodies such as HS2 Ltd must ensure that all procurement activity is carried out on a fair, equal and transparent basis and does not discriminate on the basis of location.

However, the Department are very keen that UK steel is used in the construction of HS2 where practicable. HS2's engagement with the sector has resulted, to date, in 28 of the 29 reinforcement fabrication contracts at Tier 3 level being awarded to UK-based companies.

■ High Speed 2 Line: North East**Mr Toby Perkins:** [\[96846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, where the Infrastructure Maintenance Depot for the Eastern Leg of HS2 will be located.

Andrew Stephenson:

Following the announcements in the Integrated Rail Plan, the need for, and optimal location of, any Infrastructure Maintenance Depot will be considered as part of the further development work on looking at the best way to take HS2 trains to Leeds.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Wales**Sarah Atherton:** [\[97179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to increase testing capacity for heavy goods vehicle drivers in Wales.

Trudy Harrison:

The number of available HGV driving tests across Great Britain has increased by 90% compared to pre-pandemic levels and currently stands at 3,200 tests per week. This includes increases in availability at driving test centres in Wales and Welsh drivers can also book test slots in England or Wales. Test capacity now exceeds demand and the provision of vocational tests is not a barrier to people becoming HGV drivers.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency has appointed customer account managers to help trainers access vocational driving tests where and when they need them.

■ Leamside Line

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[96861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if (a) the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State or (b) another Minister in his Department will visit the Leamside Line to discuss with stakeholders the case for its proposed reopening.

Wendy Morton:

In January 2020 the Government pledged £500 million for the Restoring Your Railway programme to deliver on our manifesto commitment to start reopening lines and stations to reconnect smaller communities, regenerate local economies and improve access to jobs, homes and education. The bid for the Leamside Line to the third round of the Ideas Fund was unsuccessful. My predecessor as Rail Minister provided feedback on the scheme and advice on alternative funding routes to the Hon Member and her colleagues. As stated in the Integrated Rail Plan, the case for re-opening the Leamside route would be best developed as part of any future city region settlement.

■ Parking: Students

Rachael Maskell:

[\[96973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to take steps to facilitate the implementation of residential parking schemes in student areas in the event that non-residential landlords and students do not participate in those schemes.

Trudy Harrison:

Parking, including the operation of residential permit schemes, is the responsibility of local authorities and it is for them to determine what is best for their own area. Local authorities should ensure that their parking strategy takes account of transport and planning policies, so that the needs of the various road users are considered. Local councillors are responsible for ensuring that local decisions about traffic measures take account of the needs and opinions of local people.

■ Railway Stations: Visual Impairment

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[98389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all train station platforms have warning tactile flooring installed to assist blind and partially sighted people when travelling by train.

Wendy Morton:

We are committed to making sure that 100 percent of British mainline station platforms are fitted with tactile surfaces and Network Rail has received an initial £10 million to install tactile paving at priority stations not already funded.

Tactiles have since been installed at a number of stations including Bournemouth, Chiswick and Overton with more to come.

I will make further announcements on future rounds of funding in due course.

■ Roads: Accidents

Jessica Morden: [96821]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to establish a collision investigation branch for roads akin to those in place for rail, aviation and maritime.

Trudy Harrison:

My Department ran a public consultation on creating a Road Collision Investigation Branch between 28 October and 9 December 2021. The consultation has now closed and the Department is currently conducting a full analysis of the feedback.

Jessica Morden: [96822]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if the Government will set a target of zero road deaths and serious injuries by 2040.

Trudy Harrison:

While UK roads continue to be among the safest in the world, we can never afford to be complacent or relax efforts to improve what we do. That is why reducing the numbers of those needlessly killed and injured on our roads is a key priority for this Department and as announced on 30 July in our Gear Change: One Year On review ([Gear Change: One Year On \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)), we intend to prepare an ambitious new framework for road safety setting out measures for action and improvement.

■ Shipping: Crew

Louise Haigh: [96976]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date his Department plans to publish Seafarers in the UK Shipping Industry: Maritime and shipping for 2021.

Louise Haigh: [96977]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date the Reported road casualties in Great Britain, provisional estimates involving illegal alcohol levels: 2020 will be published.

Louise Haigh: [96978]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date the Renewable fuel statistics 2021: Third provisional report Renewable fuel will be published.

Louise Haigh: [96979]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date the Sea passenger statistics 2021: Short sea routes Maritime and shipping will be published.

Louise Haigh: [96980]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date the document, Road goods vehicles travelling to Europe: 2021 Road freight: domestic and international, will be published.

Louise Haigh: [\[96981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date his Department plans to publish the Travel time measures for the Strategic Road Network and local A roads: January to December 2021, Road congestion and reliability.

Robert Courts:

The Department publishes a 12-month forthcoming Official and National Statistics publications calendar, for all statistics published by the Department for Transport and the Office for Rail and Road. This can be found on the Department for Transport's statistics webpage: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/about/statistics#forthcoming-publications>.

This calendar is updated monthly, where dates are announced at least 4 weeks before the publication date, in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics. Publications to be released later than the 4-week period have provisional month date of release.

■ Speed Limits

Jessica Morden: [\[96820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential safety benefits of (a) lowering the default speed limit on single carriageway roads and (b) only allowing higher speeds on rural roads which have passed a safety assessment.

Trudy Harrison:

An assessment of the potential safety benefits of lowering the default speed limit on single carriageway roads was contained in a report prepared for the Department for Transport: TRL Report 397 by Sexton and Johnson: An Evaluation of options for road safety beyond 2010, which can be found at [TRL | An evaluation of options for road safety beyond 2010](#).

No separate assessment was made of only allowing higher speeds on rural roads which have passed a safety assessment.

Setting national speed limits in Wales and Scotland is a matter for the Welsh and Scottish Governments. When setting local speed limits traffic authorities are asked to take into account the relevant national guidance.

There are no current plans to lower the default speed limit on single carriageway roads or allow higher speeds on rural roads which have passed a safety assessment.

■ **Trains: Coronavirus**

Helen Hayes: [\[96985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what savings have been made as a result of train timetable alterations made in response to the covid-19 outbreak since March 2021.

Wendy Morton:

The national rail timetable changed three times since March 2021, in May, September and December. The industry sought to improve its passenger service offer and deliver an attractive, reliable and punctual timetable that met passengers' needs. The changes implemented throughout 2021 increased the number of services that ran, which did not therefore attract cost savings.

■ **Trains: Greater London**

Helen Hayes: [\[96986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to consult (a) hon. Members representing London constituencies, (b) Greater London Assembly members, (c) local authorities and (d) the London Mayor on train timetable alterations made since March 2021 in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Wendy Morton:

In light of the surge in Omicron cases and rising staff sickness, the rail industry has made plans to operate the maximum level of service it can run reliably within existing operational constraints, to ensure passengers can plan their journeys with confidence.

Responding effectively to the challenges posed by this pandemic meant that the rail industry had to amend its timetables at short notice, cope with fluctuating passenger demand and staff absence, and act quickly on feedback from stakeholders. Train operators worked closely with their local markets and key stakeholders, including passenger groups, Members of Parliament, local and mayoral authorities, to find the best solution to the needs of the local community, and run a reliable service within existing current operational constraints. Industry partners will continue to collaborate to develop attractive timetables that are reliable and deliver excellent performance for passengers.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Patricia Gibson:

[96944]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will have discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on additional support for the UK travel industry in response to the (a) imposition of covid-19 related restrictions on and (b) reductions in international travel.

Robert Courts:

The Secretary of State for Transport speaks regularly to Chancellor of the Exchequer and colleagues on a wide range of subjects, including the impacts of Covid-19 on the travel sector.

TREASURY

■ Bank Cards: Fees and Charges

Mr Nicholas Brown:

[98515]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what enforcement action his Department takes on companies which issue minimum spend card payment charges.

John Glen:

It remains the individual merchant or retailer's choice whether to set a certain 'minimum spend' for a certain type of payment instrument, and whether to accept or decline any form of payment.

Surcharging, the practice of merchants or retailers charging a fee to the customer for using a certain payment instrument (e.g., a debit card or credit card) has been banned since 2018 through amendments made to the Consumer Rights (Payment Surcharges) Regulations 2012. For most UK retail payments, these Regulations ban merchants from charging a fee in addition to the advertised price of a transaction on the basis of a consumer's choice of payment instrument payments.

The Regulations give consumer enforcement authorities (including local authority Trading Standards and the Northern Ireland Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment) the power to take civil enforcement action against traders who breach the Regulations. Customers are also entitled to receive a refund of any unlawful surcharge they have paid and, if necessary, to take legal action to recover any such surcharge.

For further information on surcharging, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has published guidance at the following webpage:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/payment-surcharges

■ Banks: Closures

Ruth Jones:

[\[97063\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many UK bank branches have shut or been earmarked for closure in (a) Newport West constituency, (b) Wales and (c) the UK since 2015.

John Glen:

The Government recognises the continued importance of access to banking. However, decisions on opening and closing branches are a commercial issue for banks and building societies. The Government does not intervene in these decisions or make direct assessments of these branch networks. HM Treasury therefore does not collect any data relating to branch closures.

In May 2017, the largest banks and building societies, including those with a large presence in Wales, signed up to the Access to Banking Standard which commits them to ensure customers are well informed about branch closures, the bank's reasons for closure and options for continued access to banking services.

Guidance from the Financial Conduct Authority also sets out its expectation of firms when they are deciding to reduce their physical branches or the number of free-to-use ATMs. Firms are expected to carefully consider the impact of planned branch closures on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs and consider possible alternative access arrangements. This ensures the implementation of closure decisions is undertaken in a way that treats customers fairly.

Alternative options for access can be via telephone banking, through digital means such as mobile or online banking, and the Post Office. The Post Office Banking Framework allows 95% of business and 99% of personal banking customers to deposit cheques, check their balance and withdraw and deposit cash at 11,500 Post Office branches in the UK.

The Government also welcomed new industry commitments at the end of last year to protect cash access, including through shared services, and looks forward to seeing what results they deliver in protecting cash facilities for local communities across the UK.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme and Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Alex Sobel:

[\[97050\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to recover the (a) incorrectly and (b) fraudulently claimed money through the (i) Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and (ii) Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC's approach to recovering incorrectly claimed money through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is to ensure that no one who has tried to do the right thing, but made an honest mistake, has any need to be concerned as long as they work with HMRC to put it right. Claimants were able to amend an incorrect claim

without incurring a penalty within 90 days of receiving the grant, or their circumstances changing. HMRC also set up an online system to help people easily correct any mistakes. As of November 2021, HMRC have had circa £408 million returned to them by claimants who, unprompted, found an error in their claim, and over £719 million was returned to them by claimants who were entitled to the grant but decided, for a range of reasons, to repay it.

HMRC carefully examines CJRS claims for indications that they may be incorrect. This allows them to make the best possible use of their investigators and spare the vast majority, who are doing the right thing, from hearing from them. Since the launch of the CJRS, HMRC detected a range of attempted frauds, from individual opportunistic frauds, such as genuine employers manipulating CJRS claims, to organised attacks by criminal groups. HMRC commenced preventive compliance activity as soon as the scheme went live with a strong focus on stopping fraudulent payments to organised criminal groups. HMRC commenced post-payment compliance once they had the powers to do so in July 2020. They have established the Taxpayer Protection Taskforce (TPT) to provide a large-scale, dedicated capability to address fraud and error which, as of 30 November 2021, has opened over 27,000 compliance interventions. The TPT, where proportionate and necessary, refer more complex cases and those involving organised criminal groups for specialist investigation by appropriate expert teams within HMRC, including the Fraud Investigation Service (FIS). As of 30 November 2021, FIS has 21 ongoing criminal investigations and 7 live civil investigations into the most serious attempted frauds against the CJRS.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) administers the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBL). HMRC have supported BEIS in identifying and addressing fraudulent activity by exchanging data about organisations who have applied for and taken out loans under this scheme. HMRC have also used BBL data to identify broader compliance risks in the tax system.

■ Buildings: Fire Prevention

Gareth Thomas:

[\[94276\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will have discussions with the the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, on removing VAT on mandatory fire safety repairs if that work is necessary to make a residential building safe from fire; and if he will make a statement.

Lucy Frazer:

The supply of fire safety equipment under qualifying circumstances is already eligible for VAT relief when provided alongside the construction and renovation of residential or charitable buildings. The cost of replacing cladding can also be zero rated if it is tied to the initial construction of the building and the cladding is shown to be defective.

There are no plans to extend the reliefs already available, however, the Government keeps all taxes under constant review.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Rachael Maskell:

[\[94438\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had discussions on the potential merits of reintroducing a furlough scheme to help those effected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Lucy Frazer:

As we have done throughout the pandemic, we are closely monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on the economy. We will continue to respond proportionately to the changing path of the virus.

Since the start of the pandemic, the Government has a strong track record of responding quickly, flexibly, and comprehensively in supporting jobs, businesses, individuals, and families when needed.

The effectiveness of our £400 billion package of interventions since the start of the pandemic, and the strength of the recovery that we have seen from previous waves, means the economy is in a different place now.

Employee numbers are above February 2020 levels in every part of the country and grew consistently through last year.

So, it is right that our economic response in the face of Omicron adapts too and that our support is better targeted at the businesses that need it the most, providing better value for taxpayers and helping the economy to bounce back more quickly.

However, we recognise the impact Omicron and Government guidance is having on businesses and individuals, which is why on 21 December 2021 we announced £1 billion of new grant support for the hospitality, leisure, and cultural sectors, and reintroduced the Statutory Sick Pay Rebate Scheme. This is on top of the existing package of support, in place through to Spring 2022, which includes the Recovery Loan Scheme, business rates relief, VAT reduction, and the ongoing commercial rent moratorium.

■ DMB Solutions: VAT

Caroline Lucas:

[\[94314\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the HMRC liquidation claim for DMB solutions Ltd, HMRC reference 075 2142906 03, how much of the £578,497.83 VAT element of HMRC's claim from the company's directors has been recovered; and if he will make a statement.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC is unable to advise how much of the £578,497.83 VAT element of HMRC's claim from DMB solutions Ltd has been recovered from the company's directors as HMRC is not responsible for recovery of these amounts after the insolvency event.

As with all other creditors in an insolvency, HMRC rely on the appointed Insolvency Practitioner to realise all available assets from the Insolvent Party and are allocated their share per Insolvency legislation from funds obtained by the appointed Insolvency Practitioner. HMRC are provided with dividend payments from the liquidator as and when assets and funds are realised but are not advised of where the recoveries have come from. HMRC does not need to know whether recoveries have come from the directors, general company assets, or elsewhere.

■ Economic Situation

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[98263\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the size of the economy (a) at the time of the EU referendum on 23 June 2016 (b) on 5 January 2022.

John Glen:

The independent Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for measuring the size of the economy. In the second quarter of 2016, the size of the economy as measured by current price – or nominal GDP, was estimated at £502,284 million. The latest data, for the third quarter of 2021 estimate that the size of the economy was £587,198 million. Data for the first quarter of 2022 will be published in May 2022.

■ Environment Protection and Health

Stephen Farry:

[\[93924\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of using additional economic indicators to reflect measurements of (a) well-being and (b) environmental impact.

John Glen:

The Treasury uses a range of data and indicators when analysing the economy and setting economic policy.

The Treasury also considers indicators of environmental impact when making spending decisions. All departments are required to prepare their spending proposals in line with the Green Book on Appraisal and Evaluation, which mandates consideration of climate and environmental impacts in spending, and was recently updated to emphasise that policies must be developed and assessed against how well they deliver on long-term policy aims such as net zero. Similarly, the Treasury carefully considers the environmental implications of relevant tax measures. The Government incorporated a climate assessment in all relevant Tax Information and Impact Notes (TIINs) for measures at Budget and will continue to do so in future TIINs. For example, the TIIN for the new Plastic Packaging Tax incorporates an assessment of anticipated carbon savings.

Additionally, the Treasury commissioned an independent, global review on the economics of biodiversity, culminating in the publication of the *Dasgupta Review* February 2021. In line with the report's recommendations, the Treasury has

committed to working with the ONS to improve the way nature is incorporated into our national accounts.

■ Equitable Life Assurance Society: Compensation

Kim Johnson: [\[93913\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he plans to take in 2022 to help people affected by the Equitable Life scandal.

Kim Johnson: [\[93914\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the calculations, including the intermediary steps, used in determining payments made under the Equitable Life Payment Scheme.

Kim Johnson: [\[93915\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 21 June 2021 to Question 16027 on Equitable Life Assurance Society, for what reasons the Government does not plan to (a) reopen the Equitable Life Payment Scheme or (b) review the £1.5 billion funding allocation previously made to it.

John Glen:

Since 2010, the government has taken more action to resolve this issue than ever was taken previously, including setting up a payment scheme to make payments of up to £1.5bn to eligible policyholders. Since the Scheme closed in 2016, the Government's position on this issue has been clear, that there will be no further funding in addition to the £1.5bn and this issue is considered closed.

The methodology for calculating payments to Equitable Life policyholders was published in 2011 and can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/equitable-life-payment-scheme-design.

■ Events Industry: Finance

Mr Steve Baker: [\[R\] \[98268\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent financial provisions he has made, following the implementation of covid-19 Plan B, for businesses within the live events sector.

Mr Simon Clarke:

For businesses within the live events sector, the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme supports events that the general public are able to purchase tickets to - such as music festivals, sporting and business events - that are at risk of being halted or delayed due to an inability to obtain COVID-19 cancellation insurance. Over £800 million in cover will be available to purchase alongside standard commercial events insurance for an additional premium. Cover is being bought by events across the UK. This intervention supports the UK's economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis by giving events across the country the confidence they need to plan for the future.

This is a world-leading insurance scheme, backed by a number of prominent insurers in the Lloyd's market, including Arch, Beazley, Dale, Hiscox and Munich Re, with few countries offering this kind of cover. It builds on our existing offering of support to the industry, including the £500 million Film and TV Production Restart scheme.

The government announced last month that it is making available an additional £30m through the nearly £2 billion Culture Recovery Fund (CRF) to increase the Emergency Resource Support currently available for cultural organisations to apply for. So far more than £1.5 billion has been allocated to around 5,000 individual organisations and sites through the CRF including theatres, orchestras, dance and music venues, supporting live events and performance.

■ Housing: Prices

Catherine West:

[\[97010\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to increase the £450,000 property cost limit for Lifetime ISAs in line with house price inflation.

John Glen:

The Lifetime ISA is intended to support younger people saving for their first home or for later life by offering a generous government bonus of 25% on up to £4,000 of savings each year. These funds, including the government bonus, can be used to purchase a first home up to the value of £450,000.

The Government considers that the £450,000 price cap is suitable to support the majority of first-time buyers across the UK (who typically purchase less expensive properties than other buyers), while ensuring sustainable public finances.

The most recent Office for Budget Responsibility forecast stated that bonus payments will have an exchequer cost of £3.7 billion between 2021 and 2027. The price cap ensures that this significant investment of public money is more precisely targeted towards households that may find it more difficult to get onto the property ladder.

First-time buyers who can purchase a home valued over £450,000 are likely to have an income significantly above that of the average household in the UK and are therefore more likely to be able to purchase a first home without the support of this scheme.

The Government continues to keep all aspects of savings policy under review.

■ London Stock Exchange

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[98262\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the level of the FTSE 100 was (a) at the time of the EU referendum on 23 June 2016 and (b) on 5 January 2022.

John Glen:

Data on the historic performance of indices such as the FTSE100 can be found on publicly available market data sources, such as the London Stock Exchange website.

■ Railways: Midlands and North of England

Jonathan Edwards:

[98516]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of whether the Welsh Government's comparability factor for the Department for Transport should be updated in light of the changes to HS2 outlined in the Integrated Rail Plan to recognise that (a) Northern Powerhouse Rail Core Network, (b) Transpennine Route Upgrade and (c) the smaller rail schemes in the North and Midlands are England-only projects.

Helen Whately:

The UK Government is responsible for much of the rail infrastructure in Wales and therefore spends money on this infrastructure rather than providing Barnett-based funding for the Welsh Government to do so. This is consistent with funding arrangements for all other reserved responsibilities in Wales. For example, the UK Government spends money on policing in Wales rather than providing the Welsh Government with Barnett-based funding in relation to spending on police forces in England.

In line with this responsibility, the UK Government is currently delivering an ambitious programme to upgrade Welsh railways, including through the electrification of the Severn Tunnel and building a new station at Bow Street.

The Welsh Government's comparability factors will be revisited at the next Spending Review. However, they will not be significantly affected by changes in rail infrastructure spending across England and Wales given this is a reserved responsibility as set out above.

Full details of how comparability factors work are set out in the Statement of Funding Policy.

■ Research: Tax Allowances

Chi Onwurah:

[98280]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November 2021 to Question 67147, where the further details on R&D tax reliefs have been published; and what assessment was made of the financial impact of the changes to R&D tax credits prior to announcing those changes in the Autumn Budget 2021 and Spending Review.

Lucy Frazer:

At Autumn Budget 2021, the Government announced reforms to Research & Development (R&D) tax reliefs to support modern research methods by expanding qualifying expenditure to include data and cloud costs, to more effectively capture the benefits of R&D funded by the reliefs by refocusing support towards innovation in the UK, and to target abuse and improve compliance. The report published on 30 November 2021 set out further details of the Government's approach, and sought stakeholder views ahead of draft legislation later in 2022:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rd-tax-reliefs-report>

When final policy decisions have been reached, the Government will publish any effects on the public finances.

■ **Stocks and Shares: Evergrande Group**

Bill Esterson: [\[96865\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of China's Evergrande suspending shares from trading and the potential collapse of the company on British businesses.

Bill Esterson: [\[96866\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the suspension of trading shares in China's Evergrande on the global economy.

John Glen:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 22 September to the Hon. Member for Midlothian.

■ **Tax Avoidance**

Sarah Olney: [\[94456\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to take steps to ensure that people who were employed by umbrella companies in the 2020-21 tax year do not engage in tax avoidance.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government and HMRC will continue to tackle those who market and sell tax avoidance schemes. Whilst many umbrella companies are compliant with the tax rules, HMRC take action against those that are not, including those involved in tax avoidance.

HMRC have issued a range of communications to inform taxpayers who use umbrella companies and help them understand the potential risks. The communications include:

- a tax avoidance awareness campaign in 2020, that was refreshed in November 2021, which advises how to spot and steer clear of avoidance schemes: <https://taxavoidanceexplained.campaign.gov.uk/>
- guidance for agencies using umbrella companies: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/agencies-and-other-businesses-using-umbrella-companies-who-may-be-operating-avoidance-schemes>
- guidance for individuals working through an umbrella company: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-through-an-umbrella-company>

Further to this, on 30 November 2021, the Government published a Call for Evidence on the umbrella company market, inviting views on the role that they play in the labour market and the ways in which they interact with the tax and employment rights systems.

■ Tax Avoidance: Telephone Services

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[93832\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing a 24-hour helpline for people subject to the Loan Charge.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC operates a settlement helpline and a debt helpline for taxpayers who have used disguised remuneration avoidance schemes. All call handlers are trained to identify taxpayers who might need additional support.

For taxpayers who may need specialised help, HMRC advisors encourage them to contact organisations such as Samaritans or Mind. The Samaritans are available to provide emotional support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Government will continue to work with HMRC to consider what additional support could be provided to taxpayers who need extra help.

■ Tourism and Travel: Finance

Jessica Morden:

[\[96823\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will meet ABTA to discuss (a) the travel and tourism sector's financial situation and (b) potential financial support for those sectors.

Helen Whately:

The Chancellor regularly meets with industry, including the travel and tourism sector, to discuss a range of matters.

Senior officials are due to meet with ABTA and have also held discussions with a number of representatives from the travel and tourism sector, including with representatives from UK airlines and with the Chief Executive of the Business Travel Association.

Jessica Morden:

[\[96825\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make available a package of support for travel agents, tour operators and travel management companies equivalent to the support available for the hospitality sector.

Helen Whately:

On 21 December, we announced an additional £100m of discretionary funding through the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), which local authorities can use to support businesses in the travel sector, such as travel agents and tour operators. This is on top of the up to £250m that LAs have left from previous funding allocations and is available until the end of March 2022.

Plan B has been designed to help control the virus's spread while avoiding unduly damaging economic and social restrictions.

The Government continues to provide considerable support for businesses into spring next year. This is part of around £400bn of direct support for the economy

during this financial year and last, which has helped to safeguard jobs, businesses and public services in every region and nation of the UK through the pandemic.

■ **Travel: Government Assistance**

Patricia Gibson:

[\[96945\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will have discussions with the Secretary of State for Transport on additional support for the UK travel industry in response to the (a) imposition of covid-19 related restrictions on and (b) reductions in international travel.

Helen Whately:

The Chancellor speaks to his colleagues on a regular basis about a range of matters.

Ultimately the best way to support aviation and the wider travel sector is through the safe and sustainable recovery of international travel, which is why we have recently confirmed the removal of pre-departure and day 2 PCR test requirements for eligible fully vaccinated passengers and all under 18s arriving in England. The Government is working with the Devolved Administrations to ensure a four-nation approach, which we fully support.

We have worked closely with the travel sector throughout the pandemic to help find ways to enable people to travel safely, while protecting public health. The aviation and aerospace sectors are being supported with over £12 billion made available through loan guarantees, support for exporters, the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility and grants for research and development.

WALES

■ **Business: Newport West**

Ruth Jones:

[\[94530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, whether he has made an assessment of the support required by businesses in Newport West constituency following the rise in the number of positive omicron covid-19 cases.

Simon Hart:

The UK Government is committed to supporting Welsh businesses and continues to assess what support is needed as a result of Covid-19. This includes the provision of £1.1 billion through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, £2.4 billion in business support loans, and 474,000 employees supported through the furlough scheme.

The Welsh Government has also benefitted from an extra £3.8 billion of Barnett-based funding during this financial year – taking total block grant funding for the Welsh Government in 2021-22 to £19.3 billion that can be used to support Welsh Businesses. A further £270 million has been confirmed, which the Welsh Government can spend in advance of budgets being finalised at Supplementary Estimates, to support the vaccine roll out and ongoing Covid-19 response in Wales.

Furthermore, the UK Government has reintroduced the Statutory Sick Pay Rebate Scheme to help small and medium-sized employers cover the cost of Covid-related sick absences, covering up to two weeks per employee.

■ Hospitality Industry: Newport West

Ruth Jones:

[\[94531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the support required by the hospitality sector in Newport West constituency following the rise in the number of positive omicron covid-19 cases.

Simon Hart:

My ministerial colleagues and I have regular discussions with the Welsh Government on a range of topics, including the rise in the number of positive Omicron and Covid-19 cases. The UK Government is closely monitoring the impact of the virus on the economy.

I am pleased that the Welsh Government has followed the UK Government's lead in offering business rate relief to support the hospitality sector, as announced by the Chancellor at the Budget in October. We have supported Welsh businesses and people throughout the pandemic, this includes the provision of £1.1 billion through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, £2.4 billion in business support loans and 474,000 employees supported through the furlough scheme.

The Welsh Government has also benefitted from an extra £3.8 billion of Barnett-based funding during this financial year – taking total block grant funding for the Welsh Government in 2021-22 to £19.3 billion that can be used to support Welsh Businesses. We have further confirmed £270 million the Welsh Government can spend in advance of budgets being finalised at Supplementary Estimates, to support the vaccine roll out and ongoing Covid-19 response in Wales.

Furthermore, the UK Government has reintroduced the Statutory Sick Pay Rebate Scheme to help small and medium-sized employers cover the cost of Covid-related sick absences, covering up to two weeks per employee. This is in addition to a reduced VAT rate until the end of March 2022 for tourism and hospitality businesses, helping to support around 150,000 businesses, as well as continued access to the Recovery Loan Scheme until June 2022.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ LGBT Advisory Panel: Public Appointments

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[98407\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to her oral evidence to the Women and Equalities Committee on 25 May 2021, HC 133, Qq 68, what progress she has made on the recruitment of a new LGBT advisory panel.

Mike Freer:

The Government is committed to promoting and realising equality for LGBT people at home and abroad. The Government's team of Equality Ministers are leading on commitments such as banning so-called conversion therapy, digitising the gender recognition process and delivering Safe to Be Me: A Global Equality Conference, later this year. The Government is drawing on the services and advice of Lord Herbert of South Downs as the Special Envoy on LGBT rights and Chair of the Conference, Iain Anderson as LGBT Business Champion, as well as Dr Michael Brady as the National LGBT Health Adviser. Ministers and officials regularly engage with stakeholders on a range of issues and will continue to do so.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Food Banks****Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[98306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of rising inflation on levels of use of foodbanks.

David Rutley:

No assessment has been made of the potential impact of rising inflation on levels of use of foodbanks.

Foodbanks are independent, charitable organisations and the Department for Work and Pensions does not have any role in their operation. There is no consistent and accurate measure of food bank usage. We take the issue of food security seriously and understand the data limitations in this area, and thus from April 2021 we introduced a set of questions into the Family Resources Survey (FRS) to measure and track food bank usage.

We understand that with inflation rising, some people will be concerned about the cost of living. That is why this government is continuing to take action to support living standards by spending over £110 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2021/22 and by increasing the National Living Wage by 6.6% to £9.50 from April 2022.

Universal Credit recipients in work can now benefit from a reduction in the Universal Credit taper rate from 63% to 55%, and an increase in the work allowance by £500 per year meaning that working households will be able to keep substantially more of what they earn. These measures effectively represent a tax cut, worth around £2.2bn a year in 2022-23, for the lowest paid in society and will benefit almost two million of the lowest paid workers by £1000 a year on average.

To support low-income families further we have also increased the value of Healthy Start Food Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25, helping eligible low income households buy basic foods like milk, fruit and vitamins, and we are investing over £200m a year to

continue our Holiday Activities and Food programme, which is already providing enriching activities and healthy meals to children in all Local Authorities in England.

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

■ Kickstart Scheme: Defence

John Healey:

[\[96770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many kickstart positions were (a) advertised and (b) filled in the defence sector during 2021.

Mims Davies:

We do not centrally collate information regarding jobs filled or advertised in the defence sector.

To encourage young people to apply for them, Kickstart jobs are categorised by the nature of the role rather than the sector of the employer. This means for example, that a defence-sector administrative job would be categorised as 'administrative' not 'defence'. The most recently published statistics are published here:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-06/87676>

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

■ Poverty

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[98305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of rising energy costs on trends in the levels of poverty.

David Rutley:

No such assessment has been made of the potential impact of rising energy costs on levels of poverty.

The Government continues to monitor and publish trends in poverty across the UK. The latest poverty figures (2019/20) demonstrate that absolute poverty rates (both before and after housing costs) have fallen since 2009/10. In 2019/20, 14% were in absolute poverty (before housing costs), compared to 16% in 2009/10.

This Government is wholly committed to supporting those on low incomes, and continues to do so through many measures, including by spending over £110 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2021/22.

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

Universal Credit recipients in work can now benefit from a reduction in the Universal Credit taper rate from 63% to 55%, and an increase in the work allowance by £500 per year meaning that working households will be able to keep substantially more of what they earn. These measures effectively represent a tax cut, worth around £2.2bn a year in 2022-23, for the lowest paid in society and will benefit almost two million of the lowest paid workers by £1000 a year on average. We are also increasing the National Living Wage by 6.6% to £9.50 an hour from April 2022.

We are helping people with energy bills through the Warm Home Discount, Cold Weather Payments and Winter Fuel Payments. The Energy Price Cap will continue to protect consumers, ensuring they pay a fair price for their energy this winter.

In addition, we recognise that some people require extra support over the winter, through the final stages of recovery, which is why vulnerable households across the country are now able to access a new £500 million support fund to help them with essentials. The Household Support Fund is providing £421 million to help vulnerable people in England. The Barnett Formula applies in the usual way, with the devolved administrations receiving almost £80 million (£41m for the Scottish Government, £25m for the Welsh Government and £14m for the NI Executive), for a total of £500 million. The Barnett Formula applies in the usual way, with the devolved administrations receiving almost £80 million (£41m for the Scottish Government, £25m for the Welsh Government and £14m for the NI Executive), for a total of £500 million.

■ Poverty: Older People

Jonathan Ashworth:

[98308]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she intends to undertake an assessment of the potential impact of rising inflation and rising energy prices on the number of people over the state pension age who live in poverty.

Guy Opperman:

The Social Security (Up-rating of Benefits) Act 2021 introduced a double lock and allowed the Government to increase pensions by the higher of inflation or 2.5%. From April 2022 state pensions will be increased by 3.1% and this represents an additional £4bn spend on pensioner benefits in 2022/23.

Pension Credit also provides invaluable financial support for vulnerable pensioners. Around 1.4 million eligible pensioners across Great Britain receive some £5bn in Pension Credit, which tops up their retirement income and is a passport to other financial help such as support with housing costs, council tax, heating bills and a free TV licence for those over 75.

Local Authorities in England have discretion to design their own bespoke local schemes within the overall parameters of the Household Support Fund, with support primarily focused on food, energy & water bills and wider essentials. Up to 50% of the Fund is available for councils to spend on households without children, including those of State Pension age.

Other support for pensioners includes Winter Fuel Payments which continue to be payable to customers of State Pension age. We pay £200 to households with a customer aged between 66 and 79 and £300 to a household with someone aged 80 or over. We pay over 11 million winter fuel payments annually at a cost of £2bn which is a significant contribution to winter fuel bills.

Cold Weather Payments are also available and help vulnerable people in receipt of certain income-related benefits to meet additional heating costs, during periods of unseasonably cold weather between 1 November and 31 March. This includes older people in receipt of Pension Credit.

The Warm Home Discount Scheme provides those in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit a discount of £140 on their energy bill providing their supplier is part of the scheme.

There are now 200 thousand fewer pensioners in absolute poverty (both before and after housing costs) than in 2009/10.

■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[98307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the proportion of economically inactive people who are waiting for an (a) universal credit or (b) other benefit assessment.

Mims Davies:

The definition of economic inactivity, set by the independent Office for National Statistics (ONS), is not used within the welfare system to determine eligibility for support through Universal Credit or other benefits.

The economically inactive population is a diverse group, many of whom do not claim Universal Credit or other benefits.

Therefore, the Department has made no such estimates.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

EDUCATION

■ National Tutoring Programme

Robert Halfon:

[\[89550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Tuition Partners pillar of the National Tutoring Programme, how many pupils have (a) been enrolled against the target of 524,000 for 2021-22 and (b) had at least one tutoring session as of 8 December 2021; how many schools have booked in tutoring; and whether those figures are above, below or on target for this point in the academic year.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 14 December 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Mr Robin Walker:

National Tutoring Programme participation data for last year has not yet been published.

We continue to collect data from schools for all three strands of the programme in the current year and will be publishing this in due course. This covers School-Led Tutoring, Tuition Partners and Academic Mentors.

The National Tutoring Programme aims to engage up to 2 million pupils this year, and to deliver up to 90 million ~~packages~~ **hours** of tuition by the 2024/25 academic year.

■ National Tutoring Programme: Enfield

Feryal Clark:

[\[88837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students have been supported by the National Tutoring Programme in (a) Enfield North and (b) the London Borough of Enfield since November 2020.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 13 December 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Mr Robin Walker:

National tutoring programme (NTP) participation data has not yet been published. We continue to collect data from schools for all three strands of the programme – school-led tutoring, tuition partners and academic mentors, and will be publishing this in due course.

The NTP aims to engage up to 2 million pupils this year, and to deliver up to 90 million ~~packages~~ **hours** of tuition by the 2024/25 academic year.