



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 12 January 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:24 P.M., 12 January 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business: Carbon Emissions

Bill Esterson:

[\[98914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of a recent survey by YouGov and Veolia which found less than a third of UK businesses have a strategy for reaching carbon net-zero.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 11 January 2022]: The Government continues to engage with UK businesses to raise awareness of net zero and the benefits to business of making a net zero commitment. For example, through the small business campaign, the Government provides small and medium businesses with resources to help them achieve net zero. The Government has also detailed its strategy for new, economy-wide Sustainability Disclosures Requirements (SDR) in its 'Greening Finance: A roadmap to Sustainable Investment' policy paper, published on 18 th October 2021.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Kate Osamor:

[\[96995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to give businesses and workers the maximum possible notice ahead of any introduction of further covid-19 restrictions.

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. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced on 5 January that they will be in place for another 3 weeks, with a further review before the regulations expire on 26 January. We will provide businesses and the public with as much notice as possible of any changes to COVID-19 restrictions.

■ Compassionate Leave

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[96925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 13 July 2021 to Question 27196 on Compassionate Leave, what plans the Government has to undertake a formal evaluation of the Parental Bereavement Leave

and Pay scheme; and whether the outcome of any such evaluation will be available to inform consideration of the forthcoming Employment Bill.

Paul Scully:

Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay was introduced in April 2020 as the Government recognises that the loss of a child is particularly tragic. In the Explanatory Memorandum published alongside the legislation, we committed to taking forward a review of the scheme's impact in 2025, once it has been in place for a few years.

■ **Coronavirus: Government Assistance**

Kate Osamor:

[\[96994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to give businesses and workers the maximum possible amount of notice ahead of any introduction of possible further economic covid-19 support measures.

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 measures.

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, whilst minimising the impact on lives and livelihoods. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced on 5 January that Plan B will be in place for another 3 weeks, with a further review before the regulations expire on 26 January. We will provide businesses and the public with as much notice as possible of any changes to COVID-19 measures.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Michael Fabricant:

[\[96760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans there are to manipulate the covid-19 vaccine to sensitise it to the omicron and other variants; and when he estimates such vaccines might become available.

George Freeman:

Recent analysis supports our understanding that the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, which are currently being deployed in the UK, appear to work well against the current dominant variants of COVID-19 after a booster-dose. Continuing to administer these vaccines at scale remains essential in our path out of the pandemic.

The Government continues to assess our existing vaccine portfolio against current variants, working closely with vaccine manufacturers and the UK Health Security Agency to understand the efficacy of our current vaccine portfolio against new variants.

Mike Amesbury: [\[97052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the efficacy of the Valneva covid-19 vaccine; and what steps he is taking to introduce that vaccine for people who cannot take the Pfizer, Astra-Zeneca or Moderna vaccines for ethical reasons.

George Freeman:

The supply agreement between the government and Valneva was terminated in September 2021 and therefore this vaccine will not form part of the UK portfolio. Although Valneva have received their Phase III preliminary results and submitted their trial data to the MHRA, the company has not yet gained approval from the regulator. The UK Government has taken a portfolio approach to vaccine supply for regulated vaccines. The UK has sufficient supply now for the current booster campaign, as well as continuation of the primary vaccination programme.

Mike Amesbury: [\[97053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether foetal cells were used in the development of covid-19 vaccines.

George Freeman:

Approved U.K. COVID-19 vaccines do not contain any human foetal tissue.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[97169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress has been made on developing a new covid-19 vaccine which is more effective against new variants.

George Freeman:

Recent analysis supports our understanding that the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, which are currently being deployed in the UK, appear to work well against the current dominant variants of COVID-19 after a booster-dose. Continuing to administer these vaccines at scale remains essential in our path out of the pandemic.

The Government continues to assess our existing vaccine portfolio against current variants, working closely with vaccine manufacturers and the UK Health Security Agency to understand the efficacy of our current vaccine portfolio against new variants.

■ Electrical Goods: Regulation

Geraint Davies: [\[98883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support his Department has provided to businesses to implement the Ecodesign regulation which came into force on 1 January 2022; and what assessment he has made of business compliance with that regulation.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 11 January 2022]: The market surveillance authority, the Office for Product Safety and Standards routinely offers compliance support to businesses with all ecodesign and energy labelling regulations.

Geraint Davies:[\[99301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has plans to publish guidance on ecodesign following the implementation of the Ecodesign Regulations in January 2022.

Greg Hands:

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) provides general guidance on ecodesign on GOV.UK. Whilst there is no published specific guidance on the new ecodesign requirements for solid fuel local space heaters, the OPSS routinely offers support to businesses with compliance and operate a well-established enquiry service.

■ Employment Tribunals Service: Compensation**Justin Madders:**[\[96931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the amount of compensation awarded by employment tribunals but not received by employees in each of the last three years.

Paul Scully:

In England and Wales, individuals can choose to pursue enforcement of their award through applying to their local county court for an enforcement order. After this, enforcement officers will seek to secure payment from the employer. In 2010, a Fast Track scheme was introduced which was designed to speed up and simplify the process of enforcing tribunal awards and ACAS settlements. In Scotland unpaid claimants can ask for an 'extract of the judgment' so that a sheriff officer can use this to force the respondent to pay.

The Department for Business, Enterprise and Industrial Strategy also offers a free service to help incentivise prompt payment. Should an employer fail to pay an award then individuals can apply to ask to have them fined and named publicly. The respondent will get a warning notice giving them 28 days to pay the outstanding award. If this is not done they may be eligible for an additional financial penalty on top of the original award.

■ Energy Supply: Fife**Peter Grant:**[\[96947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with energy companies on the levels of debt accrued by customers in Glenrothes and Central Fife during the first and second covid-19 lockdowns and the plans those companies have to collect this debt.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 10 January 2022]: Ofgem collects information from energy companies on average debt levels which can be sourced here: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/energy-data-and-research/data-portal/all-available-charts?keyword=debt&sort=relevance>.

■ Energy Supply: Newport West

Ruth Jones: [\[97069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he has taken to mitigate the impact of rising energy costs on families in Newport West constituency.

Ruth Jones: [\[97074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of rising energy costs on the weekly budgets of people in Newport West constituency.

Greg Hands:

The Government is committed to protecting energy customers, especially the most vulnerable. The Energy Price Cap will continue to protect consumers, ensuring they pay a fair price for their energy this winter. Low income and fuel poor households will continue to be supported with their energy bills through the Warm Home Discount, which provides eligible households with a £140 discount. Winter Fuel Payments and Cold Weather Payments will ensure that the most vulnerable are better able to heat their homes through the winter. The Government also announced an additional £500 million for local authorities through the new Household Support Fund to support vulnerable households meet daily needs such as utility bills.

■ Fireworks: Noise

Paul Blomfield: [\[93751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the impact on (a) residential communities and (b) the environment of 120-decibel fireworks.

Paul Blomfield: [\[93752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of reducing the maximum noise levels of fireworks.

Paul Scully:

There is a comprehensive regulatory framework already in place for fireworks that the Government believes strikes the right balance for people to enjoy fireworks, whilst aiming to reduce risks and disturbances to both people and animals. This includes existing legislation setting the noise level of fireworks available to consumers to a maximum of 120 decibels.

We continue to use evidence to inform our work on fireworks. Earlier this year, we published research conducted by Ipsos Mori that provided evidence on consumer attitudes towards and behaviours around using fireworks in the UK. The report found that only around a third of people supported banning the sale of fireworks to the public for use in private displays.

■ Flexible Working

Marion Fellows:

[\[93785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2016 inquiry UK 2021 follow-up report published in December 2021, when he plans to bring the consultation on default approaches to flexible working; on what date he expects that consultation will finish; and when he expects the next steps and recommendations to be published.

Paul Scully:

The Government started working on its follow-up report to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2016 inquiry earlier this year. The flexible working consultation referred to in the report was published on 23 September and ran for 10 weeks until 1 December, receiving over 1,600 responses. The Government is now analysing these responses and will issue its response in due course.

Justin Madders:

[\[96928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish a response to his Department's consultation entitled Making flexible working the default.

Paul Scully:

The Government's consultation on making flexible working the default was published on 23 September 2021 and ran for 10 weeks until 1 December 2021, receiving over 1,600 responses. The Government is now analysing these responses and will issue its response to the consultation in due course.

■ Fuel Poverty

Jon Trickett:

[\[94292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to mitigate any potential increase in fuel poverty when a new energy price cap is announced in April 2022.

Greg Hands:

It is Ofgem's role, as the independent regulator, to set the price cap.

The Government is committed to tackling fuel poverty, reducing energy bills and delivering warmer, safer homes for the most vulnerable. The Government considers improving the energy efficiency of homes to be the best long-term method of tackling fuel poverty. Energy efficiency schemes include the Energy Company Obligation and the Sustainable Warmth Competition.

Ofgem rules require energy suppliers to offer customers at risk of debt, or in debt, the facility to repay their debt in instalments and require suppliers to take into account a customer's ability to pay, where they are facing financial difficulties.

In order to further help consumers, the Government has already introduced the extra £500m Household Support Fund for those more in need this winter, on top of other schemes like the Warm Home Discount, which is being increased to £150 and extended to an extra 780,000 households, to support the most vulnerable.

■ Fuel Poverty: Yorkshire and the Humber

Jon Trickett: [\[94291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the number of households at risk of fuel poverty following the increase in the energy price cap in (a) October 2021 and (b) April 2022 in (i) Hemsworth constituency, (ii) Wakefield local authority area and (c) Yorkshire and Humberside.

Greg Hands:

BEIS publish Fuel poverty statistics by Region (Table 1), Local Authority (Table 2) and parliamentary constituency (Table 4) in England, the latest data covers 2019. These are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-sub-regional-statistics#2019-statistics>.

The Government's projection for the number of households in England that were in fuel poverty for the year 2021 is published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fuel-poverty-statistics-projections-2021>.

The energy price cap from 1 April 2022 will be announced by Ofgem later this year.

■ Heat Pumps: Costs

Mr David Jones: [\[96810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what analysis he has undertaken, including with the heat pump industry, on whether heat pumps can reach cost parity with traditional boilers by 2030.

Greg Hands:

The Government's Heat and Building's Strategy sets out its ambition to work with industry to reduce heat pump costs by 25-50% by 2025. These ambitions were endorsed by several major industry bodies.

Mr David Jones: [\[96811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings of DELTA-EE's whitepaper, published on 26 October 2021, on the potential for reducing the cost of installed heat pumps.

Greg Hands:

The findings of Delta-EE's white paper support existing evidence in demonstrating the potential for reductions in the installed cost of heat pumps. As made clear in the Government's Heat and Buildings Strategy, published in October 2021, growing the number of heat pump installations to at least 600,000 a year by 2028 is contingent on the market finding ways to reduce the upfront cost of the systems. The Government has commissioned further research on this issue and will publish its conclusions later this year.

■ Heating: Housing**Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[98178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment the Government has made of the capacity of infrared heating to support its policy to decarbonise homes.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 10 January 2022]: Evidence to date suggests that there may be a role for alternative electric heating technologies, such as infrared heating, in decarbonising the way the United Kingdom heats its homes and businesses, but this should be limited to specific use cases, such as small flats with low heat demand.

■ Heating: Renewable Energy**Mr David Jones:**[\[96812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to provide a definition of hard-to-treat properties that are not suitable for conversion to low temperature heating technologies such as heat pumps.

Mr David Jones:[\[96813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of off-grid properties that are unsuitable for heat pumps and other low temperature heating technologies.

Greg Hands:

BEIS modelling on homes' energy efficiency and electrical connections suggests it would be feasible to install heat pumps in around 80% of off gas grid homes, potentially rising to around 90% with fabric upgrades. The Department's analysis indicates that most commercial and public buildings that use fossil fuel heating systems off the gas grid are technically suitable for a heat pump. For buildings on the gas-grid the Department estimates that around 90% will also be suitable for a heat pump.

Off-grid properties that cannot reasonably practicably install a heat pump will have a viable choice of high performing, commercially available alternative heating technologies that are consistent with net zero, such as high temperature heat pumps or solid biomass.

■ Liquefied Natural Gas: Carbon Dioxide

John Redwood:

[96748]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much additional carbon dioxide is generated by importing and burning LNG compared to using more natural gas delivered by pipeline from UK fields.

Greg Hands:

The Oil and Gas Association published analysis in May 2020, comparing the carbon intensity of United Kingdom Continental Shelf gas with imported liquefied natural gas and pipelined gas:

<https://www.ogauthority.co.uk/the-move-to-net-zero/net-zero-benchmarking-and-analysis/natural-gas-carbon-footprint-analysis/>.

This analysis shows that gas extracted from the United Kingdom Continental Shelf has an average emission intensity of 22 kgCO₂e/boe; whereas imported liquefied natural gas has a significantly higher average intensity of 59 kgCO₂e/boe. The process of liquefaction, combined with the emissions produced by the transportation and regasification of the liquefied natural gas once in the United Kingdom, is responsible for the higher emissions intensity.

■ Local Enterprise Partnerships

Dr Luke Evans:

[93906]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress he has made in completing the review of Local Economic Partnerships.

Paul Scully:

Following the announcement of the review of Local Enterprise Partnerships at Spring Budget, we have engaged with local partners, business organisations, higher and further education representatives, senior officials from local authorities across England and chief executives from Mayoral Combined Authorities. I am grateful to them for their time and constructive engagement over the course of the review.

Since initiating the review, we have also committed to publish a landmark Levelling Up White Paper, which will set out Government's vision for empowering local leaders and institutions, including LEPs, and will be published in 2022.

■ Local Government: Coronavirus

Paul Howell:

[99090]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has plans to review the effectiveness of the issuing of covid-19 support funding by local authorities to (a) the wedding sector and (b) other sectors.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 11 January 2022]: As for previous schemes, data on the funding provided to councils to support their local businesses through the COVID-19 business

support grants is published and available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-grant-funding-local-authority-payments-to-small-and-medium-businesses>.

As for previous schemes, we will also monitor and publish data on funding spent per Local Authority as it becomes available. This will also depend on Local Authorities having the capacity to report back to Central Government.

We have commissioned an external evaluation of the Business Support Grant programme, for the effectiveness of its delivery.

■ **Minimum Wage: Government Departments**

Justin Madders:

[\[96929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's press notice of 9 December 2021 entitled National Minimum Wage Naming Scheme, how many of the employers named have a contract with a Government Department.

Paul Scully:

All employers need to pay their staff correctly. Paying the minimum wage is not optional, it's the law. Under the National Minimum Wage Naming Scheme, employers who have previously broken minimum wage law can be publicly named. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy follows a clear and thorough process allowing firms to make representations against being named if they meet our published criteria.

■ **Natural Gas: Safety**

Drew Hendry:

[\[96948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing retail controls to restrict the (a) sale and (b) delivery of products that require a gas safe engineer for installation to people who qualify as gas safe engineers.

Greg Hands:

The UK's product safety regulatory requirements are designed to ensure that all products on the UK market meet essential safety requirements and are compliant with the law. Where appropriate, UK legislation specifically requires that products contain relevant information on the safe use of products. While it is not illegal to purchase products that must be fitted by a Gas Safe registered engineer, it remains an offence to install such products unless suitably competent to do so. The Government has no plans to change this position.

■ Natural Gas: Storage**John Redwood:** [\[96750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his policy is on minimum levels of UK natural gas stocks.

Greg Hands:

Storage plays an important role in providing system flexibility in responding to short-term changes in supply and demand. The purpose of storage is to top-up supply when demand is high. Storage is not intended as a gas supply source. Current gas storage levels for winter are higher than early January last year.

■ Oil: Storage**John Redwood:** [\[96749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his policy is on the required minimum level of oil stocks for national resilience.

Greg Hands:

Emergency oil stocks are a critical tool to defend against the harmful impacts of major disruptions to global oil supply. The UK holds emergency stocks of oil, primarily to release in a co-ordinated fashion with other members to the international market in the event of such major supply disruption. As a member of the International Energy Agency the UK is obligated to hold a minimum of 90 days of net imports. This obligation is passed on to companies that supply more than 50 thousand tonnes of key fuels to the UK market in a twelve-month period.

■ Origin Marking**Adam Holloway:** [\[96817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of mandating country of origin information on goods sold in the UK.

Adam Holloway: [\[96818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has undertaken any research on the potential impact on sales of British made goods of mandating country of origin information on goods sold in the UK.

Paul Scully:

Aside from certain specified products such as food there is no requirement for goods to be labelled with their country of origin.

Under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008, traders are banned from using misleading statements about the geographical or commercial origin of products including in response to requests for information by consumers.

■ Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[96797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, who will determine the parameters for the disputes to be referred to the Alternative Dispute Resolution process proposed in response to the Post Office Horizon scandal.

Paul Scully:

Post Office will consider all claims for compensation made by a postmaster, branch manager and/or assistant whose conviction is quashed and will seek to resolve those claims swiftly, fairly and consensually with that individual. The founding principles, including dispute resolution procedure where a postmaster is not happy with the outcome they receive in the Historical Shortfall Scheme were endorsed by the legal representatives for the claimants' steering group in the group litigation.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[96798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps will be taken to ensure consistency is maintained in the processing of disputes in response to the Post Office Horizon scandal.

Paul Scully:

Claims will be assessed by applying the specific facts of the individual cases to established legal principles and any other factors which support reaching a fair outcome. Those making claims (and their advisors) can question and challenge those assessments, and it is a fundamental tenet of Alternative Dispute Resolution that questions and challenges are addressed in good faith so as to obtain a comprehensive and consensual resolution of the claims.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[96799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether consequential losses will be included in the Alternative Disputes Resolution process for the Post Office Horizon scandal; and what other disputes will be included.

Paul Scully:

Post Office will consider all claims for compensation made by a postmaster, branch manager and/or assistant whose conviction is quashed or who has submitted an eligible claim under the Historical Shortfalls Scheme, including claims made for consequential losses.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[96800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether friends, family and employees of subpostmasters will be permitted to take part in the Alternative Dispute Resolution process proposed in response to the Post Office Horizon scandal.

Paul Scully:

Alternative Dispute Resolution is a consensual process, through which those making claims (and their advisors) can question and challenge how their claims have been

assessed. The Terms of Reference for the Historical Shortfall Scheme explain its Dispute Resolution procedure. Processes for those with quashed convictions will be agreed between the Post Office and a claimant's legal representatives.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[96801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Post Office Horizon scandal, how those conducting the Alternative Dispute Resolution process will be advised to calculate quantum.

Paul Scully:

Claims will be assessed by applying the specific facts of the individual cases to established legal principles and any other factors which support reaching a fair outcome. Those making claims (and their advisors) can question and challenge those assessments, and it is a fundamental tenet of Alternative Dispute Resolution that questions and challenges are addressed in good faith so as to obtain a comprehensive and consensual resolution of the claims.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[96802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the proposed Alternative Dispute Resolution process is intended to reduce the need for malicious prosecution cases against the Post Office following the Post Office Horizon scandal.

Paul Scully:

The proposed Alternative Dispute Resolution is a consensual process which aims to resolve claims consensually at an early stage to avoid the cost and delay for claimants which comes with having to litigate matters through the courts.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[96803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether there will be an appeal system in the Alternative Disputes Resolution process for the Post Office Horizon scandal; and whether the Government has made an estimate of the cost of resolutions.

Paul Scully:

Alternative Dispute Resolution is a consensual process, through which those making claims (and their advisors) can question and challenge how their claims have been assessed. It is a fundamental tenet of Alternative Dispute Resolution that questions and challenges are addressed in good faith so as to obtain a comprehensive and consensual resolution of all claims. As participants in the process are not obliged to accept any offers made by Post Office, there is no need for an appeals process.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[96804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Post Office Horizon scandal has altered the valuation of the Government's shareholder position in Post Office.

Paul Scully:

The Government's role as shareholder is to ensure that the Post Office is delivering its social purpose alongside building a stable business. The Government continues to support the Post Office with subsidy. The Government, through my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State, holds 100% of the issued share capital. There is a special share in POL (nominal value of £1) which is held directly by the Secretary of State. The value of this investment is published annually in the BEIS accounts.

Postal Services: Coronavirus**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[94563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he will take to ensure that service levels within postal services are maintained at a high level throughout the Christmas period and the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises the importance of a reliable universal postal service to customers and local communities across the UK and we know postal workers are working exceptionally hard to meet demand over the festive period.

Royal Mail has publicly stated that it is aware of the reduction in service levels in some areas and has taken action to minimise disruption to postal services throughout the Christmas period. This includes opening five temporary parcel sorting centres and recruiting thousands of seasonal workers to help sort the Christmas post at sites across the UK.

Royal Mail's contingency plans to mitigate disruption to postal services are overseen by Ofcom, the independent regulator responsible for monitoring the delivery of the universal postal service.

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

Power Failures: Compensation**Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[99024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the compensation available for homes that experience power cuts in severe weather; and whether it is his policy that those who experience a power cut for 24 hours as a result of a Category 2 Storm should be eligible for compensation.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 11 January 2022]: Ofgem, the independent regulator for the UK's energy networks, sets service levels which Distribution Network Operators must meet, with rules on how and when compensation payments are issued to consumers if the standards are not met. This is set out in the Quality of Service Guaranteed Standards.

■ Procurement: Environment Protection and Human Rights**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[96920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a legal requirement for UK businesses to carry out human rights and environmental due diligence on their supply chains.

Paul Scully:

The UK Government expects all British companies to adhere to the rule of law and build respect for human rights and the environment into all aspects of their operations both domestically and in other territories.

The promotion of due diligence is already provided for under existing legislation on corporate transparency, holding businesses to account on human rights and environmental matters. UK listed companies are required to cover relevant human rights and environmental issues in their annual reports. Large businesses are required to publish supply chain transparency statements on steps they have taken to ensure that no modern slavery or human trafficking is taking place in their business and through their supply chains. Both reporting requirements compel disclosure of a company's due diligence arrangements where these are in place.

The Government is also committed to tackling deforestation and greening supply chains. The UK Timber Regulations prohibit the placing of illegally harvested timber and timber products on the UK market and requires operators, when they are first placing such products on the UK market, to undertake due diligence. The UK is also introducing world-leading due diligence legislation through the Environment Act, which looks specifically at tackling illegal deforestation in UK supply chains.

■ Procurement: Regulation**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[96921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to hold companies accountable in the event that they fail to prevent harm in their supply chains, including through liability provisions.

Paul Scully:

The UK has a strong record on human rights and environmental awareness and protection, much of which results from our framework of legislation. This includes the promotion of due diligence by holding businesses to account on human rights and environmental matters.

In certain circumstances, companies can already be held liable at law for breaches of duties of care to others where harm is suffered as a foreseeable consequence of the breach.

The Companies Act 2006 includes the need for Public Interest Entities with 500 or more employees to describe its business relationships which are likely to cause

adverse impacts, and how it manages risks arising from matters such as environmental considerations and human rights.

■ Renewable Energy: Technology

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[98179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has to adopt a retrofitting policy that includes a broader range of alternative renewable technologies, including infrared heating, to help reach the net zero target.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 10 January 2022]: As the Government set out in the Heat and Buildings Strategy, a mix of technologies and customer options will need to be available to decarbonise heat at scale.

■ Small Businesses: Carbon Emissions

Bill Esterson:

[\[98915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help small and medium businesses reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 11 January 2022]: The Government continues to support UK businesses in meeting their net zero commitments. The former Net Zero Business Champion, Andrew Griffith MP, led the Race to Zero campaign targeting small and medium businesses, which boasts 2,604 participants to date. The Government has also improved support access via the small business campaign. All businesses that have made the small business climate commitment receive monthly communications from the Department, which signpost the latest policy and regulatory changes in addition to the "Together For Our Planet" digital toolkit.

■ Tidal Power: Trade Promotion

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[96857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of promoting initiatives to increase opportunities for tidal power projects in the UK.

Greg Hands:

The Government announced in November that the fourth Contracts for Difference allocation round will feature a £20m annual ringfenced budget for tidal stream energy. This builds on a long and continuing history of government support for the tidal power sector and opens up possibilities for Britain's marine energy sector to play a key role in strengthening energy security and reducing our dependency on fossil fuels.

■ Toys and Games: Safety

Fleur Anderson:

[93911]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to increase safety of toys being sold online; and whether he plans to bring forward a strategy for online marketplaces to (a) improve their verification and complaints processes, (b) inform consumers when they are buying from a third party, (c) remove unsafe products, and (d) proactively identify unsafe products, such as recalled goods.

Paul Scully:

All toys placed on the UK market must meet essential safety requirements under the UK Toys (Safety) Regulations 2011. This includes toys sold online, and online marketplaces have a significant role to play with regards to consumer safety.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is leading a national programme of regulatory action to tackle the risks from unsafe and non-compliant goods sold on online marketplaces. In 2021, 12,500 products (including toys) have been removed from supply due to OPSS interventions. OPSS is also running an expanded test purchasing programme, examining more than 1,000 products sold on online marketplaces to help ensure gifts given at Christmas are safe for families.

In parallel, the Government is undertaking a thorough review of the UK's product safety framework, including the impact of e-commerce. Our aim is to ensure the framework remains robust and is future-proofed – so that it continues to protect consumers while enabling businesses to safely innovate and grow. A Call for Evidence to inform the review has been completed and the Government's response is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/uk-product-safety-review-call-for-evidence>. In light of this, we are developing a full range of options to address the sale of unsafe products online and intend to consult in due course.

■ Unfair Dismissal

Justin Madders:

[96932]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with stakeholders on reducing the qualifying period for claiming unfair dismissal.

Paul Scully:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State meets regularly with a wide range of stakeholders, including trade unions and employers, to discuss various policy matters including questions of employment law.

■ Urenco: Investment Income

James Wild:

[97145]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what dividends have been received by the Government as a result of its shareholding in Urenco in each of the last five years.

Greg Hands:

The Government holds a one third stake in Urenco Ltd and receives one third of any dividends paid by Urenco to its shareholders.

Urenco Ltd reports its results in Euros and pays its dividends in Euros. These are converted at the prevailing exchange rate into Pound Sterling on the date the Government receives the dividend.

The table below outlines the dividend allotted by Urenco Ltd over the past 5 fiscal years to the Government in Euros and the Pound Sterling equivalent at the time.

YEAR	HMG DIVIDEND RECEIVED
2016/17	€100 million (£86 million)
2017/18	€100 million (£88 million)
2018/19	€100 million (£87 million)
2019/20	€100 million (£94 million)
2020/21	€100 million (£88 million)

■ Wood-burning Stoves

Geraint Davies: [\[93684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he has taken to ensure that only the cleanest wood burning stoves will be available for sale from 2022 under Ecodesign Regulations.

Geraint Davies: [\[93685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that wood burning appliances placed on the market after 1 January 2022 have been independently tested and verified.

Geraint Davies: [\[93686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that wood burning appliances placed on the market are accompanied with the necessary technical and performance information within appliance manufacturers' literature or sales websites.

Greg Hands:

From January 2022, wood burning stoves placed on the UK market will be regulated under ecodesign legislation, meaning that products placed on the UK market must meet minimum requirements for energy efficiency, as well as limits on the emissions of gaseous compounds and particulate matter. These new measures will ensure that the worst performing and most polluting wood burning stoves are phased out of the market.

The Ecodesign Regulations require certain technical and performance information about the product to be provided in the instruction manual as well as to be made freely available on the manufacturer's website.

Manufacturers must ensure compliance with the ecodesign requirements before placing a product on the market. The market surveillance authority, the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) undertake a programme of market surveillance that is risk-based and proportionate whilst operating under The Regulators Code.

The OPSS have engaged with stakeholders to raise awareness of the new ecodesign requirements taking effect in January 2022, and routinely offer support with compliance.

Geraint Davies: [\[93688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the new Ecodesign regulations on improving the efficiency of wood burning appliances.

Greg Hands:

The new Ecodesign Regulations for solid fuel local space heaters (wood burning stoves) will ensure that the worst performing and most polluting products are phased out of the market. Therefore, the Regulations will have a positive effect on the average energy efficiency of wood burning stoves on the UK market when they come into force in January 2022.

■ Working Hours

Justin Madders: [\[96933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on changes to the Working Time Regulations.

Paul Scully:

BEIS Ministers have regular discussions with stakeholders – but no specific recent discussions with stakeholders on changes to Working Time Regulations have been had.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Emergencies

Holly Lynch: [\[100612\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the National Resilience Strategy will be published.

Holly Lynch: [99351]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will confirm when the National Resilience Strategy will be published.

Michael Ellis:

The Integrated Review, published in March 2021, set a goal to strengthen the UK's national resilience. The Integrated Review also committed to the development of a new Resilience Strategy to set out a new vision and approach to support improvements to our national resilience. Following a successful Call for Evidence in the summer of last year, the government plans to publish the Strategy in spring 2022.

■ Government Departments: Procurement

Rachel Hopkins: [98495]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many (a) Government departments, (b) executive agencies and (c) other arm's length bodies have allocated contracts using emergency procurement regulations in the (i) first, (ii) second, (iii) third and (iv) fourth quarter of 2021.

Rachel Hopkins: [98496]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the (a) Government departments, (b) executive agencies and (c) other arm's length bodies that have allocated contracts using emergency procurement regulations in the (i) first, (ii) second, (iii) third and (iv) fourth quarter of 2021.

Rachel Hopkins: [98497]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many contracts were allocated using emergency procurement regulations in the (a) first, (b) second, (c) third and (d) fourth quarter of 2021.

Rachel Hopkins: [98498]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the value of contracts allocated by (a) Government departments, (b) executive agencies and (c) other arm's length bodies' using emergency procurement regulations in the (i) first, (ii) second, (iii) third and (iv) fourth quarter of 2021.

Rachel Hopkins: [98499]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many current Government contracts are in the process of being allocated using emergency procurement regulations.

Michael Ellis:

Individual departments are responsible for their own commercial decisions including the award of contracts.

Details of Government contracts above £10,000 are published on Contracts Finder:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Search>.

COP26**Members: Correspondence**

John Penrose: [\[96833\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, when he plans to respond to the letters from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of 28 September and 4 November 2021 on behalf of his constituent, Mr Michael Crane.

Alok Sharma:

I apologise for the delay in responding to the points raised by the hon. Member on behalf of his constituent.

I responded to the hon. Member's letters on 11 January.

DEFENCE**Armed Forces: Coronavirus**

John Healey: [\[96774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many of the 7,100 Armed Forces personnel on standby for resilience tasks have received their covid-19 booster jab.

James Heapey:

Every member of the Armed Forces has been offered vaccination and boosters when sufficient time has elapsed since their second vaccine dose.

40% of Service personnel have been boosted thus far. Uptake broadly matches the general population.

We continue to encourage all Service personnel to get boosted at the first opportunity.

Artillery

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[96807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of when the UK's AS90 will be removed from service.

Jeremy Quin:

The current forecast out of service date of the AS90 is 2030.

Autonomous Weapons

Jonathan Edwards: [\[99321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether it is the Government's policy to support a legally binding instrument on lethal autonomous weapons; and what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the UN 6th review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons held in December 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

The UK does not support calls for a specific legally binding instrument on lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS). International Humanitarian Law already provides a robust, principle-based framework for the regulation of weapons development and use.

The UN Group of Governmental Experts on LAWS remains the appropriate forum to address the challenges associated with the use of autonomy in weapons systems - we were pleased that the Review Conference renewed its mandate. The UK will continue to play an active role in it, working with the international community to agree norms and positive obligations to ensure the safe and responsible use of autonomy.

■ Conflict, Stability and Security Fund**Caroline Lucas:**[\[96841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the changes to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy published on 14 December 2021, whether UK development programmes and activities funded under the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund will be included as a criterion for furthering the UK's military and national security objectives; and if she will make a statement.

James Heappey:

The MOD-administered Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme was established to support former Locally Employed Staff (LES) and their dependants who are assessed to be at serious risk of threat to life as a result of having been directly employed by the UK Government in Afghanistan. There is also some discretion within the rules to consider, on a case-by-case and exceptional basis, those who worked in meaningful and prominent enabling roles alongside HMG and whose responsible HMG unit builds a credible case for consideration under the scheme. Approval in such cases is dependent upon the extent of the individual's relationship with HMG, the scale of their contribution to our mission, and an assessment of the risks they face.

We owe a debt of gratitude to all Afghan nationals who risked their lives working alongside UK forces. As such, the ARAP Scheme has been one of the most generous relocation programmes in the world. It is not time-limited and will endure, facilitating the relocation of eligible Afghans and their families, from third countries if possible.

■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft: Repairs and Maintenance**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[99312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 93719, whether ODIN will also contain a 7-day period whereby operational and technical data will be solely available to the UK.

Jeremy Quin:

Yes. The seven day dwell period between submission of the data by the operator and the ability of the Hybrid Product Support Integration office to access it is F-35 Program policy across both the ALIS and ODIN systems.

■ Maritime Patrol Aircraft

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[98223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether there are ITAR constraints in place that would preclude the UK from operating P-8.

Jeremy Quin:

The US Government has imposed no ITAR (International Traffic in Arms Regulations) constraints on the UK's use of the P-8A (Poseidon MRA1) aircraft capability.

■ Maritime Patrol Aircraft: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[99308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when (a) UK torpedoes and (b) UK sonobuoys will be cleared for use for the P-8.

Jeremy Quin:

The RAF Poseidon MRA1 was delivered in the same configuration as that operated by the US Navy which enables a swifter introduction to service, economies of scale and interoperability with close allies. We envisage that once the aircraft has reached full operating capability and there has been time to study the optimal utilisation model for the UK, the Department will be in a position to make decisions on future equipment configurations.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[99309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which manufacturer supplies the sonobuoys currently deployed by the UK's P-8 aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

Sonobuoys for the Poseidon MRA1 are provided by ERAPSCO (Expendable Reliable Acoustic Path Sonobuoy Company), which is a joint venture between the manufacturers, Sparton and Ultra Electronics.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[99310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which manufacturer supplies the torpedoes deployed on the UK's P-8 aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

The Poseidon MRA1 is equipped with the Mk 54 Lightweight Torpedo manufactured by the Raytheon Technology Corporation.

■ Maritime Patrol Aircraft: Torpedoes

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[99311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Stingray torpedo is qualified for use on the UK's P-8 aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

The Sting Ray torpedo is not cleared for use on the RAF's Poseidon MRA1.

■ Merlin Helicopters: Early Warning Systems

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[96787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the flying cost per hour was of the Merlin Crowsnest system on Carrier Strike Group 21.

Jeremy Quin:

The cost per flying hour for the Merlin CROWSNEST role fit equipment during the deployment was approximately £9,000 based on the cost of the support contract and planned flying hours and including the cost of industry support to CROWSNEST deployed on Op FORTIS.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[96788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Crowsnest system completed all the tests it was scheduled to complete whilst on Carrier Strike Group 21.

Jeremy Quin:

The embarked CROWSNEST fitted aircraft on the Carrier Strike Group 2021 deployment were not part of the trials programme.

Feedback from the frontline operators, which further developed tactics, techniques and procedures, was passed successfully back to industry to inform system development.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[96790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Weapon System Operators have been trained on Crowsnest.

Jeremy Quin:

There are sufficient Royal Navy Observers for the number of CROWSNEST role-fitted Merlin Mk2s at this stage of the programme. I am unable to disclose the exact number of personnel trained as to do so would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

Training is expected to commence in the first half of 2022 to increase the number of those trained for Full Operating Capability.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[96791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, who the Senior Responsible Owner was that approved the Crowsnest platform for Initial Operating Capability.

Jeremy Quin:

CROWSNEST has not yet achieved Initial Operating Capability.

■ Military Aid: Coronavirus**Jim Shannon:**[\[98296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make military (a) medics and (b) transportation available to health trusts throughout the UK to help combat the staff shortages caused by covid-19 isolation.

James Heappey:

As at 10 January 2022, we are providing 313 personnel to the NHS in England and Scotland in order to help relieve winter pressures. This comprises both medics and general duties personnel.

543 personnel, the majority of whom are drivers, are currently providing support to Ambulance services in response to driver shortages in England, Scotland and Wales.

In addition, we are currently providing 1,059 personnel comprising medics, general duties personnel and planners to support the UK's COVID-19 vaccination and booster programmes.

We remain ready to support health trusts and other bodies across the UK through the Military Aid to Civilian Authorities (MACA) process.

■ Military Aid: NHS**John Healey:**[\[96773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces personnel who have been deployed to help the NHS (a) alleviate winter pressures and (b) support covid-19 vaccine programme have received their covid-19 booster jab.

James Heappey:

As at 7 Jan 2022, there are 1,792 Armed Forces personnel deployed to alleviate winter pressures. Of these, 71% have received a COVID-19 booster jab. 939 personnel are deployed in support of the COVID-19 vaccination programme and 66% have received a booster jab.

The rates of booster uptake amongst the winter resilience force are ahead of the wider Defence population and those of similar age groups within the general population, and we continue to work to improve rates of uptake to ensure that every person in Defence takes up their offer of receiving a booster when they are eligible.

■ Ministry of Defence: Buildings**Rachel Hopkins:**[\[99106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total floor area of his Department's estate was in each year from 2010-11 to 2020-21.

Jeremy Quin:

The total floor area of the Ministry of Defence Built Estate, which includes Military Accommodation, in the UK is shown in the table below:

YEAR	UK BUILDING AREA M2
2010	No information held
2011	No information held
2012	33,868,717
2013	33,383,960
2014	33,719,318
2015	33,211,865
2016	33,510,495
2017	33,353,237
2018	33,598,448
2019	33,339,804
2020	33,937,653
2021	33,833,049
2022	33,377,306

The data in the table above is a snapshot taken from 1 April for each year, except for the current year which was taken from 7 January 2022.

Over this time period, information has been captured differently in different years, so the data set should not be directly compared.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Culture Recovery Fund****Kate Osamor:**[\[96991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the additional £30 million allocated to the Cultural Recovery Fund will be accessible to freelance creatives and other workers in the creative sector who are economically impacted by the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

This £30m for the Culture Recovery Fund being made newly available for organisations will be used to increase the budget for the relaunched Emergency

Resource Support strand of CRF in order to meet the demand from across the cultural sector.

Freelancers are supported through the Culture Recovery Fund by ensuring the venues and organisations which support them have survived the pandemic.

The Government announced on 23rd December that it has also provided an immediate £1.5 million to support freelancers affected by the pandemic, underpinning a further £1.35 million funding from the theatre sector. The Government, via Arts Council England, is providing grants of £650,000 each to charities Theatre Artists Fund and Help Musicians, and £200,000 to a-n, The Artist Information Company, a charity for visual artists, to give a much needed helping hand to freelancers over the coming weeks.

■ Devolution: Scotland

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[98457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what representations her Department has received from the Scottish Government on the potential merits of additional devolution of powers to and further input from Scotland.

Julia Lopez:

My Department has not received any formal representations from the Scottish Government on this matter.

The UK Government is committed to devolution and to working constructively with the devolved administrations.

My Department ensures it receives input from, and its work is impactful in Scotland, both with the Scottish Government and directly with an increasing proportion of DCMS staff based in Scotland. Regular formal and informal engagement takes place with the administration and other Scottish bodies and organisations.

I look forward to continuing the valued and positive working relationship that we have with the Scottish Government. It supports and strengthens our digital, media, creative, cultural and sport sectors which benefits people in both Scotland and across the UK.

■ Great Exhibition

Justin Madders:

[\[99346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on a potential Great Exhibition project; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Secretary of State has had no such meetings. For meetings conducted by the previous Secretary of State please see the answer to Written Parliamentary Question [98965](#).

■ Hospitality Industry and Leisure: Coronavirus

Geraint Davies:

[\[98198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies on the protection of vulnerable people and others in (a) entertainment and hospitality venues and (b) cultural institutions of the findings of the study entitled The removal of airborne SARS-CoV-2 and other bioaerosols by air filtration on COVID-19 surge units published by Andrew Conway Morris PhD et al.

Julia Lopez:

The Government continues to closely monitor the risks posed by COVID-19 and the Omicron variant based on scientific advice, and will respond accordingly to help keep our most vulnerable communities safe. We are committed to working alongside all of our sectors to ensure maximum safety and we continue to share the [COVID-19: ventilation of indoor spaces to stop the spread of coronavirus guidance](#) during our sector engagements, to help minimise the risk of transmission in public settings.

■ Internet: Rural Areas

Jim Shannon:

[\[98292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to allocate funding for internet connection in rural community businesses throughout the UK.

Julia Lopez:

The Government is investing £5 billion through Project Gigabit to support gigabit broadband coverage in areas not covered by commercial roll-out, adding to the 600,000 rural homes and businesses already covered by gigabit with our support.

As part of Project Gigabit the government is investing up to £210m in the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme to support rural communities with the cost of installing new gigabit-capable connections. The scheme provides a micro-grant of up to £1,500 for residents and up to £3,500 for businesses towards the cost of installing gigabit-capable broadband.

The scheme enables those communities and businesses in rural areas not in line for commercial rollout, and those that do not want to wait for Project Gigabit procurements, to get more immediate help with the costs of installing a gigabit-capable connection. Further information is available on the gigabit voucher [website](#) including eligibility criteria and how to apply for the scheme.

■ Internet: West Midlands

Stuart Anderson:

[\[98434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to help increase internet connectivity in the West Midlands.

Julia Lopez:

It is the government's view that the best way to achieve nationwide gigabit coverage is to create a competition-friendly environment in areas where deployment is

commercially viable, while focussing government funds on the 20% of the country where commercial deployment is unlikely. As a result of this approach, over 65% of premises in the UK can access gigabit-capable networks, up from just one in ten in November 2019. By 2025 the government is targeting a minimum of 85% gigabit-capable coverage.

Based on data from www.thinkbroadband.com, almost 74% of premises in the West Midlands currently have access to gigabit broadband, while 98% have superfast broadband availability. Delivery of superfast and gigabit broadband continues in a number of areas within the West Midlands including Herefordshire, Shropshire and Warwickshire through projects under the Superfast Broadband Programme. Warwickshire, Wolverhampton and Stoke-on-Trent have also benefitted from the government's Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN) programme, which provides public funding to support the installation of full-fibre broadband infrastructure.

The Government is now investing £5 billion through Project Gigabit to support gigabit broadband coverage in areas not covered by commercial roll-out. The latest [Project Gigabit Quarterly Publication](#), published in October 2021, provides an update on the delivery plan and target timeline for the regional supplier procurements for the West Midlands counties of Warwickshire (Lot 11), Staffordshire (Lot 19), Shropshire (Lot 25), Worcestershire (Lot 24) and Herefordshire (Lot 15). Further Regional Supplier procurements for areas including Birmingham and the Black Country (Lot 35), where very extensive commercial delivery continues, are also being considered, and further information will be provided in future quarterly updates.

As part of Project Gigabit, the government is also investing up to £210m in the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS) to support rural communities with the cost of installing new gigabit-capable connections. The GBVS provides a micro-grant of up to £1,500 for residents and up to £3,500 for businesses towards the cost of installing gigabit-capable broadband. Home and business owners can check the eligibility of their addresses at the [GBVS website](#).

EDUCATION

■ Education: Air Conditioning

Munira Wilson:

[\[99397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) Dyson Pure Cool Formaldehyde – TP09 and (b) Camfil City M air cleaning units have been purchased by (i) education and (ii) childcare settings through the marketplace opened by the Department.

Munira Wilson:

[\[99398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) criteria and (b) data were used to determine the destinations of the 7,000 air purifier units announced on 2 January 2022.

Munira Wilson:

[99399]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish data gathered from the 350,000 carbon dioxide monitors distributed to schools across England from September 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

During the autumn term, the department provided CO₂ monitors to all state-funded education providers. This includes early years, schools, and further education providers, backed by £25 million in government funding. Further information on this can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-schools-to-receive-carbon-dioxide-monitors>.

The department has now delivered on our public commitment with over 353,000 monitors delivered. The programme provided schools and other settings with sufficient monitors to take representative readings from across their estate. Feedback suggests that schools are finding the monitors helpful to manage ventilation and, in most education providers, existing ventilation measures are sufficient.

CO₂ monitors are an additional measure which the department have rolled out to education providers to be used as a guide for where ventilation can be improved. This is not intended to create an additional burden on staff but is an extra tool to support education providers to improve ventilation. It is up to school leaders to decide how to best use them in their specific setting.

On 2 January 2022, the department announced that 7000 air cleaning units are now being made available for mainstream state-funded providers, in addition to the 1000 units made available for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision (AP) settings that we announced in November. Settings can apply for funded units via an online form. Applications are open until 9am on 17 January.

Before applying for a funded air cleaning unit, the following criteria must be met by mainstream education providers, as set out in the 'How to apply for a Department for Education-funded air cleaning unit' guidance, which is available on the ventilation document sharing platform:

- Sustained high CO₂ readings: there have been sustained high CO₂ readings (1500ppm or higher) for at least 1 week while the room is occupied, despite taking all measures possible to introduce ventilation.
- Lengthy remedial works required in order to address poor ventilation, that cannot be completed before the end of February 2022.
- Suitable space: air cleaning units will be allocated for teaching spaces only.

There are different criteria for SEND and AP settings due the higher-than-average number of vulnerable pupils attending those settings. For these education providers, air cleaning units will also be allocated to poorly ventilated staff rooms. The department will prioritise spaces with the poorest ventilation to receive units based on criteria such as CO₂ readings and occupation density.

The department has also launched an online marketplace which provides settings with a route to purchasing air cleaning units at a suitable specification and competitive price. Further information is available here: <https://s107t01-webapp-v2-01.azurewebsites.net/list/air-cleaning>. In the future, the department may review this list and as more products which meet our specification become available, these will be added. All purchases through the marketplace are managed by the supplier, rather than by the department.

■ Education: Ventilation

Conor McGinn:

[99350]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in the context of the rise of omicron covid-19 variant cases, what additional support he has made available to education providers in (a) St Helens North constituency and (b) the North West region to improve ventilation in the various sets of teaching environments.

Mr Robin Walker:

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the department has emphasised the importance of ventilation and provided guidance to education providers on ventilation requirements. The department has always stated that where an education provider is in operation it is important to ensure that it is well ventilated and that a comfortable teaching environment is maintained.

During the autumn term, the department provided CO2 monitors to all state-funded education providers, including early years, schools, and further education providers, backed by £25 million in government funding. The department has now delivered on its public commitment with over 353,000 monitors delivered. The programme provided schools and other education providers with sufficient monitors to take representative readings from across their estate. Feedback suggests that schools are finding the monitors helpful to manage ventilation and, in the majority of education providers, existing ventilation measures are sufficient.

For the very few cases where maintaining good ventilation is not possible, the department is supplying up to a total of 7,000 air cleaning units in response to this feedback to settings. This is in addition to the 1,000 department-funded air cleaning units that we announced on 18 November for special educational needs and disabilities and alternative provision providers. Providers can apply for funded units via an online form. Applications are open until 9am on 17 January. Applications will be assessed against strict criteria for their setting type. We will prioritise spaces with the poorest ventilation to receive units based on criteria such as CO2 levels and occupation density.

The department has also launched an online marketplace, which provides education providers with 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>. In future, we may

review this list and as more products which meet our specification become available, these will be added.

■ **Out-of-school Education: Closures**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[97133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that local authorities, Ofsted and safeguarding bodies have the necessary powers to investigate, seize evidence and shut down illegal schools.

Mr Robin Walker:

It is a criminal offence under section 96 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 to conduct an unregistered independent school. The department and Ofsted continue to investigate any schools, colleges, and universities where intelligence or evidence suggest that this offence is being committed. Section 97 of the act permits no-notice inspections of education providers believed to be operating as an unregistered independent school.

Between 1 January 2016 and 31 August 2021, 850 education providers were investigated leading to 412 inspections. These inspections have led to 114 unregistered schools being identified, and joint work between the department and Ofsted has led to 101 of these schools changing their provision to cease operating unlawfully. In addition, since 2016, 6 successful prosecutions have been brought against groups responsible for operating illegal education providers

The department has previously committed to taking forward measures to make it easier for Ofsted to investigate and gather evidence of breaches of section 96 of the act, and prosecute those responsible for running unregistered schools, including in the 2019 Integrated Communities Action Plan. Such measures are planned to be taken forward when a suitable legislative opportunity arises.

■ **Pupils: Absenteeism**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[96851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the unauthorised absence rate is in schools in England.

Mr Robin Walker:

In the most recent full academic year for which data is available, 2018/19, the unauthorised absence rate in schools in England was 1.4%. This data is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england>.

■ **Schools: Governing Bodies**

Imran Hussain:

[\[96897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department records how many school governors are from a Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority background.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department does not currently collect data on the ethnicity of volunteers in school and academy trust governance. We recognise the importance and positive impact of a diverse board. For this reason, guidance published by the department emphasises that boards should understand the diversity of their schools and the communities they serve and ensure their board is reflective of this. We are committed to working with the sector to increase the diversity of school and academy trust boards.

■ **Schools: Ventilation****Geraint Davies:**[\[98184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to encourage applications by schools to buy air cleaning units through its online marketplace to help reduce covid-19 transmission.

Geraint Davies:[\[98185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies on protection of (a) children and (b) adults in educational establishments 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.

Mr Robin Walker:

During the autumn term, we provided over 350,000 CO2 monitors to all state-funded education providers, including early years, schools and further education colleges, backed by £25 million in government funding. Feedback suggests that schools are finding the monitors helpful to manage ventilation and, in the majority of providers, existing ventilation measures are sufficient.

Where an area of poor ventilation has been identified that cannot be resolved through simple measures such as opening doors and windows, schools are advised to explore what remedial works may be required to improve ventilation. Where it is not possible to maintain adequate ventilation, it may be appropriate to consider the use of an air cleaning unit while the underlying ventilation issue is addressed.

When used properly, air cleaning units can help reduce airborne contaminants in a poorly ventilated space, including viruses like COVID-19. Air cleaning units are not a substitute for ventilation and should never be used as a reason to reduce ventilation. They are not necessary in spaces that are adequately ventilated.

The department's decision to make up to 8,000 air cleaning units available for poorly ventilated spaces in education and care institutions has been informed by advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and external consultation with specialists. The academic paper on portable air cleaners referenced is part of a wider body of scientific literature considered by the department, including:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/939173/S0867_EMG_Potential_application_of_air_cleaning_devices_and

[d_personal_decontamination_to_manage_transmission_of_COVID-19.pdf](#). The department will continue to develop its policy and guidance on ventilation in line with the latest scientific advice and in consultation with industry wide experts.

Deliveries of air cleaning units will start from this week to special educational needs and disabilities and alternative provision providers. These were allocated in the first application round announced in November for special and alternative provision . The second round of applications is open until 9am on 17 January. All state funded schools (primary and secondary), further education colleges and nurseries can apply.

Special and alternative provision providers that were not successful or did not apply in the first round are also eligible to apply in this round. Once applications have closed, all applications will be assessed against strict criteria and allocated to providers based on need. Providers 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. The marketplace is available to view here: <https://s107t01-webapp-v2-01.azurewebsites.net/list/air-cleaning>.

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, we have emphasised the importance of ventilation and provided guidance to providers on ventilation requirements. In addition to our existing guidance on ventilation we have provided schools, colleges and nurseries with guidance on how to use the air cleaning units as well as how to order a unit via the marketplace. The application process has been communicated to providers via our Daily Bulletin and we continue to support schools, colleges and nurseries with their queries via the department's Coronavirus Helpline.

■ Soft Drinks: Taxation

Munira Wilson: [\[99400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what contribution the Soft Drinks Levy made to the Sport Premium in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019 and (d) 2020.

Munira Wilson: [\[99401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what contribution was made from the Soft Drinks Levy to the Healthy Pupils Capital Fund in (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Will Quince:

The Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) came into effect in April 2018 with the aim of tackling childhood obesity by encouraging suppliers to reduce the sugar content of drinks.

The government has used receipts to support activity to promote childhood health and wellbeing. In the context of SDIL receipts, the department's budgets were increased to allow for the doubling of the PE and sport premium to £320 million from the 2017/18 academic year. We have since maintained it at that level to support primary schools to make additional and sustainable improvements to the quality of

their Physical Education (PE), sport and physical activity provision. Details of how the PE and sport premium is allocated can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pe-and-sport-premium-for-primary-schools>.

Additional funding from SDIL also allowed us to offer the £100 million Healthy Pupils Capital Fund in 2018-19. This was a one-year fund.

We have now also announced nearly £30 million per year from the 2022-23 financial year to open-up school sport facilities in England, as well as to improve the teaching of PE at primary school.

■ Teachers: Coronavirus

Daisy Cooper: [\[99391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many retired teachers his Department has asked to return to school in order to ease covid-19 pressures; and how many of those teachers are aged (a) 50 to 59, (b) 60 to 69 and (c) over 70.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department is working to support all schools to remain open for face-to-face education and every ex-teacher that comes forward to help can make a difference to pupils.

The department's campaign aims to further bolster the many supply staff that are already working in our schools and who have been throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. The call has just begun, agencies are continuing to recruit new candidates for our schools. The department are extremely grateful to all the teachers who are responding to our call to return temporarily to the classroom.

The department does not routinely collect data on supply staff, however, we are in close contact with supply agencies to monitor the interest they receive. The findings of our initial survey of agencies were published on Wednesday 12 January and this showed that at least 585 ex-teachers registered interest (between 20 Dec 2021 and 7 January 2022) in returning to the classroom to support schools.

The department have not asked for any data on the personal characteristics, such as age, of the people who have expressed an interest.

■ Teachers; Pay

Daisy Cooper: [\[97131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to announce any pay rises for school teaching staff by April 2022 to allow schools to include those rises in their budgeting processes which take place before the summer holidays.

Daisy Cooper: [\[97132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when the School Teachers' Review Body plans to provide its recommendations on teacher pay rises in 2022.

Mr Robin Walker:

In the remit letter to the chair of the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB), my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has requested that the STRB provide their recommendations on the academic years 2022/23 and 2023/24 pay awards during May 2022.

Any pay award will be announced after the Secretary of State has reviewed the STRB's report. As ever, we will work with colleagues across government to ensure we publish the STRB's report and the government's response as quickly as possible.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Fertilisers****Jonathan Edwards:**[\[96845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the trends in the (i) level of supply and (ii) cost of agricultural fertiliser and (b) impact of supply and cost of agricultural fertiliser on domestic food production.

Victoria Prentis:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Gordon on 26 November 2021, PQ UIN [77505](#) and [77506](#).

■ Air Pollution: Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire**Ruth Jones:**[\[97103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Jo Churchill:

Air quality is a devolved matter and air quality in Wales is the responsibility of the Welsh Government and local authorities in Wales.

■ Air Pollution: Dumfries and Galloway**Ruth Jones:**[\[97102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Dumfries and Galloway constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Jo Churchill:

Air quality is a devolved matter and air quality in Scotland is the responsibility of the Scottish Government and local authorities in Scotland.

■ Air Pollution: Uxbridge and South Ruislip

Ruth Jones: [\[97078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Uxbridge and South Ruislip constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Richmond, North Yorkshire constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Esher and Walton constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in South West Norfolk constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Witham constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Wyre and Preston North constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Surrey Heath constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Bromsgrove constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Spelthorne constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Newcastle Under Lyme constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Reading West constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in North East Cambridgeshire constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Suffolk Coastal constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Berwick upon Tweed constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Stratford-on-Avon constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Camborne and Redruth constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Welwyn Hatfield constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Chipping Barnet constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Chingford and Woodford Green constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Kensington constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Hendon constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Stoke on Trent Central constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Thurrock constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Great Yarmouth constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Hertsmere constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Mid Bedfordshire constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Sherwood constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in North East Somerset constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Fareham constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in North West Hampshire constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Chippenham constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Selby and Ainsty constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Portsmouth North constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Stoke on Trent South constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Stoke on Trent North and Kidsgrove constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Ashfield (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas which unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Heywood and Middleton constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Don Valley (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Wakefield (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[97122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Dudley North (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Ruth Jones: [\[98423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many children aged 18 and under in Dudley South constituency (a) live in and (b) go to school in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution.

Jo Churchill:

The Government does not hold this information.

Air pollution has reduced significantly since 2010 – at a national level emissions of fine particulate matter have fallen by 11%, while emissions of nitrogen oxides are at their lowest level since records began. The Government is committed to going further and is taking a range of actions to improve air quality, including through the landmark Environment Act 2021 and by implementing the Clean Air Strategy.

■ Animal Housing: Cats and Dogs

Daisy Cooper: [\[97130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans the Government has to establish a professional regulatory body for the catteries and kennels industry.

Jo Churchill:

The provision of boarding for cats and dogs, including in catteries and kennels, is a licensable activity under [The Animal Welfare \(Licensing of Activities Involving Animals\) \(England\) Regulations 2018 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#).

This means that anyone who operates a business with the purpose of providing or arranging accommodation for other people's cats or dogs needs to have a valid licence from their local authority. Licencees must meet strict statutory minimum welfare standards and these are enforced by local authorities who have powers to issue, refuse or revoke licences.

The 2018 Regulations are due to be reviewed five years after they came into force (2023). We are always seeking to learn from implementation and make improvements where necessary. As part of planning for this review, we are proactively working with partners, including local authorities, to collate data that can provide a picture of licensed and unlicensed activities involving animals in England. Key trade associations that exist, such as the Pet Industry Federation and the Canine and Feline Sector Group, will be integral to coordinating input from this diverse sector to inform Defra's review.

■ Dogs: Tagging**Daniel Zeichner:****[96886]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the current review into the regulations on dog microchipping and the related microchipping database systems will be completed.

Jo Churchill:

We have completed the post implementation review of the Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015 and published the [report](#) on 21 December 2021. At the same time, we published a [research report](#) from Nottingham University on the effectiveness of dog microchipping legislation that supported the review.

The review found that microchipping has had a positive effect on reunification rates and legislation is seen as an important and necessary means to achieve improvements in dog welfare by increasing traceability of dogs and their keepers. The regulatory review and the Pet Theft Taskforce both highlighted areas where improvements to the microchipping regime would be beneficial, notably by improving the ease of navigation of the database system and processes around keepership records. We are considering changes to the 2015 Regulations and will be consulting on these in early 2022.

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

■ Plastics

Tulip Siddiq: [\[99023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of banning all non-essential single-use plastic in the UK.

Jo Churchill:

Plastic is an extremely useful material and when used in the right way and disposed of correctly, it can help us deliver the best environmental outcome. For example, we have seen how useful it can be for medical and clinical purposes as it is strong, flexible and light-weight. However, where the evidence supports the case, we will not hesitate to introduce bans and other measures to limit its use, as we have done with single-use plastic straws, stirrers, and cotton buds. Such an approach will continue to be applied to our upcoming policy measures, like our proposed ban of single-use plastic plates, cutlery and polystyrene food and drinks containers, to ensure we have the best overall impact on our natural environment.

■ Seasonal Workers: Pilot Schemes

Daniel Zeichner: [\[94408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to reintroduce an extension of the Seasonal Workers Pilot to include poultry workers.

Victoria Prentis:

Our points-based system allows for many roles in poultry production to use the Skilled Worker route, such as poultry processors, bird dressers, pluckers, trussers and butchers for all meats. UK employers can additionally make use of the EU Settled Status Scheme for these roles, which allows EU nationals to travel to and work in the UK. The Government encourages all sectors to make employment more attractive to UK domestic workers through offering training, careers options, wage increases and to invest in increased automation technology.

Although the Government has no current plans to reintroduce the scheme for temporary visas to poultry workers in 2022, we will continue to monitor the position. Defra works closely with the Home Office to ensure there is a long term strategy for the food and farming workforce into the future.

■ Walley's Quarry Landfill

Ruth Jones: [\[97068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on what date he last personally raised the issue of toxic air at Walley's Quarry with the Prime Minister.

Jo Churchill:

I visited Walleys Quarry last month to see the issue for myself, and to meet with local residents. Ministers have regular discussions with colleagues in the Prime Minister's Office, as well as the Prime Minister, on a range of issues.

Whales**John Spellar:**[\[96765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his department has made of the potential merits of a revival of the whale population on (a) the international marine environment and (b) carbon capture.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK Government plays a leading role championing the conservation and welfare of all cetaceans (whales, dolphins, and porpoises) both in the UK and internationally. We fully recognise the importance of whale populations to the marine ecosystem, and the vital role they play to sequester carbon.

We play an active role in the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and are Vice Chair of the IWC's Conservation Committee. The Conservation Committee considers a wide range of cetacean conservation issues, which includes increasing our understanding of their important role in ecosystem functioning and climate change.

Research into the carbon capture potential from whales is ongoing within the scientific community and we anticipate some of this research to be reported on at the IWC's Scientific Committee meeting in May this year. Defra officials and UK scientists will attend this meeting which will help improve our understanding of the importance of cetaceans in carbon sequestration.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**Abduljalil AlSingace and Hasan Mushaima****Paul Girvan:**[\[97026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has made representations to the Bahrain Government on the treatment and imprisonment of the leader of the political opposition, Mr Hasan Mushaima, and the leading human rights defender, Dr Abduljalil Alsingace.

James Cleverly:

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

■ Afghanistan: British Nationals Abroad

Imran Hussain:

[\[96905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support her Department is providing to British nationals in Afghanistan in need of urgent medical treatment.

James Cleverly:

Since 28 August 2021 the British Embassy in Kabul has suspended in-country operations. FCDO Travel Advice for Afghanistan states that only very limited medical facilities are available in Afghanistan and makes clear that consular assistance can only be provided remotely and is extremely limited. British nationals in Afghanistan can continue to access 24 hour consular assistance by phone. We can provide in-person consular assistance in neighbouring countries.

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Ms Marie Rimmer:

[\[98335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she has taken to collaborate with countries neighbouring Afghanistan to (a) keep those countries' borders open and (b) resettle refugees who flee from Afghanistan by land.

James Cleverly:

FCDO officials have engaged with governments in the region, notably Pakistan and in Central Asia, to allow Afghan nationals to cross their borders from Afghanistan on humanitarian grounds. We have supported over 3,400 people to leave Afghanistan, or to move from third countries to the UK, since the end of Op PITTING. To date, the UK Government has disbursed £10 million to support preparedness in the region and to help mitigate widespread humanitarian disaster, including to £3 million to Iran, £4 million to Pakistan and £2 million to Tajikistan.

■ Coronavirus: Females

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[98905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of Women and Girls Left Behind: Glaring Gaps in Pandemic Responses, published by UN Women on 17 December 2021.

Vicky Ford:

We know that women and girls are amongst the hardest hit by the indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. That is why the FCDO has been working with international partners to ensure the needs and priorities of women and girls are central to every aspect of our response.

This has included donating £10 million for the United Nations Population Fund's COVID-19 response and an additional £1 million to the UN Trust Fund to End

Violence Against Women for the COVID-19 Crisis Response Window. This funding helped address reproductive health supply shortages caused by the pandemic, and scale up reporting, protection, and support services for women and girls affected by the surge in gender based violence (GBV). In addition, FCDO has supported over 40 countries to flex and adapt their social protection systems in response to COVID-19. This integrated a focus on gender equality and social inclusion to support women disproportionately impacted by the crisis. Social protection when well-designed can increase women's economic participation and reduce their unpaid care responsibilities, which have increased during the COVID crisis. The FCDO will continue to champion women and girls rights because that's the only way we will create a fairer, safer and more prosperous world.

■ **Kazakhstan: Demonstrations**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[99082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to help prevent human rights infringements against protestors in Kazakhstan; and what discussions the Government has had with authorities in that country since that unrest began.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

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. Protests should be peaceful and law enforcement responses proportionate and in line with Kazakhstan's international commitments. At the beginning of the protests, President Tokayev signalled his intention to engage with the legitimate demands of peaceful protestors, a fact that we welcomed. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon spoke to the Kazakh Ambassador to the UK on 6 January, and with Kazakhstan's Deputy Foreign Minister Alimbayev on 7 January. During these meetings, Lord Ahmad was that clear that the right to peaceful protest should be protected, that internet services should be restored, and that the Kazakh authorities should respect their commitments to freedom of speech and expression. Our Ambassador and her team in Nur-Sultan are in contact with the authorities in Kazakhstan and we will continue to engage in the coming days.

■ **Myanmar: Rohingya**

Imran Hussain:

[\[96896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to engage with the Rohingya community as part of the UK's relations with the Government of Myanmar.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is committed to ensuring that the voices of Rohingya people are at the heart of our policy making. We have worked to keep the Rohingya crisis on the international agenda, at both the UN Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council.

The UK funded Rohingya refugees to attend the International Court of Justice in December 2019 to provide testimony of their experiences. Rohingya leaders have met regularly with FCDO Ministers over the last few years, both in person and virtually. The Minister responsible for South Asia, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, visited the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar in late 2021, where he spent the day meeting Rohingya refugees and listening to their experiences. My officials have a strong relationship with the Rohingya community based in Bradford, last visiting in October 2019, shortly before the pandemic.

■ Nagorno Karabakh: Human Rights

Jim Shannon:

[\[98288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential occurrence of war crimes and serious human rights violations within the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The UK Government remains deeply concerned by the allegations that war crimes and human rights violations and abuses were committed during and after the conflict in 2020. We continue to encourage the Armenian and Azerbaijani Government, including through our Embassies in Yerevan and Baku, to thoroughly investigate all allegations that prisoners of war and detainees were mistreated during and after the conflict.

■ Paraguay: Indigenous Peoples

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[98889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with her Paraguayan counterpart on the protection of the Ayoreo people following the forced removal from their homes in the Chaco forest.

Vicky Ford:

The British Embassy in Asuncion regularly discusses both human rights and deforestation issues with the Paraguayan authorities, and the British Ambassador has raised this issue directly with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and for the Environment.

■ Republic of Ireland: Foreign Relations

Ruth Jones:

[\[97062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what date she last spoke to Simon Coveney TD.

Ruth Jones:

[\[97067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when she last met the Irish Ambassador to the UK.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Foreign Secretary had dinner with Simon Coveney, Minister for Foreign Affairs, on Thursday 6 January 2022. They discussed how to work together to support progress in EU/UK talks on the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol and other international priorities following their previous call in December. The Irish Ambassador to the UK, Adrian O'Neill, also attended the meeting.

■ Russia: Ukraine**Bob Seely:**[\[98416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made for the implications of her policies of the essay by President of Russia Vladimir Putin entitled On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians published on 12 July 2021.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The UK Government has noted and carefully considered Russia's statements on this issue, including President Putin's 2021 article. The Foreign Secretary's statement to the House of Commons on 6 January set out clearly the Government's position, our concerns about Russia's intentions and aggressive rhetoric, and our support for Ukrainian sovereignty.

We have made clear to Russia that any military incursion into Ukraine would be a strategic mistake and would have severe cost in response. Russia's military build-up on the borders of Ukraine is unprovoked and unjustified. Russia should take concrete steps to reduce tensions. Russia needs to step back, abide by its international commitments, report troop movements and return to diplomacy for serious talks. The UK will continue to respond to Russia's actions with our allies and partners.

The UK and our allies are unwavering in our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We are committed to ensuring the people of Ukraine are able to define their own future.

■ Sahel: Internally Displaced People**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[98902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help support people displaced within the Central Sahel region as a result of increased insecurity in that region.

Vicky Ford:

The UK is working with partners, through our Sahel Humanitarian Emergency Response Programme, to address the needs of those displaced in the Sahel. UK support includes responding to urgent food insecurity, responding to severe acute malnutrition, providing basic life-saving assistance to conflict affected people, as well as supporting safe access for humanitarian workers. Since 2019, we have supported 10.5 million people with life-saving assistance across the G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Mauritania).

■ Sudan: Freedom of Expression

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[98252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has of the freedom (a) of the press, (b) of expression and (c) of association in Sudan since 19 November 2021.

Vicky Ford:

Despite progress on economic reforms and peace talks since the 2019 revolution in Sudan, fractures between different political actors 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. 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.

The situation in Sudan puts at risk the significant achievements made in freedom of the press, of expression, and of association since the 2019 revolution. We have consistently raised our concern at, and called for an end to, detentions of activists and journalists since the coup, most recently in the 4 January statement. We have also repeatedly called for the Sudanese people to be able to protest and express their views without fear of violence, including through statements the Foreign Secretary and I made, and in international fora such as the UN Security Council and G7 Foreign and Development Ministers meeting. It remains essential that the right to peaceful protest is protected and accountability for any violations is delivered.

■ Sudan: Politics and Government

Ruth Jones:

[\[97072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the political situation in Sudan following the resignation of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok.

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 dialogue to secure a lasting solution to the political crisis. We therefore welcome the UN's announcement that they will facilitate talks to help resolve the situation. The Sudan Quad (UK, Saudi Arabia, UAE and US) released a statement on 8 January welcoming this initiative, urging all Sudanese political actors to seize this opportunity to restore the country's transition to civilian democracy. 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.

■ Transcaucasus: Hate Crime

Jim Shannon:

[\[98290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if her Department will monitor the potential prevalence of anti-Armenian hate speech and disinformation in the Caucasus region; and what discussions she has had with her Azerbaijani counterpart on the use of anti-Armenia hate speech and disinformation by senior Azerbaijani politicians.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The UK Government remains deeply concerned by the inflammatory rhetoric deployed during and after the conflict in 2020 by Azerbaijan and Armenia. We continue to urge the parties to refrain from unhelpful actions and rhetoric and engage in discussions with the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to settle all outstanding matters related to the conflict. The former Minister for Europe and Americas, Wendy Morton MP, reinforced these messages during her trip to the South Caucasus last year.

■ Yvonne Fletcher

Drew Hendry:

[\[96950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her Libyan counterpart on obtaining support for UK authorities' investigations within Libya into the case of Constable Yvonne Fletcher.

James Cleverly:

The Government cannot comment on the details of this case. This is one of the most notorious crimes of the last forty years, representing an act of state-sponsored terrorism, which resulted in the murder of a serving police officer on the streets of London. WPC Fletcher's death remains as shocking and senseless today as the day it occurred, and I understand that the decision not to prosecute remains disappointing and frustrating for all her family, friends and colleagues.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Air Pollution: Public Health****Geraint Davies:****[98180]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Chief Medical Officer is taking to (a) address public health problems associated with air pollution and (b) promote potential solutions to those problems.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 10 January 2022]: The Chief Medical Officer for England is currently writing his 2022 annual report on the topic of air pollution. This report will focus on evidence for potential solutions to reduce the public health impacts of air pollution and will offer recommendations based on this evidence. The report is due to be published in the summer.

■ Coronavirus**Dr Liam Fox:****[96757]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many admissions to the NHS with covid-19 were (a) fully vaccinated, (b) partially vaccinated and (c) unvaccinated in each of the last 10 weeks in England.

Maggie Throup:

This information is not available in the format requested. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) publishes data on COVID-19 cases presenting to emergency care within 28 days of a positive specimen resulting in an overnight inpatient admission by vaccination status, for the most recent four week period. This is available at the following link:

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

The analysis is based on data from a sentinel network of acute National Health Service trusts contributing enhanced data cases data from the UKHSA linked to vaccination status and presentation to emergency care and inpatient admissions from the NHS.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Liz Twist:****[97018]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to protect children who (a) have complex respiratory and neurological conditions and (b) other clinically extremely vulnerable children aged five to 11 from covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

On 22 December 2021, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) provided advice on the primary vaccination of five to 11 year olds. The potential merits from vaccination were assessed according to the presence or absence of

underlying health conditions that increase the risk of serious COVID-19. It advised that children aged five to 11 years in a clinical risk group, which includes complex respiratory and neurological conditions, or who were household contacts of someone who is immunosuppressed should be offered two 10 micrograms doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (Comirnaty) with an interval of eight weeks between the first and second doses. The minimum interval between any vaccine dose and recent COVID-19 infection should be four weeks. Further advice regarding COVID-19 vaccination for other five to 11 year olds will be issued in due course following consideration of additional data.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[97054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with relevant stakeholders on updating the Government's guidance on covid-19 symptoms in the context of the findings of the study by the Zoe symptom tracker app on symptoms associated with the omicron covid-19 variant.

Maggie Throup:

Evidence on symptomatology of COVID-19 is continually reviewed and monitored. We have liaised with public health clinicians and the United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers and other stakeholders regarding the symptoms of COVID-19 as well as considering internal data and academic studies. We will update our guidance if necessary as our understanding of the virus and new variants develops.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Damien Moore:

[\[97056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of covid-19 rapid lateral flow tests for home delivery.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency has secured hundreds of millions of additional lateral flow device tests, to allow a 200% increase in testing supply prior to the Omicron variant. We have accelerated manufacture and delivery timelines which has doubled the total delivery capacity with Royal Mail to 900,000 test packs and polymerase chain reaction tests per day for home delivery. We have also increased the availability of tests at pharmacies and for local authorities. We plan to distribute over 90 million tests across the United Kingdom per week.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Peter Kyle:

[\[57194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to accelerate the covid-19 vaccination programme in schools.

Peter Kyle:

[\[57195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to allow children eligible for the covid-19 vaccine to use walk-in and mass vaccination centres.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: Children aged 12 to 15 years old are receiving COVID-19 vaccination in schools through the School Age Immunisation Service (SAIS) and in wider community settings. The National Health Service is supporting the in-school offer to increase the scale and pace of delivery, including targeting communications to parents, young people to improve uptake.

An increasing number of 'out of school' sites have been offering vaccinations for those aged 12 to 15 years old, including general practitioner practices and community pharmacies. Letters have been sent to parents and guardians of children aged 12 to 15 years old, offering the option to book the vaccine online or by calling 119. Appointments for COVID-19 vaccinations for children aged 12 to 15 years old are also available via the National Booking Service.

On 13 December 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement wrote to local health systems on offering 12 to 15 year olds a second dose of the vaccine. This included preparations for the winter break in 'out of school' settings and a spring term offer from 10 January 2022.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[62632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that vaccination data is accurate for people who have had covid-19 vaccines at different sites.

Maggie Throup:

To ensure that vaccination data is accurate for people who have received vaccines at different sites, patient details are checked against National Health Service records. Any doses recorded at different sites or the same site on previous days are considered and sequencing checks are undertaken. This ensures that a first dose is given before a second dose, which precedes a third primary or booster dose. NHS Digital processes data collected at vaccination sites and identifies any discrepancies. Should data issues arise, patients are advised to contact the Vaccine Data Resolution Service via 119, which ensures accurate recording for clinical records.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[62677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether North East London Health and Care Partnership has a list of (a) immunosuppressed patients and (b) other patients eligible for a covid-19 vaccine booster dose; and when eligible patients will begin to be contacted about receiving their vaccine booster dose.

Maggie Throup:

North East London Health and Care Partnership has a list of immunosuppressed patients, and other patients eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine booster dose. General practitioner practices use this list to contact patients for COVID-19 vaccinations, in coordination with primary care colleagues and acute consultants.

Every eligible adult in England aged 18 years old and over has now been contacted and offered a COVID-19 booster vaccination, including immunosuppressed patients.

Sir David Evennett:

[\[65381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been invited to receive a booster vaccination for covid-19 in (a) Bexley Borough, (b) Greater London and (c) England as of 28 October 2021.

Maggie Throup:

The information requested for Bexley and Greater London is not available. While the number of invitations sent in England as of 28 October is not available, by 7 November 2021 more than 13 million texts, letters and emails had been sent to eligible people in England.

Steve McCabe:

[\[86038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the progress of the covid-19 booster programme in ensuring that people who are housebound receive their booster vaccination.

Maggie Throup:

Every eligible adult in England aged 18 years old and over has been offered a COVID-19 booster vaccination, including those who are housebound. Local arrangements are in place with general practitioners, community pharmacies and volunteers visiting those who are housebound and eligible for their COVID-19 booster dose.

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[88817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he made of the number of housebound people in (a) Bath and (b) England who have yet to be offered their covid-19 booster vaccination.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 13 December 2021]: Every eligible adult in England aged 18 years old and over has been offered a COVID-19 booster vaccination, including those who are housebound in Bath and England. Local arrangements are in place, with general practitioners, community pharmacies and volunteers visiting those who are housebound and eligible for a booster dose.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[90940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the availability of the covid-19 booster vaccination for people who are housebound.

Maggie Throup:

Every eligible adult in England aged 18 years old and over has been offered a COVID-19 booster vaccination, including those who are housebound. Local arrangements are in place, with general practitioners, community pharmacies and volunteers visiting those who are housebound and eligible for their booster dose.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[92025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure there are a sufficient number of venues available to deliver the covid-19 booster campaign safely.

Maggie Throup:

There are now 3,000 vaccination sites in operation, with pop-up sites in convenient locations for communities. NHS England and NHS Improvement have supported local areas to increase the number of available appointments and extend the opening hours of vaccination sites where possible. Every eligible adult in England aged 18 years old and over has been offered a booster vaccination.

Liz Twist:

[\[97017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of vaccinating children aged five to 11 against covid-19 who (a) have complex respiratory and neurological conditions that make them more vulnerable to severe illness from covid-19 and (b) are clinically extremely vulnerable for other reasons; and whether that is a priority for his Department.

Maggie Throup:

On 22 December 2021, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) provided advice on the primary vaccination of five to 11 year olds. The potential merits from vaccination were assessed according to the presence or absence of underlying health conditions that increase the risk of serious COVID-19. It advised that children aged five to 11 years in a clinical risk group, which includes complex respiratory and neurological conditions, or who were household contacts of someone who is immunosuppressed should be offered two 10 micrograms doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (Comirnaty) with an interval of eight weeks between the first and second doses. The minimum interval between any vaccine dose and recent COVID-19 infection should be four weeks. Further advice regarding COVID-19 vaccination for other five to 11 year olds will be issued in due course following consideration of additional data.

Sara Britcliffe:

[\[97175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he will take to ensure that housebound people are able to access the covid-19 booster vaccine.

Maggie Throup:

Every adult in England aged 18 years old and over has now been offered a COVID-19 booster vaccination, including all those who are housebound. General practitioners and community teams have determined the best approach for vaccination for those who are housebound, based on their knowledge of the patient and their circumstances. Some patients may be able to attend Primary Care Network (PCN) designated sites with assistance and discussions should be held with the family and /or carer to facilitate this. For those patients unable to travel to a PCN

designated site with assistance, vaccinations will be delivered via roving units to an individual's home.

Afzal Khan:

[\[98410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have received covid-19 vaccinations at walk-in and pop up clinics; how many of those people (a) did not have a NHS number and (b) were not registered with a GP; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

The data is not held in the format requested. However, as of 6 January 2022, over 34.8 million people have received a booster or third primary dose in the United Kingdom. Registration with a general practitioner or a National Health Service number is not required to receive a vaccination.

■ **Coronavirus: Vitamin C**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[97158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government has taken to make an assessment of the potential merits of the use of Vitamin C as a treatment for covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

Although some clinical trial results do show promise for vitamin C to support COVID-19 treatment and recovery, the studies are limited by small sample sizes, early termination of some of the studies, differences in dose and duration, lack of placebo controls, and no pre-and post-intervention plasma vitamin C concentrations. However, vitamin C is currently being trialled in the REMAP-CAP study for patients with COVID-19 acquired pneumonia.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**

Owen Thompson:

[\[89630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Question 78453 tabled on 19 November 2021 by the hon. Member for Midlothian.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 13 December 2021]: I refer the hon. Member to the answer to Question 78453.

■ **Health Services: Private Sector**

Derek Twigg:

[\[92819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of using emergency powers available to the Government to take control of private hospitals and health facilities for a temporary period to help tackle the backlog of patients awaiting surgery, diagnosis and treatment not related to covid-19.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 5 January 2022]: We have no plans to make such an assessment. Throughout the pandemic, the National Health Service and independent sector providers have secured all appropriate inpatient capacity and other resource in England. On 23 December 2021, a ministerial direction permitted NHS England to commission services from independent providers to directly or indirectly support the provision of healthcare to address COVID-19. We are working with NHS England to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place with independent healthcare providers to secure sufficient capacity.

■ **HIV Infection: Drugs****Jim Shannon:**[\[98287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has a timetable for the HIV drug which combines the antiretroviral drugs cabotegravir and rilpivirine as a bi-monthly injection to be available on the NHS throughout the UK.

Edward Argar:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body responsible for developing evidence-based recommendations for the National Health Service on whether new medicines represent a clinically and cost-effective use of resources. On 5 January 2022, NICE published guidance recommending cabotegravir with rilpivirine, within its marketing authorisation, as an option for treating HIV-1 infection in adults. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ta757>

The NHS in England is legally required to fund medicines recommended in a NICE appraisal within three months of final guidance. The availability of medicines in the rest of the United Kingdom is a devolved matter.

■ **Midwives: Coronavirus****Sir Desmond Swayne:**[\[74864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether a medical history involving an episode or episodes of myocarditis in a midwife will be sufficient condition for exemption from covid-19 vaccination under plans to require covid-19 vaccinations for healthcare workers.

Edward Argar:

The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2021 provide for a medical exemption from vaccination. Individuals who believe that they may be medically exempt, such as those with a medical history involving episodes of myocarditis, should contact their doctor or specialist clinician for advice. Guidance on medical exemptions is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-medical-exemptions-proving-you-are-unable-to-get-vaccinated>

■ NHS and Social Services: Coronavirus

Ben Bradley:

[92069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimates his Department has made of the number of NHS and social care staff who may lose their employment as a result of the introduction of compulsory covid-19 vaccination in that sector.

Edward Argar:

Decisions on the dismissal of unvaccinated workers, rather than redeployment, if an option, or unpaid leave, will be for individual employers, therefore no specific estimate has been in the Department's the impact assessment. The impact assessment estimates the number of workers who may remain unvaccinated against COVID-19 at the end of the 12-week grace period and are not medically exempt. This estimated to be 73,000 for National Health Service staff and 38,000 for social care workers in scope. The impact assessment is available at the following link:

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

Actual figures will depend on individual decisions and the positive choice to take up the offer of COVID-19 vaccination. The Government is focussed on improving vaccine uptake within the health and care workforce and the numbers of vaccinated staff are increasing. There are now 75,000 additional staff working in the NHS who have received a first dose of the vaccine since September.

■ NHS: Coronavirus

Fabian Hamilton:

[74895]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether private healthcare facilities will be able to hire staff from the NHS who have not been vaccinated against covid-19 and who have subsequently lost their jobs as a result.

Fabian Hamilton:

[74896]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether private healthcare staff who are unvaccinated against covid-19 will be permitted to carry out NHS treatment.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 18 November 2021]: The vaccination requirements of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) (No.2) Regulations 2021 apply to both public and private providers of Care Quality Commission regulated services.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[98332]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that frontline medical staff are able to get a vaccine exemption recorded on their NHS covid pass in cases where those individuals have a legitimate health reason for not having the covid-19 vaccine.

Edward Argar:

Individuals can apply for a medical exemption through the NHS COVID Pass Service via 119. The guidance on medical exemptions sets out that applications will be clinically reviewed by a general practitioner, specialist clinician or midwife. The domestic NHS COVID Pass does not distinguish on the basis of COVID-19 status. Individuals should use their medical exemption confirmation letter to evidence their medical exemption status for vaccination as a condition of deployment purposes.

Florence Eshalomi:[\[99098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact on staff numbers of making covid-19 vaccines compulsory for NHS staff.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 11 January 2022]: The Department's impact assessment estimates of the number of workers who may remain unvaccinated against COVID-19 at the end of the 12-week grace period and are not medically exempt. For National Health Service staff, this is estimated to be 4.9% or 73,000. However, the exact behavioural response to the regulations is uncertain and is dependent on the decisions of health and care workers. We continue to encourage unvaccinated staff to make the positive choice to be vaccinated. Since the Government's consultation in September, the latest data shows an overall net increase of NHS trust healthcare workers vaccinated with a first dose of over 75,000.

■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges**Gill Furniss:**[\[98366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing permanent Medical Exemption Certificates to those with verified lifelong chronic conditions.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 10 January 2022]: No assessment has been made. We currently have no plans to expand the prescription charge medical exemption list to include all those with a verified lifelong condition or to provide those that currently qualify for a medical exemption with a permanent exemption. Medical exemption certificates are valid for a period of five years as although many of the conditions on the list are life-long, some can resolve over time and the patient's entitlement should be reviewed by their clinician periodically.

For those ineligible for an exemption on medical grounds, arrangements are in place to assist with the affordability of National Health Service prescriptions, including exemptions for which people with life-long chronic conditions may already qualify. Approximately 89% of NHS prescription items are dispensed in the community free of charge. To support those who do not qualify for a medical exemption, the cost of prescriptions can be capped by purchasing a prescription pre-payment certificate, which can be paid for in instalments. A holder of a 12-month certificate can get all the prescriptions they need for just over £2 per week.

■ Suicide

Liz Twist: [\[97019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his timetable is for a national real time suicide surveillance system being operational in England.

Liz Twist: [\[97020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many local areas in England have established a real time suicide surveillance system; and of those areas, how many are contributing to a national system as of 4 January 2022.

Liz Twist: [\[97021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the contribution of a national real time suicide surveillance system to suicide bereavement support planning in England.

Liz Twist: [\[97022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the ongoing funding requirements for a national real time suicide surveillance system in England.

Liz Twist: [\[97023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) police and (b) coroners will regularly contribute to a national real time suicide surveillance system in England.

Liz Twist: [\[97024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much of the £1.2 million allocated by the Government to establish a real time suicide surveillance system in England (a) has been spent and (b) is remaining.

Gillian Keegan:

The Department is assessing options for delivering a near Real Time Suspected Suicide Surveillance System as part of the national near Real Time Suicide Surveillance pilot (nRTSS). The next steps for establishing a national nRTSS system, including a timetable, will be considered once the findings from the current pilot project are available. The pilot project is due for completion at the end of March 2022. We have identified 16 areas in England where a system that aims to deliver near real time suspected suicide surveillance has been established. The Department is currently working with 37 of the local authorities covered by existing systems to develop and pilot a national system by the end of March 2022.

An effective national system has the potential to improve local bereavement support by reducing the time taken for suicide-related information to be made available to local service providers and commissioners. This could include proactive approaches to individuals and families who have been bereaved by suicide.

The ongoing funding requirement for a national near Real Time Suicide Surveillance system in England, and the potential contribution of coroners and the police will be assessed following the findings of the pilot. To date £360,000 of revenue funding has been spent or is committed to delivering the pilot by 31 March 2022. Capital funding of £140,000 is currently being distributed to the seven participating local areas, which are submitting bids against the remaining £700,000 of capital funding to meet further costs required to deliver the pilot this year.

■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus

Dame Diana Johnson:

[82270]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria his Department plans to use to assess whether travel restrictions to a particular country are necessary to help prevent the spread of b.1.1.529 variant of covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 1 December 2021]: To halt the spread of b.1.1.529 variant of COVID-19 (Omicron), we added countries to the red list where significant numbers of this variant have been identified.

Decisions on red list country assignment and associated border measures will continue to be discussed alongside the UK Health Security Agency risk assessments on wider public health factors.

From 15 December, the Government agreed to remove all 11 remaining countries and territories from England's red list - with community transmission of Omicron in the United Kingdom and spread widely across the world, the travel red list is now less effective in slowing the incursion of Omicron from abroad.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Mr Steve Baker:

[R] [98271]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will implement measures to ensure that people who are still testing positive for covid-19 despite completing the self-isolation period after contracting the virus are not disadvantaged by the Government's covid-19 international travel testing requirements; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 10 January 2022]: If an individual has recently recovered from COVID-19 but is no longer infectious, they should use a lateral flow device test due to its lower sensitivity and therefore a reduced likelihood of returning a positive result from a historic infection.

While the United Kingdom does not recognise natural immunity for international travel, this is kept under review. The presence of antibodies does not guarantee that an individual is not capable of infection and transmitting the virus, therefore individuals who have been previously infected may still put others at risk.

HOME OFFICE**■ Antisocial Behaviour: Travellers****Ben Everitt:**[\[97174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what enforcement powers local authorities have to tackle anti-social behaviour on a travellers' site, when the site has been acquired by the traveller community; and what new powers the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill will introduce to assist local authorities to undertake enforcement action on those sites.

Rachel Maclean:

The *Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014* can be used for cases of anti-social behaviour, including on travellers' sites. Through this Act we have provided the police, local authorities, and other local agencies with a range of flexible tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to all forms of anti-social behaviour. These powers are deliberately local in nature, and it is for agencies to use their local knowledge of each incident to determine whether their use is appropriate in the specific circumstances.

Through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, we will be strengthening the police's powers to arrest and seize the vehicles of those who trespass to set up unauthorised encampments and cause damage, disruption or distress, which could include instances of anti-social behaviour. These will complement the existing powers that the police and local authorities have to remove unauthorised campers under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

■ Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme**Imran Hussain:**[\[96901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding was received under the Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme by each police force in England and Wales in each year from 2010.

Kit Malthouse:

The Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme (ARIS) funds are allocated to agencies based on their relative contribution to the total value of delivered receipts into ARIS. Under ARIS, the total amount of funds available for allocation for police force agencies is determined by the total value of receipts received by the Home Office in the financial year and police force agencies will receive 50% of the amount they recover, following any deductions for costs associated with the asset recovery and ARIS Top Slice funding. The 50% allocation may be split across several agencies depending on the asset recovery type and the agencies involved.

We do not routinely publish data on how much funding in total police forces received under the ARIS on a yearly basis. However, in February 2015 there was a review of the ARIS which provides data on the ARIS allocations under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) by each individual police force in the jurisdictions of England and

Wales, Northern Ireland and those with no reported jurisdiction. Data is available for the financial year 2013/14 and can be found in in the [Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme Review in Annex A](#).

In 2014/15 we also created a 'top slice' to fund key national asset recovery capabilities and, in 2021/22, increased the investment from £7.5m to £13.9m.

■ Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre

Kate Osborne: [\[98461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what reasonable adjustments have been made in accordance with sections 20 and 29 of the Equality Act 2010, to accommodate incapacitated and mentally ill detainees at Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre who may find it challenging to access legal advice remotely.

Kate Osborne: [\[98462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, from what date the first women were detained at Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre (IRC); how many women are detained at that IRC as of 5 January 2022; and whether any women detained at that IRC have subsequently been released following detention.

Kate Osborne: [\[98463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that women released from Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre (a) are able to access accommodation in the community and (b) can reach that accommodation safely upon release from detention.

Tom Pursglove:

Following the formal opening of Derwentside immigration removal centre last year, the first women were detained at the centre on 28 December 2021. Of these women one has been subsequently released. As of 5 January, there were nine women detained at Derwentside.

The Home Office provides accommodation for those who are destitute and have outstanding asylum claims or to individuals who fall within the scope of protection provided to potential victims of modern slavery. Additionally, the Secretary of State may provide accommodation and support for a foreign national offender who is subject to a residency condition and are either considered to pose a high risk or harm to the public or be suffering from a serious physical or mental health problem.

As set out in published Detention Services Order (DSO) 07/2013 'welfare provisions in immigration removal centres' staff will provide support with planning travel to accommodation. Any individual released from detention is offered a travel warrant to reach the accommodation to which they are being released unless accommodation is being provided by the Home Office in which case transport is provided.

The published equality impact assessment and DSO 04/2020 'Mental vulnerability and immigration detention: non-clinical guidance', provides information on reasonable adjustments to accommodate incapacitated and mentally ill women at the IRC,

including access to legal representation. The published contract and relevant Detention Services Orders set out the arrangements to ensure adherence to rules 34, 35, 40, 42 and 45 of the Detention Centre Rules. The contract is published here: [Hassockfield IRC \(STA\) - Contracts Finder](#)

■ Home Country Nationals: Afghanistan

Ruth Jones: [\[99052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential vulnerability of people who supported British aims in Afghanistan to criminal smugglers and traffickers.

Kevin Foster:

We are immensely grateful for Afghan Citizens who supported UK aims and who may be at risk. As a result, in addition to our Afghanistan Relocations and Assistance policy, we relocated a number of individuals who supported UK aims under Op Pitting; and is why [the Afghan Citizen's Resettlement Scheme](#) will prioritise those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech, and rule of law.

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme launched on 6 January 2022, and will provide up to 20,000 Afghan women, children and others at risk with a safe and legal route to resettle in the UK. It demonstrates the Government's New Plan for Immigration in action, as we expand and strengthen our safe and legal routes to the UK, for those in need of protection.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Bambos Charalambous: [\[98377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken address delays in the processing of applications to the EU Settlement Scheme.

Bambos Charalambous: [\[98378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to progress applications to the EU Settlement Scheme from applicants who are awaiting a response and who have been unable to take up offers of employment and education as a result of delays in the application process.

Kevin Foster:

We are committed to ensuring our operational teams have the resources they need to run an efficient and effective system, and we actively monitor workflows to ensure sufficient resources are in place to meet demand.

Our aim is to process all applications to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) as quickly as possible. Each individual case is considered on its own facts, which means some cases will inevitably take longer than others to conclude. Cases may take longer dependent on the circumstances of the case, for example, if the applicant is facing an impending prosecution or has a criminal record.

The following link lists the expected processing times for EU Settlement Scheme applications, based upon current performance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-settlement-scheme-application-processing-times/eu-settlement-scheme-pilot-current-expected-processing-times-for-applications>

The rights of those EU citizens and their family members who were lawfully resident at the end of the transition period and who, from 1 July 2021, have a pending application under the EUSS or an appeal against the refusal of an application submitted by them, will be protected until their application is finally determined.

Anyone awaiting the outcome of their in-time application to the EUSS can evidence their rights to work or study with their Certificate of Application which is issued as soon as possible after a valid application is received.

■ Proceeds of Crime

Imran Hussain: **[96900]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much has been recovered under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 by each police force in England and Wales in each year from 2010.

Kit Malthouse:

The Asset Recovery Statistical Bulletin is published annually and provides data on the total value of the proceeds of crime that have been recovered under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) by each individual police force in the jurisdictions of England and Wales, Northern Ireland and those with no reported jurisdiction.

Data is available for financial years 2015/16 to 2020/21 and can be found in [Tables 12a and 12b](#). In 2020/21 a total of £116.8m was recovered by police forces, including local and regional police forces from an overall total of £219m recovered by all POCA agencies.

■ Refugees: English Language

Fabian Hamilton: **[98218]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Education on the potential merits of standardising the English for Speakers of Other Languages curricula to enable settled refugees to learn necessary materials to integrate successfully into British society.

Kevin Foster:

This Government recognises the ability to speak English is key to helping refugees integrate into life in the UK, as well as to breaking down barriers to work and career progression. The Home Office works very closely with other Government departments to ensure mainstream English language provision meets the needs of refugees.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) qualifications are available at five levels, funded through the Adult Education Budget and regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). Qualifications are aimed at providing learners with the skills they need for life and work in the UK.

Ofqual regulate ESOL qualifications so the outcomes achieved by learners attest to the level of knowledge, understanding and skills set out in the qualification.

■ Sexual Harassment

Fleur Anderson:

[\[97160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if the Government will make public sexual harassment a specific criminal offence.

Rachel Maclean:

Sexual harassment in public places is an appalling practice, which this Government is committed to tackling. Women and girls have the right to both be and feel safe on our streets.

As set out in the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, published last July, we are looking carefully at where there may be gaps in existing law and how a specific offence for public sexual harassment could address those.

In addition, in order to tackle public sexual harassment:

- In September 2021, we launched the pilot of an online tool, StreetSafe, which enables the public to report anonymously areas where they feel unsafe and identify what about the location made them feel this way. The data is then used to inform local decision-making. Several thousand people have used the tool to date.
- In October we announced awards of £23.5 million to Police and Crime Commissioners and local authorities under Round 3 of the Safer Streets Fund to make public spaces safer for everyone through projects to help women and girls feel safer on the streets.
- In November we announced the results of our separate, £5 million Safety of Women at Night fund, funding interventions which focus on preventing violence against women and girls in public spaces at night, including in the night-time economy.
- In December the College of Policing published a new advice product for police officers, advising them about the preventative strategies and criminal offences which they can use to respond to reports of various different types of public sexual harassment.
- The public communications campaign to which we committed in the Tackling VAWG Strategy will seek to change public attitudes and tolerance towards crimes such as public sexual harassment and help create an atmosphere in which women and girls can report such crimes to the police with confidence.

■ West Yorkshire Police: Staff**Imran Hussain:** [\[96902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers were employed by West Yorkshire Police on (a) 31 March 2010, (b) 31 March 2015 and (c) 31 March 2021.

Imran Hussain: [\[96903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers identifying as from a Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority background were employed by West Yorkshire Police on (a) 31 March 2010, (b) 31 March 2015 and (c) 31 March 2021.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the size of the police workforce in England and Wales on a biannual basis in the 'Police workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin, available here: [Police workforce England and Wales statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005763/open-data-table-police-workforce-ethnicity-280721.ods)

Information on the total number of police officers by ethnicity and Police Force Area as at the 31st March each year, since 2007, can be found in the ethnicity open data tables published at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005763/open-data-table-police-workforce-ethnicity-280721.ods

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Iron and Steel: USA****Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[96859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of the EU's steel tariff deal with the US on the UK's steel industry.

Penny Mordaunt:

Securing a deal with the US on their Section 232 tariffs is a priority. Both the steel and aluminium industries are important pillars of our economy.

The US-EU deal has only just come into effect, but we are working closely with industry to understand the possible impacts and prepare for our own resolution with the US. The Secretary of State stands ready to take the necessary action to minimise the impact of a US deal with the EU on UK industry. This includes responding to the department's consultation on the UK's rebalancing measures.

JUSTICE

■ HM Courts and Tribunals Service

Justin Madders:

[\[96930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the current average waiting times are for the (a) first hearing date in an employment tribunal claim and (b) publication of the judgment.

James Cartlidge:

(a) The most current information on waiting times to first hearing is set out in the table below.

(b) We aim to work within the general correspondence targets and upload judgments to the public register within 10 working days of promulgation.

	PERIOD	THE AVERAGE TIME (IN DAYS) FROM RECEIPT TO FIRST HEARING			THE AVERAGE TIME (WEEKS) FROM RECEIPT TO FIRST HEARING	
		All Claims	Single Claims ¹	Multiple Claims ²	All Claims	
Single Claims ¹	Multiple Claims ²					
	1st April 2020 - 31st March 2021	388	340	48	55	49

Notes relating to the above data

¹ Single claims are made by a sole employee/worker, relating to alleged breaches of employment rights

² Multiple claims are where two or more people bring proceedings arising out of the same facts, usually against a common employer. In this instance the lead multiple claim would be listed for hearing.

Data are taken from a live management information system and can change over time. Data are management information and are not subject to the same level of checks as official statistics.

The data provided is the most recent available and for that reason might differ from any previously published information.

Data has not been cross referenced with case files.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing the data, the details are subject to inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale case management system and is the best data that is available.

Published statistics can be found on www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2020 and information on Employment Tribunal outcomes can be found on www.gov.uk/employment-tribunal-decisions.

Published Management Information (used by HMCTS for understanding workload volumes and timeliness at a national level during COVID-19): [HMCTS weekly management information during coronavirus - March 2020 to May 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The most recent Employment Tribunal data covers the period up to March 2021. This is because the Employment Tribunal has moved to a new case management system and HMCTS is currently working to incorporate the new IT system alongside longer-established data sources to provide a more complete and consistent data set for this jurisdiction.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

John Penrose: [\[96835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to reply to the letters from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of 25 October and 23 November 2021 on behalf of his constituent, Holly Saunders.

James Cartlidge:

The Government recognises the great importance of the effective and timely handling of correspondence.

The delay in responding to your letters of the 25 October and 23 November 2021 was the result of an administrative error. We have now responded to both letters.

■ **Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Children**

Feryal Clark: [\[97173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prosecutions have been brought under The Botulinum Toxin and Cosmetic Fillers (Children) Act 2021 to date; and what sentences were imposed.

James Cartlidge:

National statistics on the number of prosecutions and the sentences imposed under the 'The Botulinum Toxin and Cosmetic Fillers (Children) Act 2021' for the calendar year of 2021 are due for publication in May 2022.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

■ **Leader of the House of Commons: 5 Hertford Street**

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[98333\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, whether he (a) holds membership of, (b) has visited and (c) has held official engagements at 5 Hertford Street; and whether his Department has paid for hospitality at that establishment in each of the last two years.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

Questions (a) and (b) are not matters of Government responsibility. There have been no official engagements held by the Office of the Leader of the House of Commons at 5 Hertford Street in the last two years.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Buildings: Insulation****Kevin Hollinrake:****[93815]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what Government body will determine (a) which buildings are most at risk due to dangerous cladding and (b) a matrix of which buildings to remediate first.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is prioritising remediation on the highest risk buildings. After the Grenfell tragedy, the Government identified the high-rise buildings with the highest risk ACM cladding and made sure that interim measures were installed to reassure and protect residents while remediation of those building is taken forward.

Government funding is targeted to high rise buildings (18 metres and over) with ACM and other forms of unsafe cladding. The fire risk is lower in buildings under 18 metres and costly remediation work is usually not needed. Where fire risks are identified, they should always be managed proportionately. The Government has therefore focused its financial support on high-rise residential buildings over 18 metres because we know that the risk to multiple households is greater when fire does spread in buildings of this height. As the Secretary of State said in his announcement on Monday 10 January, taxpayers should not be funding the remediation of 11-18 metres buildings. It is for industry to develop a solution to this problem and ensure that leaseholders living in their own flats in medium buildings do not pay a penny to remediate historic cladding defects that are no fault of their own. That is why we are asking the industry to step up and agree how they can fund cladding remediation in the next two-three months. Detailed information on which buildings are eligible for Government funding can be found in Prospectus Annex A: Technical Information of the Building Safety Fund Prospectus, available at: www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#prospectus---outlining-eligibility-for-the-fund.

■ Buildings: Safety**Mr Clive Betts:****[98211]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the costs to building safety managers of establishing a golden thread of information.

Christopher Pincher:

Through the Building Safety Bill, we are introducing a requirement as part of the new more stringent regulatory regime to create and maintain a golden thread of information for high rise residential buildings. It will be the duty of the people responsible for a building in scope to put in place and maintain a golden thread of information. In occupation this will be the Accountable Person.

We estimate there will be additional annual costs to industry due to implementing the golden thread. These will vary depending on whether the people responsible for the building have already put in place good digital information management systems and practices. The impact assessment sets out our current estimate of the costs to industry of the golden thread.

The costs of the Golden Thread may be included in the Building Safety Charge, payable by leaseholders, which covers the ongoing day-to-day costs of managing building safety. The Building Safety Charge covers a defined list of activities and there are powers in the Bill that will enable Government to limit the building safety costs that can be recharged to leaseholders.

■ Homelessness: Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council**Julian Knight:**[\[96918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much Homelessness Prevention Grant funding has been allocated to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council for the financial year 2022-23.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to fully enforcing the Homelessness Reduction Act and reducing homelessness.

In December 2021 we announced the 2022/23 Homelessness Prevention Grant allocation to give councils early funding certainty for the next year. This £316 million funding boost will support households in England who are homeless or at risk of losing their home. Councils will use the funding to help them find a new home, access support for unexpected evictions and secure temporary accommodation where needed.

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council will receive £890,660 Homelessness Prevention Grant funding for the year 2022/23.

This is part of £2 billion in the next three years to tackle rough sleeping and homelessness, further demonstrating the Government's commitment to end rough sleeping within this parliament.

Julian Knight:[\[96919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much funding will be allocated from the Domestic Abuse Act (new burdens) Fund to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council for the financial year 2022-23.

Eddie Hughes:

My Department will announce the funding allocations for all local authorities in England, including Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, for the support in safe accommodation duties in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 in 2022/23 as soon as possible.

Housing: Green Belt**Damien Moore:**[\[97057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of residential developments taking place on green belt land.

Christopher Pincher:

This Government has a manifesto commitment to protect and enhance the Green Belt. Our National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that a local authority can take development land out of Green Belt only in exceptional circumstances, through the local plan process, and only if it can demonstrate that it has explored all other reasonable options.

To reduce pressures on Green Belt land, the Government is investing significant amounts in re-using and regenerating brownfield sites. We have set up the £4.35 billion Housing Infrastructure Fund; the £4.95 billion Home Building Fund; the £400 million Brownfield Housing Fund; and the £75 million Brownfield Land Release Fund. At Autumn Budget 2021 the Chancellor announced a further £300 million of grant funding for Mayoral Combined Authorities and local authorities to unlock smaller brownfield sites.

Levelling Up Taskforce**Lisa Nandy:**[\[99333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many civil servants working in the Levelling Up Taskforce are based in (a) London, (b) the South East of England and (c) outside of London and the South East of England.

Eddie Hughes:

Levelling up is a cross-Government policy. With regard to work on levelling up in my Department specifically, officials from across the Department, which has 22 office locations across the UK, are working on this flagship policy. In March 2020, 23% of the Department's workforce was outside of London; we now have 32% of our workforce outside of London, an increase of c400 FTE. The Department has also made good progress in opening our second HQ in Wolverhampton in 2021 and so far have over 200 roles in post or in the process of onboarding, including senior officials. Within that, the small Levelling Up Taskforce comprises 30 officials based in London offices and home addresses across the country.

DLUHC LOCATION	DLUHC FULL-TIMEEQUIVALENT EMPLOYEES
London	1929.2
Hastings	15.3
Hemel Hempstead	44.2
Cambridge	29.3
Leeds	75.0
Manchester	62.9
Truro	13.6
Nottingham	49.5
Birmingham	117.9
Birkenhead	46.2
Plymouth	19.6
Warrington	53.0
Bristol	88.3
Sheffield	28.2
Newcastle	62.1
Wolverhampton	129.1
Exeter	20.0
Edinburgh	16.5
Darlington	13.8
Cardiff	12.0
Northern Ireland	7.0
Other*	172.1
Home workers	7.0
Grand Total	3011.8

* The data in the table includes a figure of 172.1 for 'Other' which is predominantly made up of staff who have very recently transferred into the Department from Cabinet

Office as a result of a Machinery of Government change. We are currently in the process of working through and confirming the locations for these individuals.

■ **Local Government: Meetings**

Richard Fuller:

[\[96837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to publish his Department's response to the call for evidence on whether local authorities and parish councils may meet remotely on a permanent basis, which closed on 17 June 2021; and whether he plans to make any changes to the existing requirements for such meetings.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Department has considered the responses to the consultation and the Government will respond shortly.

■ **Regional Planning and Development**

Holly Lynch:

[\[96974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans his Department has to support councils in delivering the levelling up agenda during current levels of material, energy and labour price inflation; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing councils with additional funds to compensate for those increased costs.

Kemi Badenoch:

The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, announced in December, makes available an additional £3.5 billion to councils, including funding for adult social care reform. This is an increase in local authority funding for 2022-23 of over 4% in real terms, which will ensure councils across the country have the resources they need to deliver key services.

Local authorities have the flexibility to use funding in a way that responds to local needs, and can prioritise based on their own understanding of the needs of their communities.

SCOTLAND

■ **Seed Potatoes: Scotland**

Richard Thomson:

[\[97168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the imposition of trade barriers between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK as a result of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the (a) proportion and (b) value of the domestic UK market for Scottish seed potatoes.

Mr Alister Jack:

My officials are in regular contact with the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Department for International Trade, who continue to press the EU to reconsider its position, in line with its own regulations, on the import of seed potatoes from Great Britain to the EU.

We fully appreciate the importance of Scotland's seed potato industry, not only for our production across the UK but also for export, and its deserved reputation for high quality.

Prior to the EU import ban, Scotland exported approximately 20,000t of seed potatoes to the EU and around 2,000t to Northern Ireland, worth in the region of £11M pa. The Scottish potato sector's output contributes over £208 million to the economy. Scottish seed potatoes are high quality and before the EU ban were exported to more than 40 countries.

TRANSPORT■ **A1****Kenny MacAskill:**[\[98453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he is taking steps to implement the recommendations of the Union Connectivity Review on the A1.

Wendy Morton:

The Union Connectivity Review was published on 26 November 2021. The UK Government is grateful to Sir Peter Hendy for his work and will consider his recommendations carefully, working collaboratively with the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive to identify the solutions that work best for the people of the UK. We intend to respond formally to the Union Connectivity Review as swiftly as possible.

■ **A5: Shrewsbury****Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[96830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the recent fatality at the Shrawardine Turn of the A5 near Shrewsbury, what (a) assessments have been made of the safety of the junctions on the A5 in the vicinity of Shrewsbury and (b) upgrades are planned in relation to those junctions.

Trudy Harrison:

I was sorry to hear about the Incident at the Shrawardine Turn of the A5 in Shrewsbury, my thoughts are with those affected.

The safety of the Strategic Road Network remains a top priority for the Department and National Highways, which has recently completed analysis of collision data across the West Midlands, including this part of the A5, to identify key areas of concern and prioritise action. While no further upgrades to this stretch of the A5 are

planned, National Highways will continue to constantly monitor the safety of this and other parts of the Strategic Road Network.

■ **Airlines: Dispute Resolution**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[100663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment has he made of the impact on the airline sector of the introduction of a mandatory alternative dispute resolution scheme in that sector.

Robert Courts:

The Government remains absolutely committed to ensuring consumers are protected when travelling by air. As announced in both the Global Travel Taskforce report in April, and the recent announcement by the Government on Regulatory reforms, we will consult on additional, flexible and modern tools to enforce consumer rights. This consultation will provide further evidence to assess measures for supporting dispute resolution.

■ **Aviation: Coronavirus**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[100664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with airline carriers on failures to refund passengers who have had their flights cancelled due to the covid-19 pandemic.

Robert Courts:

Consumer protection for those travelling by air remains a key priority for this Government. If an operator cancels the flight, passengers are entitled to a full refund.

During the pandemic, Government has been clear, including through the publication of the Passenger COVID-19 Charter, that everyone should be as flexible as possible, and that businesses are expected to be reasonable and refund customers who cannot travel due to COVID-19 restrictions. Passengers may not be entitled to refunds in certain circumstances and should check the terms and conditions of their booking. We have seen the industry responding flexibly by offering alternative dates or destinations in these circumstances.

In summer 2020, the Civil Aviation Authority reviewed airline compliance on refunds and worked collaboratively to improve performance. The majority of airlines now pay refunds within seven days.

■ **Aviation: Public Consultation**

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[100418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department will open the Aviation Consumer Policy consultation as part of the Government's aviation strategy; and whether changes are planned to the scope of that consultation in response to covid-related events that have affected the sector.

Robert Courts:

The Government remains absolutely committed to ensuring consumers are protected when travelling by air. As announced in both the Global Travel Taskforce report in April, and the recent announcement by Government on Regulatory reforms, we will consult on additional, flexible and modern tools to enforce consumer rights. We will publish the consultation in due course at an appropriate time.

■ **Bus Services: Greater London**

Felicity Buchan: [\[98468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has held discussions with Transport for London on the Mayor of London's commitment to roll out a fully electric bus fleet by 2034.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government has discussions with Transport for London on a wide range of topics, including decarbonising transport. However, transport in London is ultimately devolved to the Mayor of London and TfL.

Rolling out zero-emissions buses across the UK forms part of our Transport Decarbonisation Plan, and London already has the largest electric bus fleet in the UK and one of the largest in Europe. If the Mayor wants to implement a fully electric bus fleet by the 2030s, it is up to the Mayor to find the necessary funding to implement this.

■ **Cycling: Infrastructure**

Bob Seely: [\[98421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to improve cycling infrastructure (a) on the Isle of Wight and (b) in other isolated and island communities.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department will continue to make active travel funding available to local transport authorities, including those with isolated and island communities, as part of its unprecedented £2 billion of investment in cycling and walking over the rest of this Parliament. In 2018, the Department provided technical support to the Isle of Wight Council to plan cycling and walking networks on the island, enabling it to adopt its first Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan covering Newport and Ryde in April 2020. In 2020, £297,600 of Active Travel funding was allocated to the Isle of Wight in two tranches. An announcement on allocations for the latest round of active travel capital funding will be made shortly.

■ Cycling: Safety

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[97143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to encourage cyclists to use (a) high visibility clothing in the dark, (b) cycle helmets, (c) bicycle bells and (d) other safety precautions when out on the road.

Wendy Morton:

Rule 59 of The Highway Code already says that cyclists should wear a cycle helmet which conforms to current regulations, is the correct size and securely fastened. It also recommends they should wear light-coloured or fluorescent clothing to help other road users see them in daylight and poor light, as well as reflective clothing and/or accessories in the dark. Rule 66 says that cyclists should use their bell when necessary to signal to other road users that they are nearby.

Changes to The Highway Code are due to come into effect later this month which will clarify and strengthen this advice. The proposed changes are summarised at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/review-of-the-highway-code-to-improve-road-safety-for-cyclists-pedestrians-and-horse-riders>.

The Department has established a working group of key organisations to ensure that these changes are disseminated as widely as possible and understood by all road users. Our well-established THINK! campaign will ensure that as many road users as possible are aware when the changes come into effect, and will also highlight the importance of cyclists following the strengthened advice.

■ East Coast Main Line

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[98452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he is taking steps to implement the recommendations of the Union Connectivity Review on the East Coast Main Line.

Wendy Morton:

The Union Connectivity Review was published on 26 November 2021. The UK Government is grateful to Sir Peter Hendy for his work and will consider his recommendations carefully, working collaboratively with the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive to identify the solutions that work best for the people of the UK. We intend to respond formally to the Union Connectivity Review as swiftly as possible.

■ Electric Vehicles

Nickie Aiken:

[\[99067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, in reference to the rising use of electrical vehicles on roads, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of increasing the use of (a) rumble strips and (b) other methods to make pedestrians aware of areas where pavements intersect roads.

Trudy Harrison:

Local highway authorities have a duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highways network in their area. It is for each highway authority to decide on the most suitable materials to be used for surfacing, as well as the standards that should be applied, based upon their local knowledge and circumstances. The Department for Transport's guidance on rumble strips is set out in section 5 of our Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/07 'Traffic Calming', the LTN is available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-transport-notes.

Electric Vehicles: Air Pollution**Catherine West:**[\[98362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Air Quality Expert Group's report on Non-Exhaust Emissions from Road Traffic, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the report's findings that fully electric cars cause dust pollution from car brakes and tyres.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department for Transport recognises that fully electric cars, in common with all road vehicles, contribute particulate pollution from road, tyre and brake wear.

In February 2021, the Department commissioned a leading UK research provider to investigate the measurement techniques, materials properties and control parameters of brake and tyre wear emissions from road vehicles. The study will report in 2023 and will be used to inform policy decisions and any potential legislation that may be required to control and reduce these emissions, including from electric vehicles.

Litter: Motorways**Andrew Percy:**[\[96843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to tackle littering on motorways and to ensure more regular litter picking on the network.

Trudy Harrison:

National Highways is committed to keeping the Strategic Road Network free from litter, without compromising safety and it being delivered affordably. As outlined in its Litter Strategy, National Highways delivers this through communication campaigns, improving the delivery and effectiveness of litter picking, ensuring responsiveness to customer feedback, and improving partnership working.

Government has committed to updating the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse which sets out the expected standards of cleanliness and timeframes for litter picking on the road network.

■ Motor Vehicles

Louise Haigh:

[\[99008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of total journeys were completed in cars, vans or taxis in each year from 2015 to date.

Trudy Harrison:

According to the National Travel Survey, the proportion of total journeys per person in England completed in cars, vans or taxis in each year from 2015 to 2020 is as shown in the following table.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Car	61%	61%	60%	60%	60%	57%
Van	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Taxi	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Car/van/taxi	64%	63%	62%	62%	62%	59%
Unweighted sample size:						
individuals	15,525	15,840	14,541	14,150	14,356	6,239
trips ('000s)	259	276	256	256	250	86

■ Motor Vehicles: Registration

Greg Smith:

[\[99075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to ensure that historic vehicles are protected from changes to (a) fuel standards and (b) other regulations.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department continues to ensure the concerns of owners of historic vehicles are reflected in any regulatory changes.

Fuel quality standards in the UK are agreed through the British Standards Institution (BSI) liquid fuel standards committee, which includes representatives from the historic vehicles sector.

The quality of fuel sold in the UK is also ensured through the Motor Fuel (Composition and Content) Regulations 1999. Changes to these regulations are subject to consultation, in which the views of vehicle owners and their representative groups would be sought. This would also be the case for regulatory changes to motor vehicle standards.

For example, when E10 petrol was introduced last September we put in place provisions to ensure the continued availability of E5 petrol; we are also ensuring that current proposals to modernise vehicle standards do not prevent restoration, repairs

or legitimate improvements to vehicles, including historic vehicles, or damage to the businesses involved in such activities.

Derek Twigg: [\[99306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 92818, for what reason the DVLA is confident that it can trace 92.1 per cent of vehicles from its records; what records that Answer refers to; and how many vehicles comprise the 92.1 per cent of vehicles in that Answer.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) carries out quarterly scans of the vehicle register. The most recent scan shows that 92.1 per cent of vehicles on the database are traceable, equating to 46,284,393 vehicles that have been taxed or had a statutory off road notification made in the last five years. Traceable means that each of these vehicle records will have contact details (name and address) for the registered keeper of the vehicle to which the DVLA can send correspondence.

■ National Highways: Finance

Louise Haigh: [\[99353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what National Highways' funding allocation was in (a) total, (b) regional amounts, (c) combined authority amounts and (d) local authority amounts for each year from 2020-21 to 2024-25.

Trudy Harrison:

Following the 2021 Spending Review, Government has confirmed that £24 billion is available for National Highways to deliver the Road Investment Strategy (RIS) from 2020 to 2025. This includes the operation, maintenance and enhancements of the strategic road network at a national level. An annual split of this allocation is not yet available and will be published in due course.

The RIS sets out a programme that will deliver improvements and benefits across England, but the Department does not specify precisely how National Highways should allocate spending between different regions or local authority areas.

■ Quad Bikes: Helmets

Julian Knight: [\[98325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of mandating the compulsory use of helmets for motorists using a quad bike.

Trudy Harrison:

The Motor Cycles (Protective Helmets) Regulations 1988, which require motorcyclists to wear a helmet, do not apply to quad bikes as they fall outside the definition given of a motor bicycle, which is defined as a "two-wheeled motorcycle". However, The Highway Code (Rule 83) does include advice that riders and passengers of motor tricycles and quadricycles, also called quad bikes, should wear a protective helmet.

There are no immediate plans to make the wearing of helmets compulsory but we are keeping the position under review; there are a number of factors that need to be taken into consideration such as, the level of use, the safety of riders in a collision and the availability or otherwise of seat belts.

■ Railways: Finance

Helen Hayes: [\[99019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline will next be updated.

Helen Hayes: [\[99020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason his Department is delayed in providing annual updates on the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline.

Wendy Morton:

We remain committed to publishing the RNEP update, which has been delayed by the need to take account of the impacts of the pandemic and the Spending Review. We want to provide as much clarity and certainty as possible on rail enhancements and will set out our plans shortly.

■ Regional Planning and Development: North East

Bridget Phillipson: [\[96863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on plans for a future city region settlement in North East England to include an assessment of the potential merits of re-opening the Leamside Line.

Wendy Morton:

My predecessor as Rail Minister has provided feedback on the unsuccessful Restoring Your Railway bid to re-open the Leamside Line 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. The North East will be eligible for these settlements once appropriate governance is in place. Officials in the Department for Transport and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities continue to work closely together.

■ Taxis: Licensing

Rachael Maskell: [\[96963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps he has taken to review the adequacy taxi licensing and improve standards in the private hire trade.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[96966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress he has made on implementing the Law Commission's recommendations on taxi and private hire services, published 23 May 2014.

Trudy Harrison:

In 2017, a Task and Finish Group on Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing was established to consider how private hire vehicle and taxi licensing authorities use their powers, and produce focussed recommendations for action. The Group was also tasked with considering whether it would advise the Government to accept the recommendations made in the Law Commission's May 2014 report. The report by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group was published in 2018.

In 2019 the Government responded to the Task and Finish Group report setting out which of the recommendations made by the Chair the Department proposed to take forward. Many of the short-term recommendations were for licensing authorities to make full use of their extensive existing powers. To support licensing authorities, in July 2020 the Government issued the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards which sets out a robust range of safeguarding requirements and processes that all licensees in England should be subject to. A consultation on updated Best Practice Guidance for licensing authorities, which will contain recommendations on a wide range of issues, will be launched shortly.

The Government remains committed to bringing forward legislation, when Parliamentary time allows, to introduce national minimum standards, national enforcement powers and a national licensing database, as set out in the Government's response to the report by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[96964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of private hire drivers being licensed by the local authority in which they pick up passengers.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[96965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to delegate powers to local authorities to prevent private hire drivers operating in an authority area for which they have not passed the local knowledge test or local safety standards.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[96967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the safety of women and girls using a taxi, where that taxi is registered in an area that differs from where it is operating.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[96968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of advance booking apps on the prevalence of taxis from outside of a licensing area operating within that area.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[96969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it a condition for a private hire driver to operate only within areas for which they have (a) the necessary licence and (b) passed the local knowledge, safeguarding, safety and car environmental standards.

Trudy Harrison:

The Task and Finish Group on taxi and Private Hire Vehicles licensing set up in 2017 considered the impact of new technology on the sector including in respect of out-of-area working. As set out in the Report by the Chair of the Group, the recommendation to address out-of-area working was one of the areas on which it was not possible to reach a consensus. The Government, in its 2019 response, agreed to consider the recommendation further.

The Department for Transport has considered in detail options to restrict out-of-area working by taxis and private hire vehicles in England. Engagement with the sector and regulators evidenced that there are a wide range of differing views and a lack of agreement on how the negative aspects caused by out-of-area working might be best addressed; many approaches having detrimental impacts for drivers, businesses, and ultimately passengers, along with congestion and air quality. The safety of passengers, including women and girls, was one of the issues considered, and there were particular concerns that restrictions on the availability of taxis and private hire vehicles may impact adversely on passenger safety by increasing the use of unlicensed, unvetted and uninsured drivers and vehicles. Following this engagement with the sector, the Government concluded that it would not, at this time, take forward out-of-area restrictions.

Everyone has the right to feel safe when travelling and using public spaces. The Department for Transport is working closely with Home Office on the Government's cross-departmental strategy to address Violence Against Women and Girls. The Department's first Women's Safety Champions are engaging with campaign groups, industry and Government to understand areas for improvement across the UK's transport network. They will shortly produce independent recommendations for the Department and wider transport network on what best practice should be adopted to improve safety of the transport network for women and girls.

■ Train Operating Companies: Finance

Sarah Olney:

[\[99362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will update the publication of information relating to his Department's payments to passenger rail operators under emergency agreements and National Rail Contracts.

Wendy Morton:

On 21 October 2021, the Department published operational support payments to the Train Operating Companies along with the scores and fees determined through the evaluation of operator performance. This release on the Government website www.gov.uk covered the period between September 2020 to March 2021

(performance and fees) and 1 April 2021 to 24 July 2021 (operational support). The Department is committed to providing periodic updates of this information on an ongoing basis.

■ Transport for London: Finance

Sarah Olney: [\[99361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Written Statement on Transport for London funding extension, dated 5 January 2022, if he will publish the letter setting out the details of that extension.

Trudy Harrison:

Government recently agreed to extend the 1 June 2021 extraordinary funding settlement for TfL to 4 February 2022. The details of this extension are set out in a Written Ministerial Statement and the letter will be published in due course.

Sarah Olney: [\[99363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 17 June 2021 to Question 12937 on Transport for London: KPMG, what progress he has made on monitoring the public interest test for the publication of the KPMG report into Transport for London financial sustainability; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward the publication of that report through redacting sensitive financial information.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government's review into Transport for London's future financial position continues to be a matter of live policymaking. The Government will continue to monitor the public interest test for when publication might be appropriate. This includes consideration of whether publishing a redacted version of the report would meet the public interest test.

TREASURY

■ Child Benefit: Taxation

Martyn Day: [\[96983\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many taxpayers are liable to pay the High Income Child Benefit Charge in the 2021-22 tax year.

Lucy Frazer:

The High Income Child Benefit Charge (HICBC) was introduced in January 2013 to target support at those who need it most. It applies to anyone with an income over £50,000 who claims Child Benefit or whose partner claims it. The charge is tapered for taxpayers with incomes between £50,000 and £60,000. Where income is over £60,000, the amount of the charge is equal to the Child Benefit payments.

HICBC is based on the amount of Child Benefit paid and the higher earner's Adjusted Net Income. A Self Assessment tax return is the only means of establishing this.

As the 2021-22 Self Assessment deadline has not yet passed, HMRC cannot provide the number of taxpayers who are liable to pay HICBC in the 2021-22 tax year. The numbers of individuals with a High Income Child Benefit Charge liability in each tax year are published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-income-child-benefit-charge-data/high-income-child-benefit-charge>

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Kate Osamor:

[96992]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the potential reintroduction of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in the context of the spread of the omicron covid-19 variant.

Kate Osamor:

[96993]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to reintroduce the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in the event that further restrictions are introduced in the context of the rising rate of covid-19 infections.

Lucy Frazer:

As we have done throughout the pandemic, we are closely monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on the economy. We will continue to respond proportionately to the changing path of the virus.

Since the start of the pandemic, the Government has a strong track record of responding quickly, flexibly, and comprehensively in supporting jobs, businesses, individuals, and families when needed.

The effectiveness of our £400 billion package of interventions since the start of the pandemic, and the strength of the recovery that we have seen from previous waves means the economy is in a different place now.

Employee numbers are above February 2020 levels in every part of the country and have grown consistently through this year.

So, it is right that our economic response in the face of Omicron adapts too and that our support is better targeted at the businesses that need it the most, providing better value for taxpayers and helping the economy to bounce back more quickly.

However, we recognise the impact 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.

■ Cost of Living: Newport West

Ruth Jones:

[\[97077\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential disproportionate effect of an increased cost of living on groups in Newport West constituency with protected characteristics.

Mr Simon Clarke:

We are taking targeted action to help families with the cost of living, including through freezing fuel and alcohol duties, the energy price cap, the Warm Home Discount and the £500m Household Support Fund to help the most vulnerable families this winter. In the longer term the best approach to managing the cost of living is to get people into work and help them progress – which we are doing through our Plan for Jobs. In addition to this, we are making work pay by reducing the Universal Credit taper rate from 63% to 55%, increasing work allowances by £500 per year and increasing the National Living Wage to £9.50 per hour.

The Treasury carefully considers the equalities impact of fiscal events on those sharing protected characteristics, in line with both its strong commitment to promoting fairness and its legal obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in the Equality Act 2010.

The interests of those most vulnerable in society have been at the centre of fiscal decisions taken at the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, in keeping with the Government's stated belief in fairness and equality of opportunity. The Treasury publishes analysis of the impact of the Government's measures on households at different levels of income in the 'Impact on Households' report, which is published separately alongside each Budget, along with trends in living standards and the labour market, by region and income level. This is the most comprehensive analysis of this type available.

The publication's analysis of the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 shows:

- The poorest 60% of households receive more in public spending than they contribute in tax.
- Households in the lowest income decile will receive more than £4 in public spending for every £1 they pay in tax on average.

■ Immunosuppression: Coronavirus

Holly Lynch:

[\[96975\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing financial support to people who are clinically extremely vulnerable and who work in (a) the health and social sector and (b) other sectors that may put them at further risk of infection from covid-19.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government has been clear on the need to balance the risk of infection for those who were previously identified as clinically extremely vulnerable with the benefits of

gradually returning to normal life. The Government will continue to assess the situation and the risks posed by COVID-19 and, based on clinical advice, will respond accordingly to keep the most vulnerable safe.

Vaccines are expected to be largely effective against severe disease. Those at higher clinical risk have been prioritised for third doses or booster vaccines and are being encouraged to take up that offer as soon as possible. In addition, there are new therapeutic and antiviral treatments being made available within the community to NHS patients at greater risk.

On 8 December 2021, the Government implemented its [Plan B](#) response to managing COVID-19. Plan B has been designed to help control the virus's spread while avoiding unduly damaging economic and social restrictions. The measures under Plan B, including introducing face coverings, mandatory certification, and working from home, will help to reduce transmission, adding a further layer of protection for the most vulnerable.

■ Income Tax: Tax Rates and Bands

Daisy Cooper:

[\[99396\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the number of higher rate tax payers in each constituency in each of the last five years.

Lucy Frazer:

Estimates of the number of individuals paying the higher rate of Income Tax, including additional rate taxpayers, by parliamentary constituency for the tax years 2016-17 to 2018-19, which are the latest available, are provided in the attached Excel table.

Please note that an Income Tax payer's country and region are determined by residential postcode. Projections of Income Tax payer numbers by country and region beyond the year 2018-19 outturn are based on economic outturn data and forecast assumptions applying to the UK as a whole. As such, the latest data set available to provide the requested information is based on the 2018-19 tax year.

Furthermore, we have provided the requested figures for the last three tax years only to maintain cost limits. Please refer to the footnotes in the attached document for other points to note.

Attachments:

1. Excel document containing data [PQN21-22_00333 draft response (1).xlsx]

■ London Stock Exchange

Alicia Kearns:

[\[97171\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Republika Srpska raising £350 million on the London Stock Exchange, what steps the Government has taken to prevent entities potentially seeking to undermine international agreements from using the London Stock Exchange to raise funds.

John Glen:

The Financial Conduct Authority is the competent authority for listings on regulated markets in the UK, such as the London Stock Exchange. Companies seeking to admit securities to the Official List must apply to the UK Listing Authority, a division of the Financial Conduct Authority. A decision as to whether or not to grant an application for listing is entirely a matter for the Financial Conduct Authority.

■ Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[94460\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will implement the Business Rates Relief Fund before Christmas 2021 to allow local authorities to help businesses impacted by omicron covid-19 as soon as possible.

Lucy Frazer:

The local authority guidance for the COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF), a £1.5 billion pot of funding for businesses that have not previously received support linked to COVID-19 and business rates, was published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on 15 December 2021.

Businesses will be able to apply for schemes run by local authorities as soon as they have been set up. The Government will support local authorities to do this as quickly as possible, including through new burdens funding.

DLUHC ministers have written to local authorities to encourage them to provide CARF support to eligible businesses as soon as they can.

■ Off-payroll Working**Drew Hendry:**[\[96952\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2021 to Question 40978 on Off-Payroll Working, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of reforming the taxation system to allow personal service companies (PSC) to claim tax relief for (a) commuting costs and (b) other expenses incurred by a contractor working through that PSC and who pays (i) Employers' National Insurance, (ii) Employees' National Insurance and (iii) the Apprenticeship Levy.

Lucy Frazer:

Where a contractor works through their own Personal Service Company and is within the off-payroll working rules, they can claim tax relief on expenses, including overnight stays and business travel away from their usual place of work, in the same way as those employed directly.

Such contractors can also claim tax relief on expenses, including equipment, tools, and professional fees in the same way as those employed directly.

Where someone is working within the off-payroll working rules, the deemed employer is responsible for paying Employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs) and the

Apprenticeship Levy. These costs should not be paid from the contractor's gross pay, from which the deemed employer will deduct Income Tax and Employee NICs.

■ Research: Tax Allowances

Chris Green: [\[96911\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish his Department's response to its consultation entitled R&D Tax Reliefs.

Chris Green: [\[96912\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential effect on research and development tax relief of territoriality restrictions having been in place for each of the last five years, by sector.

Chris Green: [\[96914\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the life sciences sector to discuss the issue of territoriality for R&D tax relief.

Lucy Frazer:

At Autumn Budget 2021, the Government announced reforms to Research & Development (R&D) tax reliefs to support modern research methods. The Government did this 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 review will continue to identify areas for further change. A report was published at Tax Administration and Maintenance Day. The report provided more detail on the reforms announced at Autumn Budget 2021 and set out areas where the Government is seeking views to inform the draft legislation that will be published next year.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Conversion Therapy

Nia Griffith: [\[905026\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what progress her Department has made on its extended consultation on banning conversion therapy.

Mike Freer:

The Government extended the consultation period to the end of Friday 4 February 2022 to allow a further opportunity to input for those who are yet to respond and to take account of the Christmas and New Year break. The consultation responses will be used to further refine the Government's policy proposals and inform the process of developing legislation.

■ Equality

Scott Benton: [\[905027\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps her Department is taking to reduce inequality beyond the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010.

Mike Freer:

Levelling up is at the heart of the Government's agenda to build back better after the pandemic. The Government will publish a landmark Levelling Up White Paper setting out bold new policy interventions to improve livelihoods and opportunity in all parts of the UK. To support this, the Equality Data Programme considers geographic and socio-economic inequality, alongside other factors, when identifying barriers to opportunity.

■ Equality: Females

Duncan Baker: [\[905029\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to improve equality for women through the UK's recovery from the covid-19 outbreak.

Mike Freer:

We have provided unprecedented support to those most affected by the pandemic, including to major employers of women in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors.

We will continue to build on the progress women have made in the workplace so that everyone can benefit as the economy recovers from COVID-19.

■ Surgery: Females

Sarah Olney: [\[905024\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of findings on the disparity in mortality rates of women following operations performed by male and female surgeons.

Mike Freer:

We are committed to improving women's health. Independent reports such as Baroness Cumberlege's review in 2021 were a catalyst in shining a light on women's experiences of the healthcare system. In December we published Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy, which sets out our ambitions for improving women's health and reducing disparities – we will publish the Women's Health Strategy this year.

We are also clear that wider patient safety must be a top priority for the NHS in England. Significant measures introduced by the Government and those being implemented by NHS England as part of the NHS Patient Safety Strategy are about improving the way the NHS learns from avoidable patient harm and the response to harmed patients.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme: Wales

Ben Lake:

[\[94492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps is taking to increase participation in the Access to Work programme amongst disabled people in Wales.

Chloe Smith:

Over the last 12 – 18 months, significant work has gone into increasing awareness and take up of Access to Work (AtW) amongst disabled people in Wales.

Upskilling sessions have taken place with Work Coaches, Armed Forces Champions, Schools Advisors and Prison Work Coaches, to support them in their discussions with disabled customers about moving closer to or into the workplace.

We have supported external organisations in Wales, including the NHS, Headway and Epilepsy UK, providing greater awareness of the AtW scheme. The DWP Health Model Offices in Wales is trialling a “Health Adjustment Passport”, using the passport to start conversations about disability with prospective employers, including support available through AtW.

The AtW team are supporting “DWP Wales Area Health Plans” to provide even more intensive support to reduce the disability employment gap and increase take up of AtW.

■ Disability: Newport West

Ruth Jones:

[\[97076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact of the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 on support for disabled people in Newport West constituency.

Chloe Smith:

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

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

In addition, the Government published the National Disability Strategy in July 2021 which aims to break down barriers and extend opportunities for disabled people in all parts of the UK. The strategy respects and showcases the diversity of approaches across the UK on disability, in relevant policy areas which are devolved. Reflecting

those devolved areas, each nation has - or is in the process of developing - its own disability strategy.

■ **Employment Support Allowance and Universal Credit: Telephone Services**

Drew Hendry: [\[96949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of implementing a feature on calls relating to (a) universal credit and (b) employment support allowance where in the event that the caller does not progress with automated telephony services they are automatically transferred to a human operator.

Guy Opperman:

All except two of the many freephone lines that DWP provides operate with a menu of options for customers to select before the call is routed to a human operator. The two lines which operate differently with a form of automation are the Benefit Enquiry Line and the Jobcentre Enquiry Line. These freephone lines use a function called Natural Language Call Steering which, if the customer is not understood, does not understand the question, or chooses not to speak, will revert to a menu of options before transfer to a human operator.

■ **Housing: Medical Equipment**

John McNally: [\[98328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of financial support available to people who operate and require the use of medical equipment within their homes.

Chloe Smith:

We are committed to supporting disabled people and people with health conditions to realise their potential and live independently. Dedicated financial support for equipment at home is available to some disabled people and can be explored through [Apply for equipment for your home if you're disabled - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) or [Financial help if you're disabled - GOV.UK](#).

The Department recognises the extra costs disabled people can face in their everyday lives. Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment are intended to help with these extra costs. Claimants are able to use their benefit according to their own priorities. These benefits are tax-free, non-contributory and are uprated annually in line with inflation. They are paid in addition to other benefits which someone may be able to receive.

■ **Industrial Health and Safety: Mothers**

Stella Creasy: [\[98935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many requests for advice from workers and employers on health and safety for new and expectant mothers were made

to the Health and Safety Executive in each of the last five years; and in how many of those cases enforcement action was taken.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 11 January 2022]: The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Concerns and Advice Team respond to questions and concerns from employers and members of the public. Over the last five financial years and current year to date, the number of enquiries related to the terms 'pregnant', 'pregnancy' and 'new mother' are:

FINANCIAL YEAR	PREGNANCY/NEW MOTHER RELATED	TOTAL CONCERNS RECEIVED	% OF TOTAL
16/17	167	22,497	0.74%
17/18	156	26,507	0.59%
18/19	146	29,476	0.50%
19/20	173	32,490	0.53%
20/21	282	46,103	0.61%
21/YTD	93	18,226	0.51%

There has been no enforcement action taken over this period related to the same terms.

Stella Creasy:

[\[98936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to update health and safety guidance for employers to (a) reflect recent case law and (b) clarify that employers must carry out an individual risk assessment when notified that a woman is (i) pregnant, (ii) has given birth in the last six months or (iii) is breastfeeding.

Chloe Smith:

[Holding answer 11 January 2022]: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has noted new case law requiring employers to carry out individual risk assessments when notified a worker is pregnant, has given birth in the last 6 months or is breastfeeding. HSE is in the process of amending its guidance accordingly and will work with stakeholders and interested parties to communicate and promote the amended guidance to support employers in carrying out individual risk assessments.

■ **Job Centres: Coronavirus**

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[96922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the risk to job centre staff of covid-19 transmission as a result of continuing face-to-face services for all appointments during the covid-19 outbreak.

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[96923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that staff working in (a) Jobcentres and (b) other offices of her Department are protected from covid-19 transmission.

Guy Opperman:

DWP takes the safety of colleagues and customers very seriously and all of our offices are COVID secure. We have a suite of Health & Safety risk assessments in place developed following extensive consultation with departmental trade union representatives that cover all of the measures in place to protect staff and customers. These risk assessments are regularly reviewed, for example following changes to government guidance, including that from the respective governments in the devolved nations.

■ **Offshore Industry: Continental Shelf**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[94353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2021 to Question 80980 on Offshore Industry: Continental Shelf, what the percentage increase was in the maintenance backlogs based on the data provided to the HSE.

Chloe Smith:

The data provided to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) indicates that there has been a distinct increasing trend in maintenance backlogs. Operators record and classify their maintenance backlog figures according to their own safety management systems. There is no legal requirement for operators to be record it in a particular way. This means that it is difficult and potentially misleading to compare the maintenance figures for different operators in absolute terms. What is clear though is that there is a clear trend of an increase in maintenance backlog among UKCS operators. HSE's focus is on how effectively operators risk manage their backlogs until they have dealt with them.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[94355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2021 to Question 80980 on Offshore Industry: Continental Shelf, if she will provide the duty holders that worked with HSE on alternative ways of carrying out safety critical maintenance work; and what the outcomes were of that work.

Chloe Smith:

Although many duty holders undertook extended maintenance shutdowns in 2021, these were often not enough to eliminate the backlog issues. As well as through its day-to-day regulatory activities, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) also impacts on offshore safety through membership of working groups. One of these is the Asset Integrity Task Group (AITG). AITG members include Apache, BP, CNOOC, CNR, Repsol Sinopec, TAQA as well as the Oil and Gas Authority and Oil and Gas UK. The AITG's current key focus relates to addressing asset integrity issues, including

maintenance backlog, through a more effective focus on Process Safety Leadership. The offshore industry signed up to improving its approach to Process Safety Leadership at the Oil and Gas UK's Health & Safety Conference in 2019.

Outcomes of HSE's working on alternative means than traditional shutdowns to address maintenance backlogs, include the recognition by industry that a move towards more sustained asset integrity campaigns for late life installations is required. Potential solutions include increasing the size of the offshore workforce using flotel or jack-up drilling rigs in accommodation mode alongside production installations and more frequent maintenance campaigns; more extended shutdowns and Floating Production Storage and Offloading vessel (FPSOs) being taken off station for extensive maintenance that cannot be done offshore.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[94356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2021 to Question 80980 on Offshore Industry: Continental Shelf, if she will publish the types of enforcement action the HSE took where backlogs were not being managed safely; and if she will provide to which installations those actions applied.

Chloe Smith:

HSE does not record its enforcement actions specifically in relation to "maintenance backlogs". A search of HSE's database has revealed that since the start of the initial pandemic lockdown in March 2020, there have been 112 interventions that have looked at maintenance management, including backlog, and have resulted in enforcement action in the form of letters and notices. A table showing the actions in relation to installations and their duty holders is attached.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Universal Credit**

Sara Britcliffe:

[\[97176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with stakeholders on merging personal independence payments into universal credit.

Chloe Smith:

The Health and Disability Green Paper aimed to explore ways to improve the design of the benefits system and posed illustrative ideas, such as a single benefit covering both PIP and UC, to generate discussion.

During the consultation period we held more than 40 events with stakeholders to hear their views on the proposals in the Green Paper, including on options for simplifying the benefits system.

Although the formal consultation period has now ended, we will continue to engage stakeholders regularly, particularly on the broader aspects of the paper that focus on future reform.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification

Kate Osamor: [\[96988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 8 December 2021 to Question 84427 on Social Security Benefit: Disqualification, how many of the 149,057 cases that were suspended under the Risk Review Process remain suspended as of December 2021.

Kate Osamor: [\[97004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many benefit claims that have been suspended under the Risk Review process have been closed under suspicion of fraud as of 24 December 2021.

David Rutley:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

Kate Osamor: [\[96989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 8 December 2021 to Question 84427 on Social Security Benefit: Disqualification and with reference to the 149,057 cases that were suspended under the Risk Review Process, what steps her Department has taken to ensure the process of suspension does not result in the discrimination of claimants and is compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Kate Osamor: [\[96999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the majority of claimants who have had their benefits suspended under the Risk Review process are Bulgarian nationals.

David Rutley:

The Risk Review Team does not capture demographic data on any claims they suspend. All claims subject to the Risk Review Process are suspected of fraud. This is not linked to nationality.

Kate Osamor: [\[96998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what financial support is available to claimants whose benefits have been suspended under the Risk Review process.

Kate Osamor: [\[97000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what information the Risk Review Team shares with claimants whose benefits have been suspended under the Risk Review process.

Kate Osamor: [\[97001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether claimants who have had their benefits suspended under the Risk Review process are able to request a reconsideration of that decision or appeal against it.

Kate Osamor:

[\[97002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the time frame is for the Risk Review Team to finish reviews of benefits it has suspended.

David Rutley:

Any decision to suspend a claim to benefit by the Risk Review Team is not made lightly and includes an assessment of a person's personal circumstances.

Suspension of benefit is a last resort and is based on the risk that a person may not be entitled to benefit.

Where a claim is suspended, we are unable to make any alternative payments. In law, there is no right of appeal against a decision to suspend payment of benefit.

If it is determined there is entitlement to Universal Credit, following the receipt of additional information and evidence from the claimant, the suspension would be lifted immediately and we would always aim to pay benefits at the earliest opportunity, including any arrears that may be due.

Where a review determines there is no entitlement to Universal Credit an outcome decision will be made to that effect. This decision can be appealed.

We make all claimants aware of the evidence we need and the consequence of failing to provide it within prescribed timescales. For any Universal Credit claim that is suspended as a consequence of the Risk Review Team activity, the claimant is notified by journal and text messages, along with a means by which they can contact the Department and speak to the agent responsible for that case. At no time should claimants be unaware of the action they need to take and how they may contact us to provide evidence.

The length of time a review may take to complete is largely dependent on the engagement of the claimant and the timely provision of any information requested. Claimants are asked to provide requested information within a 14-day window for digital submissions, extended to 28 days if they have indicated a postal submission. Once a customer engages with us, the time taken to complete a review is case specific, dependant on the information provided. Once entitlement is established, payments are put into payment as soon as possible.

Kate Osamor:

[\[97003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many benefit claims were suspended under the Risk Review process as of 24 December 2021.

David Rutley:

Since the Risk Review Team was created in May 2020, latest published figures show there have been 3,999,004 claims made to Universal Credit.

As of 24th December 2021, 149,763 have been suspended under the Risk Review Process, a percentage of 3.74%

■ Statutory Sick Pay: Coronavirus

Kate Osamor: [\[96996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has had any discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the potential merits of increasing statutory sick pay to rates paid in other economically developed countries in order to encourage workers who need to self-isolate to do so.

Kate Osamor: [\[96997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of increasing statutory sick pay on the ability of workers to self-isolate when necessary.

Chloe Smith:

The government has put in place support to help individuals to comply with public health advice on self-isolation. This includes extending Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) to those who are sick or self-isolating due to coronavirus. SSP is also payable from the first day of absence, rather than the fourth, where an employee is sick or self-isolating due to coronavirus.

Alongside this we have always made sure there are no financial barriers to self-isolating, by providing the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment which has been extended until the end of March 2022.

■ Universal Credit

Imran Hussain: [\[96898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of removing the two-child limit from universal credit as recommended by the Social Mobility Commission in its State of the Nation 2021 report.

David Rutley:

No assessment has been carried out since the Social Mobility Commission's report. However, latest figures from April 2021 indicate that over 50% of those households with three or more children who are in receipt of Universal Credit, are not affected by the two-child policy, with over 4% of those being in receipt of an exception. Statistics relating to this policy are published annually, most recently on the 15 July 2021, and are available on GOV.UK.

Statistics from the Office for National Statistics show that in 2020, of all families with dependent children, 85% had a maximum of two in their family. For lone parent families, this was 83%.

The government therefore feels it is proportionate to provide support through Universal Credit for a maximum of two children. A benefits structure adjusting automatically to family size is unsustainable.

On 9 July 2021, the Supreme Court handed down its judgment in the judicial review of the two-child policy. The court found the two-child policy lawful and not in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights

This policy ensures fairness by asking families on benefits to make the same financial decisions as families supporting themselves solely through work. We recognise that some claimants are not able to make the same choices about the number of children in their family, which is why exceptions have been put in place to protect certain groups.

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Exceptions to the two-child policy are any child in a household who is:

- Adopted, when they would otherwise be in Local Authority care;
- Children living long term with friends or family, who would otherwise be at risk of entering the care system;
- A child born to a young person under 16, who is living with their parents or carers (until they make a separate claim upon turning 16);
- Third and subsequent children who are:
 - additional children in a multiple birth;
 - likely to have been born as a result of non-consensual conception (which for this purpose includes rape or where the claimant was in a controlling or coercive relationship with the child's other biological parent at the time of conception).

More information regarding this policy and its exceptions, can be found on GOV.UK.

■ Universal Credit: Habitual Residence Test

Kate Osamor:

[\[96987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit claims were issued with a negative decision on the grounds that the claimant failed the habitual resident test, as a proportion of total claims, in each month from January 2014 to December 2021.

David Rutley:

The table attached gives relevant proportions and volumes of total Universal Credit (UC) claims that failed their Habitual Residency Test (HRT) in each month from June 2015 to September 2021.

The Department currently holds information for HRTs failed by UC claimants from June 2015 to September 2021.

Notes:

1. Numbers failing the HRT are updated monthly and retrospectively as outcomes are resolved. Current numbers and the proportions on which these are based may therefore be different from those shared at an earlier time for the same period.

2. The rise in numbers failing the HRT since 2015 reflects the gradual roll out of UC and rising UC caseload.
3. Only single-person claims were included on the early UC caseload until December 2018 when the UC full service began rollout.
4. Proportions in table attached are based on unrounded numbers.
5. Any numbers shown below 100 are rounded to the nearest 10.
6. Any numbers shown above 100 are rounded to the nearest 100.

Attachments:

1. Table 1 [PQ96987- table (1).xlsx]

■ **Winter Fuel Payments**

Stuart Anderson:

[99068]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to promote awareness of (a) winter fuel payments and (b) associated welfare provision.

Guy Opperman:

Winter fuel payments are supporting over 11 million pensioners with their energy bills. We are also continuing to encourage those eligible for Pension Credit to make a claim. Pension Credit provides invaluable financial support for vulnerable pensioners. Around 1.4 million eligible pensioners across Great Britain receive some £5bn in Pension Credit, which tops up their retirement income and is a passport to other financial help such as support with housing costs, council tax, heating bills and a free TV licence for those over 75.

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 Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is responsible for the warm home discount scheme and the majority of those in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit receive their rebate automatically without needing to claim.

Details of all three schemes can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment>

<https://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment>

<https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme>

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.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Offshore Industry: Continental Shelf

Alex Cunningham:

[\[94356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2021 to Question 80980 on Offshore Industry: Continental Shelf, if she will publish the types of enforcement action the HSE took where backlogs were not being managed safely; and if she will provide to which installations those actions applied.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 12 January 2022. The correct answer should have been:

Chloe Smith:

HSE does not record its enforcement actions specifically in relation to “maintenance backlogs”. A search of HSE’s database has revealed that since the start of the initial pandemic lockdown in March 2020, there have been 112 interventions that have looked at maintenance management, including backlog, and have resulted in enforcement action in the form of letters and notices. A table showing the actions in relation to installations and their duty holders is attached.

Attachments:

1. [94356 attachment.pdf](#)

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Covid-19 Update

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Sajid Javid):

[\[HCWS532\]](#)

On 20 October 2021, the Government announced the procurement of two ground-breaking novel oral antivirals to treat UK COVID-19 patients, supplemented by the announcement of additional volumes of these drugs on 22 December. I am writing to inform the House of the progress made on the Platform Adaptive trial of Novel antivirals for early treatment of COVID-19 In the Community (PANORAMIC) national study and issue a call to action.

On 8 December, the PANORAMIC national study was launched by the University of Oxford. This study was set up so that comprehensive data can be collected on how well these antiviral treatments work in a highly vaccinated population before making these treatments more widely available in the NHS to patients in the most effective way possible.

This will ensure that both patients and clinicians have clear evidence and full confidence in taking and prescribing these treatments respectively across the UK. This has become even more important since the emergence of the Omicron variant, as all research previously has been completed with non-Omicron variants.

The first antiviral being studied is molnupiravir, which was granted conditional Marketing Authorisation by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency on 4 November 2021. The study has recruited 3,176 participants as of noon on 12 January 2022. This is excellent progress for a community-based trial in its first month, but it is crucial that recruitment ramps up significantly to generate results as quickly as possible.

We are encouraging people who receive a positive test for COVID-19, are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms beginning in the last five days, and are aged over 50, or are over 18 with certain underlying health conditions, to sign up to the study straight away.

The study is available to people in this cohort across the UK and it is possible to sign up from anywhere, with the treatment delivered to a participant's house directly. To ensure eligibility for the study, those who wish to participate must sign up as soon as possible after getting a positive COVID-19 test result as antivirals are expected to be most effective when taken at the earliest stages of disease.

Members of both Houses are requested to encourage constituents and others who may contact them to consider enrolling in the study online at www.panoramictrial.org or by calling the freephone number 0808 156 0017.

The Antivirals Taskforce is working across the health and care system in the UK, including NHS England and NHS Improvement, UK Health Security Agency, and our

partners in the Devolved Administrations, to plan the wider deployment of antiviral treatments as data from the national study becomes available.

The Department of Health and Social Care will publish a further update in due course.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Prime Minister's Trade Envoy Programme

Minister for Exports (Mike Freer):

[\[HCWS529\]](#)

The Prime Minister has made two new appointments to his Trade Envoy programme.

The new appointments will extend the total number of Trade Envoys to 34 parliamentarians, covering 72 markets. The Prime Minister's Trade Envoy Programme is an unpaid and voluntary role with cross-party membership from both Houses. The role supports the UK's ambitious trade and investment agenda by championing Global Britain and promoting the UK as a destination of choice for inward investment. Trade Envoys will help to make the most of our new trade deals and support the UK's economic recovery through the levelling up agenda, by helping business take advantage of the opportunities arising in export markets.

The new appointments are:

The Honourable Member for Beverley and Holderness, Graham Stuart MP, has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Vietnam, Cambodia & Laos.

Lord Sarfraz of Kensington has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Singapore.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Appointments to the UK Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):

[\[HCWS530\]](#)

The Hon. Member for Broadland (Jerome Mayhew) has been appointed as a full member of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The Hon. Member for Sedgefield (Paul Howell) has been appointed as a full member in place of the Hon. Member for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers).

The Rt. Hon Lord Keen of Elie QC has been appointed as a full member in place of Baroness Eccles of Moulton.

The Hon. Member for Jarrow (Kate Osborne) has been appointed as a substitute member of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The Hon. Member for Wolverhampton North East (Jane Stevenson) has been appointed as a substitute member in place of the Hon. Member for Kensington (Felicity Buchan).

The Hon. Member for North West Durham (Richard Holden) has been appointed as a substitute member in place of the Hon. Member for St. Austell and Newquay (Steve Double).

Baroness Foster of Oxtou has been appointed as a substitute member in place of Lord Balfe.

■ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): [\[HCWS531\]](#)

The Rt Hon. Member for Maldon (John Whittingdale) has been appointed as a full representative of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in place of the Hon. Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson).

The Hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mark Pritchard) has been appointed as a full representative in place of the Hon. Member for Dudley South (Mike Wood).

Lord Smith of Hindhead has been appointed as a full representative in place of Lord Bowness.

John Whittingdale has been appointed as Leader of the Delegation.

TRANSPORT

■ Roads Update

Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps): [\[HCWS528\]](#)

Since becoming Transport Secretary, I have worked consistently to raise the bar on motorway safety and I am determined to make sure people using our motorways continue to benefit from one of the safest and best performing road networks in the world.

To this end, one of my first actions as Transport Secretary was to order a stocktake of smart motorways. I also welcome the Transport Committee's report published on 2 November 2021, following their inquiry into the roll-out and safety of smart motorways.

The Stocktake and Action Plan which I published in March 2020, focused efforts on further upgrading the safety of smart motorways. I am pleased that these efforts have been recognised by the Committee which agreed that the Government was right to focus on upgrading the safety of All Lane Running (ALR) smart motorways, rather than reinstating the hard shoulder – which the Committee recognised could cause more deaths or serious injuries on our roads.

Having carefully considered the Committee's report, I will be taking forward all of its recommendations. This includes the recommendation to pause the roll out of future ALR smart motorway schemes until a full 5 years' worth of safety data is available.

During the pause, we will continue to make sure all existing ALR smart motorways are equipped with best-in-class technology and resources and are as safe as they can possibly be.

I will also follow the recommendations to pause the conversion of Dynamic Hard Shoulder smart motorways to ALR until the next Road Investment Strategy; retrofit more Emergency Areas across existing ALR schemes; conduct an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of stopped vehicle detection technology; explore the introduction of the emergency corridor manoeuvre into the Highway Code, and; investigate the benefits of health and safety assessments being undertaken by the Office of Rail and Road.

Taken together and building on my initial stocktake these measures will ensure that our roads continue to be among the safest in the world – helping drivers not just to be safe, but crucially, to feel safe and confident when driving.

I am grateful for the Transport Committee's scrutiny and to all those that provided evidence for their work. I will be instructing National Highways to take immediate steps to implement the actions as set out in the response and will update the Committee on progress over the coming year.