



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 13 January 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:36 P.M., 13 January 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	6	■ Weddings: Coronavirus	16
ATTORNEY GENERAL	6	■ Wood-burning Stoves	16
■ Sentencing: Appeals	6	CABINET OFFICE	17
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	6	■ 10 Downing Street: Meetings	17
■ Artificial Intelligence: Finance	6	■ Cabinet Office: Contracts	17
■ Compassionate Leave: Perinatal Mortality	7	■ Civil Service: Surveys	17
■ Construction: Companies	7	■ Covid-19 Inquiry	18
■ Construction: Complaints	9	■ EU Law	18
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	10	■ EU Law: Reviews	19
■ Employment Tribunals Service	11	■ Government Departments: Staff	19
■ Energy: Meters	11	■ NHS	19
■ Equal Pay: Ethnic Groups	11	■ Regulation: Departmental Responsibilities	20
■ Global Britain Investment Fund: Life Sciences	12	CHURCH COMMISSIONERS	20
■ Hospitality Sector: Recruitment	12	■ Church of England: Public Relations	20
■ Parental Leave	12	DEFENCE	21
■ Plastics: Manufacturing Industries	13	■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement	21
■ Regulation: Reform	14	■ Armed Forces: Coronavirus	21
■ Research England: Finance	15	■ Glencorse Barracks	21
■ Research: Finance	15	■ Kazakhstan: Military Aid	22
■ Vaccine Manufacturing and Innovation Centre	15	■ Maritime Patrol Aircraft: Procurement	22
		■ Merlin Helicopters	23

■ Merlin Helicopters: Early Warning Systems	23	■ Sports: Racial Discrimination	33
■ Military Aid: NHS Wales	23	EDUCATION	33
■ Military Aid: Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust	23	■ Adult Education: Finance	33
■ Military Aircraft: Helicopters	24	■ Apprentices	34
■ RAF Croughton	24	■ Apprentices: Construction and Manufacturing Industries	34
■ RAF Croughton: US National Security Agency	24	■ Apprentices: Taxation	35
■ Torpedoes: Procurement	25	■ BTEC Qualifications	36
■ Veterans: Immigration	25	■ Department for Education: Telephone Services	36
DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	25	■ Disability and Special Educational Needs: Slough	37
■ Art Works: Nigeria	25	■ Education: Yorkshire and the Humber	37
■ Arts: Coastal Areas and Rural Areas	26	■ Higher Education: Islands	38
■ Channel Four: Privatisation	26	■ Noonan Syndrome	38
■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Buildings	26	■ Pre-school Education: Ventilation	39
■ Events Industry: Finance	27	■ Schools: Air Conditioning	40
■ Exhibitions: Costs	28	■ Schools: Transport	41
■ Festivals and Special Occasions	28	■ Schools: Ventilation	42
■ Football: Governing Bodies	28	■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus	43
■ Gambling: Internet	29	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	44
■ Gambling: Licensing	29	■ Chemicals: EU Law	44
■ Internet: Children	30	■ Grasslands: Environment Protection	45
■ Live Events Reinsurance Scheme	30	■ Ivory	46
■ Mobile Phones: Newport West	30	■ Plastics: Recycling	46
■ Music and Theatre: Coronavirus	31	■ Plastics: Waste Disposal	46
■ Peers' Interests: Finance	31	■ Solid Fuels	47
■ Rugby: Listed Events	32	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	47
■ Social Media	32	■ Angola: Elections	47
		■ Burkina Faso: Children	48

■ Chad: Internally Displaced People	48	■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	57
■ China: Forced Labour	48	■ Coronavirus: Drugs	58
■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Uyghur Tribunal	49	■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing	59
■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: World Uyghur Congress	49	■ Coronavirus: Screening	60
■ Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria	50	■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	60
■ Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria: Finance	50	■ Coronavirus: Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme	63
■ Hong Kong: Judges	50	■ Dementia	63
■ Horn of Africa: Humanitarian Aid	51	■ Diabetes: Health Services	64
■ Kakwenza Rukirabashaija	51	■ General Practitioners: Coronavirus	65
■ Kazakhstan: Financial Services	52	■ Health Services: Standards	65
■ Kazakhstan: Sanctions	52	■ Health: Females	65
■ Kenya: Elections	52	■ Travel: Coronavirus	65
■ Mali: Security	53	■ Virgin Care: Somerset	66
■ Overseas Investment: Sanctions	54	HOME OFFICE	67
■ Senegal: Elections	54	■ Asylum: Afghanistan	67
■ Southern Africa: Travel Restrictions	55	■ Immigration: Fees and Charges	68
■ West Africa: Food	55	■ Joint Fraud Taskforce	68
■ Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps: Overseas Investment	56	■ Refugees: Afghanistan	72
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	56	HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION	75
■ Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients: Restraint Techniques	56	■ Big Ben: Repairs and Maintenance	75
■ Coronavirus: Children	57	INTERNATIONAL TRADE	75
		■ Arms Trade: Arab States	75
		■ Arms Trade: Export Controls	76
		■ Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia	76
		■ Energy: Kazakhstan	76
		JUSTICE	77
		■ Prisoners' Release	77

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	78	■ Train Operating Companies: Contracts	89
■ Elections: Proof of Identity	78	■ Train Operating Companies: Industrial Disputes	89
■ Large Goods Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries	79	■ Transport for London: Property Transfer	90
■ Local Plans: York	79	■ Travel: Night-time Economy	91
NORTHERN IRELAND	80	TREASURY	92
■ Members: Correspondence	80	■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme	92
■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland	80	■ Cryptocurrencies	92
SCOTLAND	81	■ Debts: York	93
■ INTERREG Programme: Scotland	81	WALES	94
■ Scotland Office: Buildings	81	■ Fisheries: Wales	94
TRANSPORT	82	■ Refugees: Afghanistan	94
■ Airlines: Dispute Resolution	82	■ Television Licences: Older People	95
■ Aviation: Coronavirus	83	■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland and Wales	95
■ Aviation: Fares	83	■ Wales Office: Buildings	96
■ Bus Services: Newcastle upon Tyne	83	WORK AND PENSIONS	96
■ Bus Services: Travel Information	84	■ Poverty: York	96
■ Clean Air Zones: Greater Manchester	84	■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification	98
■ Electric Scooters	85	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	99
■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Vacancies	86	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	99
■ London Northwestern Railway: Crew	86	■ Gibraltar: UK-EU negotiations	99
■ Motor Vehicles: Registration	86	■ The Sanctions Regulations Report on Annual Reviews 2021	100
■ Offshore Industry: Shipping	87	INTERNATIONAL TRADE	100
■ Oxted Line: Electrification	87	■ Trade Update	100
■ Railways: North of England	88	LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	102
■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance	88	■ The Review of Intergovernmental Relations	102

TREASURY	102
■ Penalty Reform for VAT	102

Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS**ATTORNEY GENERAL****■ Sentencing: Appeals****Emily Thornberry:** [\[100469\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, pursuant to the Answer of 10 January 2021 to Question 98226 on Public Sector: Misconduct, why the Solicitor General's decision was not included in her Department's updates on the outcome of unduly lenient sentence referrals published on (a) 29 December, (b) 4 January and (c) 5 January 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [\[100470\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, pursuant to the Answer of 10 January 2021 to Question 98226 on Public Sector: Misconduct, what the average length of time is for decisions made on unduly lenient sentence referrals to be included in the regular updates of referral outcomes published by her Department.

Alex Chalk:

There is no legal obligation to publish updates on the outcome of unduly lenient sentence referrals. The updates prepared by officials are checked manually and it is not always possible to meet the Attorney General's aspiration for weekly editions, especially over the Christmas and New Year period. The Department does not hold information on the average length of time for updates

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY**■ Artificial Intelligence: Finance****Chi Onwurah:** [\[96872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the budget for the Office of Artificial Intelligence in the financial year 2022-23 is; which budget that money comes from; and what steps his Department has taken to fund the long-term needs of the artificial intelligence ecosystem.

George Freeman:

The Office for Artificial Intelligence is a joint unit between BEIS and DCMS, reporting to directors in both BEIS and DCMS and accountable to Secretaries of State in both departments.

The recently published AI Strategy confirmed the Government's commitment to continue to support the development and deployment of these technologies. The Strategy included commitments to launch a National AI Research and Innovation Programme to improve coordination and collaboration between the country's researchers and a programme aimed at continuing to develop AI in sectors based outside of London and the South East.

The budget for the Office for Artificial Intelligence and the scale of funding provided to these programmes will be set through departmental business planning processes, which are ongoing.

The Autumn 2021 Spending Review announced record-breaking investment in the UK's world leading research base, increasing by £5.2 billion to £20 billion per annum by 2024/25 in line with the target of UK economy-wide R&D investment reaching 2.4% of GDP by 2027.

■ **Compassionate Leave: Perinatal Mortality**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[98217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending entitlement to parental bereavement leave and pay to parents of babies miscarried or stillborn during early pregnancy.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises that losing a child at any age is deeply upsetting, and in April 2020 we legislated to give parents who lose a child under the age of 18 a right to take up to two weeks off work in the 56 weeks following the death of their child.

This right extends to parents of babies stillborn after 24 completed weeks of pregnancy. In the Explanatory Memorandum published alongside the legislation, we committed to taking forward a review of the scheme's impact in 2025.

Individuals who do not feel able to return to work following a miscarriage before 24 weeks may be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay while off work. All employees are also entitled to 5.6 weeks of Annual Leave a year and many employers also offer 'Compassionate Leave'. We encourage employers to respond sensitively to each individual's specific needs.

■ **Construction: Companies**

Mark Garnier:

[\[98918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate the Government has made of the number of general building firms operating within the repair, maintenance and improvement sector in England.

Mark Garnier:

[\[98919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government maintains a database of the firms operating within the repair, maintenance and improvement sector in England.

Mark Garnier:

[\[98920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate the Government has made of the number of general building firms operating within the repair, maintenance and improvement sector in England which are limited by shares.

Mark Garnier: [\[98921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate the Government has made of the number of general building firms operating within the repair, maintenance and improvement sector in England which are limited liability partnerships.

Mark Garnier: [\[98922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate the Government has made of the number of general building firms operating within the repair, maintenance and improvement sector in England which are unlimited liability partnerships.

Mark Garnier: [\[98923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate the Government has made of the number of sole traders operating within the repair, maintenance and improvement sector in England.

Mark Garnier: [\[98924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate the Government has made of the number of workers employed by firms operating within the repair, maintenance and improvement sector in England.

Lee Rowley:

The repair, maintenance and improvement sector (RMI) is not part of the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC). Therefore, whilst the Government has data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) regarding the number of construction businesses operating, we do not maintain a database on how many of these businesses operate in the RMI sector, either solely or partially.

The most recent *Construction Statistics annual tables* were published by the ONS in December 2021 and relate to 2020 (please find the relevant data attached). Table 1.4 shows the value of RMI work carried out by businesses in different SIC sectors in Great Britain, and Table 3.5 provides information on the number of employees in such businesses, although the data does not show whether or not they undertake RMI work.

The ONS also publishes data on business counts by sector, country and legal status. The following data relates to March 2021 and only includes construction businesses in England which are registered for VAT and/or PAYE. It relates to SIC sector 412: Construction of residential and non-residential buildings, and it is therefore not specific to the RMI sector:

LEGAL STATUS	TOTAL
Company (including building society)	51,840
Sole proprietor	7,365

LEGAL STATUS	TOTAL
Partnership	1,575
Column Total	60,775

“Company” includes both limited by shares and limited liability partnerships, and “partnerships” refers to unlimited liability partnerships.

Attachments:

1. [Value and employees - RMI sector](#) [UIN 98918-24 - Mark Garnier MP - Value and employees - RMI sector.xlsx]

■ **Construction: Complaints**

Mark Garnier: [\[98925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government maintains a database of complaints levelled against general building firms operating within the repair, maintenance and improvement sector in England.

Mark Garnier: [\[98927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government maintains a database of complaints levelled against general building firms operating within the repair, maintenance and improvement sector in England; and how many disputes have been registered between general building firms and customers in each of the last three years.

Mark Garnier: [\[98928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government maintains a database of complaints levelled against general building firms operating within the repair, maintenance and improvement sector in England; and how many customer complaints have been made against general building firms for substandard work over the last three years.

Mark Garnier: [\[98929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government maintains a database of complaints levelled against general building firms operating within the repair, maintenance and improvement sector in England; and how many customer complaints have been made against general building firms for unsafe work over the last three years.

Mark Garnier: [\[98930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government maintains a database of complaints levelled against general building firms operating within the repair, maintenance and improvement sector in England; and how many customer complaints have been made against general building firms for work that has failed building control inspections in each of the last three years.

Mark Garnier:

[\[98931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government maintains a database of complaints levelled against general building firms operating within the repair, maintenance and improvement sector; and how many complaints have been made by subcontractors against general building firms that have engaged their services over the last three years.

Lee Rowley:

The Government is committed to ensuring that we have a high-quality and professional construction industry in the UK, and to strengthening consumers' rights and access to redress in the domestic construction sector. We have recently consulted on proposals to reform competition and consumer policy. This includes proposals for mandatory alternative dispute resolution in the home improvements sector.

At present, the Government does not maintain a database of complaints levelled against general building firms operating within the repair, maintenance and improvement sector in England.

There are also several market-led mechanisms, including online forums and public reviews, that highlight those in the sector who are not doing the right thing.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Layla Moran:

[\[100676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2021 to Question 69687, whether the Government delivered the 20 million covid-19 vaccine doses due to be donated by the Government by the end of 2021 to countries in need.

George Freeman:

On 30 December, the Government announced that we had met the target to donate 30 million COVID-19 vaccines by the end of 2021. We also reiterated our plan for millions more vaccines to be sent to other countries in 2022, including 20 million more Oxford-AstraZeneca doses and 20 million Janssen doses.

Of the over 30 million vaccines we have donated; approximately 25.4m have been received by COVAX, and 5.5m have been delivered directly by the UK to countries in need. These donations have benefitted more than 30 countries. The majority, 23.3m, of these donations have now arrived at their final destination, with 7.6 million of the doses received by COVAX that remain to be shipped to recipient countries in the next few weeks.

In addition to life saving vaccine, the Government have also recently pledged £105m of UK emergency aid to help vulnerable countries tackle Omicron, with a particular focus on Africa.

■ Employment Tribunals Service

Justin Madders:

[\[100578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to extend the time limit for employment tribunals.

Paul Scully:

A claim to an Employment Tribunal must usually be made within three months. For certain claims, redundancy pay or equal pay, the claim must be made within six months. The Employment Tribunals already have the discretion to allow claims submitted out of time, on a case by case basis.

■ Energy: Meters

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[96752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate his Department has made of the potential number of smart meters fitted by energy companies since December 2019 which will require (a) upgrading and (b) replacing when the 2G and 3G networks are switched off; what estimate the Government has made of the potential cost of that upgrading and replacement which will be passed on to consumers; what discussions the Government had with energy companies on the potential effect of 2G and 3G switch off (i) before and (ii) during marketing campaigns for new replacement 5G smart meters; what plans the Government has to switch off 2G and 3G networks before all smart meters dependent on those networks have been upgraded or replaced; and what the Government's policy is on whether 5G smart meters will be mandatory for energy consumers.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 10 January 2022]: Smart meters will not need to be replaced or upgraded as a result of sunsetting 2G and 3G networks. Smart meters can work with a range of communications technologies and the system has been designed to accommodate the inevitable evolution of communication services over time. Communications hubs, which are installed alongside smart meters and connect them to the national smart metering network, can be replaced independently of the meter.

■ Equal Pay: Ethnic Groups

Ruth Jones:

[\[97075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had any discussions with the Welsh Government on tackling the ethnicity pay gap.

Paul Scully:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy talks regularly with the Welsh Government on a wide range of labour market issues.

The recent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report contained specific recommendations on pay gap reporting. We are considering our response to the Commission's report and will discuss this with the Welsh Government in due course.

■ Global Britain Investment Fund: Life Sciences**Chi Onwurah:**[\[96875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November 2021 to Question 64605 on Global Britain Investment Fund, what proportion of the Global Britain Investment Fund will be spent on life sciences; over what time period that money will be spent; and if he will publish the funding sources for the Global Britain Investment Fund.

George Freeman:

The Global Britain Investment Fund will provide £354m to UK Life Sciences. The funding will be spent over a three-year period from April 2022. HM Treasury aggregates funds from various funding streams to finance the investments announced at Spending Review 2021, including the Global Britain Investment Fund. The individual funding sources for the Global Britain Investment Fund are therefore not known.

■ Hospitality Sector: Recruitment**Stuart Anderson:**[\[98433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what long-term measures the Government has put in place to support the hospitality sector to meet its recruitment needs.

Paul Scully:

The Department has launched the first-ever hospitality strategy to support the reopening, recovery and resilience of England's pubs, restaurants, cafes and nightclubs. As part of this, we have set up the Hospitality Sector Council to oversee the delivery of the strategy, including working with the sector to make hospitality a career option of choice and looking at the labour and skills shortages.

In order to help address the immediate challenges of labour shortages in the hospitality sector, the Department for Work and Pensions is working hard to fill ongoing vacancies by using work coaches to help find local talent, and Plans for Jobs programmes, such as Kickstart and Sector-based Work Academy Programmes. The Department for Education has also added hospitality and catering qualifications to the Free Courses for Jobs, as part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee. Additionally, we are increasing employer-led apprenticeship funding to £2.7 billion by 2024-25, extending the £3,000 incentive payment for every apprentice a business hires up until 31 January 2022, and improving the apprenticeship system for employers.

■ Parental Leave**Justin Madders:**[\[100575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 26 April 2018 to Question 137053, the Answer of 20 May 2019 to Question 254256, the Answer of 24 September 2020 to Question 95140 and the Answer of 19 July

2021 to Question 32423 on Parental Leave, when he plans to publish the report of his Department's evaluation of the Shared Parental Leave scheme.

Paul Scully:

Evaluating Shared Parental Leave and Pay is an important part of the policymaking process.

As part of the evaluation, we commissioned large, representative surveys of parents and employees which asked about a range of parental leave and pay entitlements as well as their experience of Shared Parental Leave specifically. We also consulted on high-level options for reforming parental leave and pay.

We are currently analysing this information and will publish our findings in due course.

Justin Madders:

[\[100576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps he has taken to encourage the take up of shared parental leave.

Paul Scully:

In order to make it easier for parents to access Shared Parental Leave, and easier for employers to administer it, the Government also launched a new online tool last year. This shows how many weeks of leave and pay are available and lets parents map out how weeks will be shared with their partner, supporting conversations with employers.

In addition, the Government is evaluating the Shared Parental Leave and Pay scheme, which will help us understand what would enable more parents to take up the entitlement. We will publish the findings in due course.

Justin Madders:

[\[100577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to collect data on the uptake of parental leave entitlements.

Paul Scully:

HMRC routinely collect data on the uptake of parental pay entitlements which provides some useful indicators of leave uptake.

The Government is currently undertaking an evaluation of the Shared Parental Leave and Pay scheme. This evaluation will include survey and administrative HMRC data on the uptake of the Maternity, Paternity and Shared Parental Leave and Pay schemes in recent years. We will publish the findings in due course.

■ **Plastics: Manufacturing Industries**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[100539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support research into new zero carbon methods of producing plastics in the UK.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[100540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to increase the proportion of plastics consumed in the UK which are (a) manufactured in the UK and (b) recyclable in the UK.

George Freeman:

The billions we are investing in R&D, skills and support for digital technology adoption through initiatives like Made Smarter and Help to Grow is providing a competitive business environment for British manufacturers. It is attracting new investment, developing new export opportunities, and securing new high-value jobs in our industrial heartlands.

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funds a variety of projects related to plastics including projects improving sustainability and recyclability of plastics in the UK. For example, the Smart Sustainable Plastic Packaging Challenge, with £60m of funding from UKRI through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund and matched by £149m from industry, is supporting academic-led research to address known problems and to support industry-led collaborative research and development of new technologies, de-risking innovative plastics sustainability projects, and delivering over 230kt per annum of additional recycling capacity. The output of this capacity is intended to be used back in packaging and will make a real contribution to the gap of recycled plastics in the UK.

The introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for Packaging will see businesses that place packaging on the market bear responsibility for the costs of managing that packaging once it becomes waste. It will incentivise businesses to design and use packaging that is easier to recycle, and to increase the recycling of packaging waste.

Finally, The UK Plastic Packaging Tax will be introduced from 1 April 2022 to encourage the use of recycled plastic in packaging, and in turn stimulate increased levels of recycling and collection of plastic waste, diverting it away from landfill or incineration. It is estimated that this will lead to an increase in the use of recycled plastic by 40% in 2022-23.

■ Regulation: Reform

Imran Hussain:

[\[96899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the recommendation by the Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform Taskforce, in its report published in June 2021, to reimpose the one in, two out regulatory offset principle.

Paul Scully:

A joint consultation on “Reforming the Framework for Better Regulation” between the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Cabinet Office was launched on 22 July 2021. The consultation examined relevant recommendations from the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform

report, including reimposing the one in, two out regulatory offset principle. The consultation received 188 responses from a range of stakeholders including business and trade and industry bodies. The Government response to the consultation will be published in due course.

■ Research England: Finance

Chi Onwurah: [\[96873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment his Department has made of differences in Research England funding between the (a) North East and (b) east of England.

George Freeman:

Research England Quality-related Research funding is allocated largely on the basis of the volume of highest quality research as assessed by REF2014. Through the “Expanding Excellence in England” programme, Research England is seeking to grow excellent research capacity where excellence exists but is currently at a small scale with potential for growth.

UKRI are publishing detailed breakdowns of their funding data at a regional level annually to increase transparency of how places benefit from R&D funding. The latest available data is at: <https://www.ukri.org/our-work/what-we-have-funded/regional-distribution-of-funding/2018-to-2019-regional-distribution-of-funding/#contents-list>.

■ Research: Finance

Chi Onwurah: [\[96874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, paragraph 2.38, how much money the Government has allocated to support its response to the Nurse review of research councils; and which budget that money will come from.

George Freeman:

The Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 represents a record investment in UK R&D – providing £20 billion per annum by 2024-25. This will support a wide range of initiatives to cement the UK as a global science and technology superpower. Following the Spending Review, BEIS is currently working to set detailed R&D budgets to 2024/25. Further details of how this funding will be allocated will be announced in due course.

■ Vaccine Manufacturing and Innovation Centre

Layla Moran: [\[100674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with officials in his Department on the sale of the Vaccine Manufacturing Innovation Centre.

George Freeman:

The Vaccine Taskforce and UK Research and Innovation are working closely with VMIC, which is a private company, to ensure the UK has a strong domestic vaccine manufacturing capability to contribute to the UK's resilience against COVID-19 and other future health emergencies. At present these discussions are commercially sensitive.

Weddings: Coronavirus**Paul Howell:****[99089]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support the Government has made available for local authorities to support wedding industry businesses and those in the supply chain for that sector that have been affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 12 January 2022]: The Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant provides local councils with one-off grant funding to support hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses in England. Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-youre-eligible-for-the-omicron-hospitality-and-leisure-grant>.

The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) provides local councils with grant funding to support businesses that are severely impacted by coronavirus and the rise of the Omicron variant, which are not eligible for other grant funding. Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-youre-eligible-for-the-coronavirus-additional-restrictions-grant>.

Wood-burning Stoves**Geraint Davies:****[93692]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish a definition of sustainably sourced in relation to wood burning in domestic appliances.

Greg Hands:

Sustainability in relation to wood burning for domestic appliances varies depending on the appliance. The sustainability requirement for fuel used in the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI), which support biomass boilers and pellet stoves used for heating and hot water for domestic properties, includes a greenhouse gas emissions limit and specific land criteria. These requirements are set out in the RHI regulations through the obligation for 'approved sustainable fuel' to be used in domestic RHI accredited installations. There is no specific sustainability requirement for fuel for other domestic appliances such as traditional open fires or wood burning stoves.

CABINET OFFICE**■ 10 Downing Street: Meetings****Fleur Anderson:**[\[97164\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the investigation led by Sue Gray into allegations of breaches of covid-19 regulations will include the gathering held in the gardens of Downing Street on 15 May 2020.

Michael Ellis:

As the terms of reference for the inquiry into staff gatherings make clear, where there are credible allegations into other gatherings, these may be investigated. This includes the allegations relating to 15 and 20 May 2020.

■ Cabinet Office: Contracts**James Wild:**[\[97148\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many consultancy and professional services contracts of or over £500,000 in value or at least 9 months in duration his Department has (a) approved and (b) rejected in the last five years, by department; and what the total value of those contracts are.

James Wild:[\[97149\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many contingent labour contracts (a) for people with day rates of £1,000 or over, excluding recoverable VAT and (b) durations of 18 months or over his Department has approved in the last five years, by department.

Michael Ellis:

The approval of consultancy and professional services spend of over £500k or 9 months duration by Cabinet Office is subject to central government spending control since October 2021. Prior to this, approval of consultancy and professional services spending of up to £10m was delegated to departments and other central government bodies. As a result, the data requested is not available.

The approval of contingent labour spend for engagements with day rates of £1,000 or over, excluding recoverable VAT and (b) durations of 18 months or over by Cabinet Office is subject to central government spend control since November 2021. Prior to this, spend decisions were fully delegated to departments and therefore no central dataset was collected on this specific spend.

■ Civil Service: Surveys**Angela Rayner:**[\[98969\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when his Department will publish the results of the Annual Civil Service People Survey for 2021.

Michael Ellis:

Every year, the Civil Service People Survey team publishes the Civil Service benchmark scores and the results for all participating organisations in the annual Civil Service People Survey, including for the Cabinet Office, on GOV.UK. The publication of the results for the Civil Service People Survey 2021 is scheduled for Thursday 28 April 2022.

■ **Covid-19 Inquiry****Rachael Maskell:**[\[98997\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he has taken to consult relevant stakeholders on the criteria for the Terms of Reference for the Covid-19 Public Inquiry; who was consulted; and when he plans to publish the Terms of Reference.

Michael Ellis:

On 12 May 2021, the Prime Minister confirmed that a public inquiry into Covid-19 will be established on a statutory basis, with formal powers, and that it will begin its work in Spring 2022.

The Prime Minister has appointed the Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett as the chair of the inquiry. Draft terms of reference will be published in due course, following consultation with Baroness Hallett and ministers from the devolved administrations.

As set out in the Prime Minister's statement on 15 December, Baroness Hallett will then lead the public consultation, including with bereaved families and other affected groups, before the terms of reference are finalised.

■ **EU Law****Layla Moran:**[\[100675\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has plans to bring forward proposals on retained EU law in spring 2022.

Michael Ellis:

As set out in the Paymaster General's Written Ministerial Statement of 9 December 2021, officials in the Cabinet Office are continuing to undertake two reviews into retained EU law, one into the substance of retained EU law and one into its status in law.

Any proposals for change will be finalised at the conclusion of the reviews. The Queen's speech will set out the Government's legislative programme in the normal way.

■ EU Law: Reviews

Layla Moran:

[100677]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether her Department holds responsibility for the review of retained EU law following the resignation of Lord Frost.

Michael Ellis:

The Brexit Opportunities Unit in the Cabinet Office is leading reviews of Retained EU law (REUL). The aim of these two reviews, into the substance and status of REUL, is to ensure that REUL - as established by the EU Withdrawal Act 2018 - does not stagnate on the UK statute book.

An announcement will be made in due course to confirm which Minister will lead these reviews, following the resignation of my Rt Hon Friend Lord Frost.

■ Government Departments: Staff

Rachel Hopkins:

[98502]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many full-time equivalent employees were employed by Government bodies in each year from 2010-11 to 2020-21.

Michael Ellis:

National Statistics on employment numbers in the public sector are published each quarter by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and are available at the following link:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/publicsectorpersonnel/datasets/publicsectoremploymentreferencetable>.

These statistics provide quarterly estimates and time-series data of UK public sector employment by central government (including Civil Service), local government and public corporations.

■ NHS

Jim Shannon:

[98294]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has a role in (a) ensuring that the NHS is training enough doctors and nurses and (b) developing policies on the structure, and any potential restructuring, of the NHS.

Michael Ellis:

The Cabinet Office's role is to support DHSC in delivering the priorities of the Prime Minister and the government, which includes training more doctors and nurses. The NHS has over 5,100 more doctors and over 9,700 more nurses than last year and is on track to train 50,000 more nurses by the end of this Parliament - as per our manifesto commitment. The Cabinet Office is also supporting DHSC with the Health

and Care Bill, which delivers on the NHS reform proposals set out in the 2019 Long Term Plan.

■ Regulation: Departmental Responsibilities

Theresa Villiers:

[100457]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Minister is now responsible for regulatory reform related to the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Michael Ellis:

As a result of leaving the EU, we now have the freedom to conceive and implement rules that serve our own interests and that are specifically tailored to the needs of the UK economy.

Ministers across departments have responsibility for regulatory reform in their respective areas and for ensuring we seize the opportunities of Brexit. In September 2021, we announced a package of regulatory reforms covering areas as diverse as: data reform, gene editing, clinical trials directive, the Future of Transport and AI strategy. Cabinet Office officials will continue to work with departments to deliver further reforms.

An announcement will be made in due course to confirm which Minister will lead this work, following the resignation of my Rt Hon Friend Lord Frost.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ Church of England: Public Relations

Chris Loder:

[R] [101841]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, how much the Church of England spent on (a) public affairs and (b) reputation management organisations in financial year 2020-21.

Andrew Selous:

It is not possible to give a cumulative figure for expenditure on public affairs for the Church of England, as each National Church Institution, diocese and parish is a separate charity and this information is not collected.

At a national level public affairs functions are not limited to a specific branch of the National Church Institutions. The Faith and Public Life team of the Archbishop's Council (formerly MPA: the Mission and Public Affairs Division) handles much of the Church of England's national engagement with Government, Parliament and policymakers but also has responsibility for work that is not public affairs. In the transition from MPA to the Faith and Public Life team under the Transforming Effectiveness process, the total number of NCI staff working in those public affairs roles has been cut.

The Archbishops' Council Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2020 can be seen here: [GS 2211 AC annual report and financial statements for year ended 31 December 2020.pdf \(churchofengland.org\)](#)

The Church Commissioners for England Annual Report 2020 can be seen here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Church%20Commissioners%20Annual%20Report%202020.pdf>

DEFENCE

■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[100451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 10 January 2022 to Question 96783, on Ajax Vehicles: Procurement, whether his Department has inspected any of the 296 hulls delivered to General Dynamic in the UK; and what customer assurance is being undertaken.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence has inspected 28 of the 296 hulls as part of the General Acceptance Testing of Capability Drop 1 Ajax vehicles prior to delivery to the Army, of which 26 have passed.

■ Armed Forces: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[100443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to prevent outbreaks of covid-19 in the armed forces.

James Heappey:

The Armed Forces have adopted a multi-layered approach to reducing the likelihood of COVID-19 outbreaks by following national recommendations and guidelines throughout the pandemic. This has included encouraging vaccination and booster uptake, social distancing, the wearing of face coverings, workplace testing, and proactive efforts to trace and contain COVID-19 whenever it has arisen.

■ Glencorse Barracks

Owen Thompson: [\[99354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what engagement his Department has had with Midlothian Council regarding education provision following plans announced in Future Soldier to increase personnel numbers based at Glencorse Barracks.

James Heappey:

The plans announced as part of Future Soldier will result in an overall small uplift to the number of personnel based at Glencorse Barracks through the relocation of

Balaklava Company, 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland from Redford Barracks.

Whilst the Department has not yet engaged with Midlothian Council on this specific issue, it routinely communicates in good time with all local councils affected by unit relocations and will do so in this case, should it be required.

■ **Kazakhstan: Military Aid**

Kenny MacAskill: [\[100702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when military officers from Kazakhstan last received training in the UK; and what the ranks of those officers were.

James Heapey:

The UK Ministry of Defence last delivered training to the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan between 22-26 November 2021. The participants ranged in rank from Captain to Lieutenant Colonel with three non-commissioned participants; in total eighteen Kazakh servicepeople participated. The intention of this training was to prepare and evaluate participants' readiness to deploy on UN Peacekeeping Missions.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[100703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will (a) suspend UK military training with Kazakhstan and (b) apologise for UK military involvement in training with that country in the last three years, including as part of Exercise Steppe Eagle.

James Heapey:

Her Majesty's Government has followed developments in Kazakhstan closely. We condemn the acts of violence and greatly regret the loss of life. We have been clear with the Kazakh Government that the right to peaceful protest should be protected. We will continue to monitor the conduct of the Kazakh Armed Forces and, if any breaches of international law are seen, we will raise these with the Kazakh Government. Our vision for Central Asia is of a peaceful and prosperous region underpinned by respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We are committed to engaging with Kazakhstan to build a stable and prosperous future on the basis of these principles.

■ **Maritime Patrol Aircraft: Procurement**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[100456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) CPI, (b) SPI and (c) cost variance is of the P-8A programme.

Jeremy Quin:

For technical reasons, the CPI and SPI for the P-8A (Poseidon MRA1) programme are set at 1.00 as the Government-to-Government Foreign Military Sale arrangement under which the UK is acquiring the aircraft does not include the use of Earned Value Management. The most recent forecast of the cost of the acquisition programme

shows that it is expected to be below the approved cost. All nine aircraft ordered for the Royal Air Force have now been delivered.

■ Merlin Helicopters

Mr Laurence Robertson: [\[100423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he expects to make a decision on re-engining the Merlin fleet of helicopters; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

Work to determine the future support requirements for the Merlin helicopter fleet is currently underway. This may result in a different engine being installed on Merlin, although a procurement decision is not expected until mid-2023.

■ Merlin Helicopters: Early Warning Systems

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[98222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans for Crowsnest to be (a) at initial operating capability (IOC), (b) at full operating capability (FOC) and (c) out of service (OSD); and what the original dates for (i) IOC, (ii) FOC and (iii) OSD were.

Jeremy Quin:

A Review Note will be finalised in Q1 2022 however on current plans IOC is expected to be reached in 2022 and FOC in 2023. The out of service date for Crowsnest is currently planned to be in 2029.

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 27 July 2021 to Question 35545.

Attachments:

1. [Merlin Helicopters: Early Warning System](#) [UIN35545.docx]

■ Military Aid: NHS Wales

Rob Roberts: [\[100722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many times NHS Wales has (a) submitted to and (b) been granted a MACA request from his Department in each of the last five years.

James Heapey:

Within the last five years, NHS Wales had submitted 29 requests for Defence support, 24 of which were approved (as of 11 January 2022). Five of the requests submitted to Defence were cancelled.

■ Military Aid: Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust

Rob Roberts: [\[100723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 17 December 2021 to Question 87877, on Military Aid: Ambulance Services, what the cost was of the support provided to the Welsh Ambulance Service.

James Heappey:

The cost charged to the Welsh Ambulance Service for Defence support over the past five years is £2,802,545. This figure includes the cost of ongoing Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) tasks.

■ Military Aircraft: Helicopters**Mr Laurence Robertson:**[\[100424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he expects to make a decision on the Puma replacement; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

Following on from the Early Market Engagement and Market Interest Day, we are intending to initiate the formal competition in February 2022. Subject to industry responses and timely approvals, we are aiming for a decision date in late 2023. It is important that we give industry sufficient time to compile detailed competitive bids in order to reduce risk in the latter stages of the competition.

■ RAF Croughton**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[100701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what role RAF Croughton has in facilitating US drone operations in the Middle East; and how that base is linked to the US military facility at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti.

James Heappey:

RAF Croughton is part of a worldwide US Defence Communications network, and the base supports a variety of communications activity. For operational security reasons and as a matter of policy, neither the Ministry of Defence nor the US Department of Defense publicly discuss specifics concerning military operations or classified communications regardless of unit, platform or asset.

US Forces maintain robust civilian and military cooperation with the United Kingdom and manage all base activities in accordance with the agreements made between the United States and Her Majesty's Government.

■ RAF Croughton: US National Security Agency**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[100700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many US National Security Agency (a) personnel and (b) officers are based at RAF Croughton.

James Heappey:

Any details of US intelligence personnel are classified. It is Government practice not to disclose the information of personnel working in intelligence roles to protect national security.

■ Torpedoes: Procurement**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[100452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 10 January 2022 to Question 96795, whether he plans to replace the US-developed, built and supported Mk54 torpedo with a UK equivalent.

Jeremy Quin:

No decision has been taken about a possible eventual replacement for the Mk54 Lightweight torpedo on the Poseidon MRA1.

■ Veterans: Immigration**Jim Shannon:**[\[98291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he is taking steps to encourage non-UK military personnel who are leaving the UK Armed Forces and who wish to remain in the UK to apply for residency for their families before their service ends.

Leo Docherty:

Applying to Settle in the UK is a personal choice and some non-UK families will already have Settled status before the Service Person leaves the military. The MOD works closely with our non-UK personnel to make sure that they and their families are aware of how they can attain settlement in the UK, should they wish to do so.

We keep our personnel guidance under regular review and as part of that ongoing process we update non-UK content, from the point of recruitment, including information on recruitment websites, right through Service life. In addition, through the Armed Forces Covenant Trust, a further immigration advisor has also been employed by the Army Families Federation to help deal with their casework.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Art Works: Nigeria****Navendu Mishra:**[\[99083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government has plans to return (a) the Benin Bronzes and (b) other historically and culturally significant artifacts to Nigeria.

Nigel Huddleston:

Museums and galleries in the UK operate independently of the government. Decisions relating to their collections are a matter for the trustees of each museum.

Some national museums are prevented by law from deaccessioning objects in their collections unless, broadly, they are duplicates or unfit for retention. The two exceptions to this are when the objects are human remains that are less than 1000 years old, and objects that were spoliated during the Nazi-era. The Government has no plans to change the law.

■ Arts: Coastal Areas and Rural Areas

Bob Seely:

[\[98422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support her Department can provide to incentivise major London-based arts institutes to undertake outreach to (a) the Isle of Wight, (b) coastal and (c) rural communities.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government is committed to promoting the arts and culture outside of London, and invests in culture across the country through Arts Council England.

Arts Council England's ambition to ensure the arts are accessible to all is articulated in its 'Let's Create' Strategy 2020-2030, which can be found on its website. The Arts Council encourages London-based organisations to have national reach and impact. It facilitates relationships across the country where there are synergies and/or particular opportunities, and supports organisations from major cities, including London, to share their work in rural areas. In addition, the Arts Council has identified the Isle of Wight as a priority area for increased engagement and investment.

A number of London-based National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) work in the Isle of Wight as well as rural and coastal areas. One example includes The Reading Agency, which produces programmes delivered by libraries across the country.

■ Channel Four: Privatisation

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[100431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what progress her Department has made on the Government consultation on whether to privatise Channel 4; and what her timetable is for announcing a decision on that matter.

Julia Lopez:

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

The Government's response will be published in due course.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Buildings

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[98511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the total floor area of her departmental estate was in each year from 2010-11 to 2020-21.

Julia Lopez:

This is shown in the table below, taken from the State of the Estate Reports.

The 2020-21 figure is significantly higher as it includes museums. These were not included in previous years.

YEAR	DCMS SQM (NIA - NET INTERNAL AREA)
2010	92,605
2011	86,224
2012	75,391
2013	69,928
2014-2015	124,031
2015-2016	124,384
2016-2017	126,090
2017-2018	122,871
2018-2019	122,305
2019-2020	120,364
2020-2021	778,348

■ Events Industry: Finance

Owen Thompson:

[\[99011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate the Government has made of the loss of income within the live events industry as a result of covid-19 related cancellations.

Julia Lopez:

The pandemic has been a unique challenge to the live events industry. The government is committed to supporting the live events industry and continues to work with the sector to understand losses and recovery.

To assist with recovery, from 22 September 2021, the UK Live Events Reinsurance Scheme has given events the confidence they need to plan through to Summer 2022. The Scheme will support live events across the country - such as concerts and festivals, conferences and business events - that are at risk of being cancelled or delayed due to an inability to obtain Covid-19 cancellation insurance; it will enable the sector to plan future events with greater confidence.

The scheme is in addition to the extensive support already given to the cultural sector throughout the pandemic, including the nearly £2 billion Culture Recovery Fund and the £500 million Film and TV Production Restart scheme.

■ Exhibitions: Costs**Wendy Chamberlain:** [100695]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether there was a cost to the public purse of developing proposals for a potential Great Exhibition.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Great Exhibition 2.0 is a project led by the Royal Albert Hall. The government is not involved in its planning or development, and no government funding has been provided.

■ Festivals and Special Occasions**Lucy Powell:** [99340]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will publish minutes of meetings where (a) the Great Exhibition 2, (b) Festival UK* 2022 and (c) Unboxed were discussed.

Julia Lopez:

DCMS Ministers meet a wide range of stakeholders on a regular basis relating to the department's portfolio. While DCMS does not routinely publish minutes of meetings, Ministers' official meetings with external organisations are published each quarter on gov.uk. These can be found [here](#).

Lucy Powell: [99341]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will publish any correspondence between her Department and the Prime Minister's Office on (a) Great Exhibition 2, (b) Festival UK* 2022, (c) Unboxed and (d) the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Julia Lopez:

DCMS corresponds regularly with the Prime Minister's Office on a wide range of issues relating to the department's portfolio. DCMS does not routinely publish this correspondence.

■ Football: Governing Bodies**Stuart Anderson:** [100694]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will commit to bringing forward legislative proposals to reform football governance in the next Queen's Speech.

Nigel Huddleston:

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

The Government will continue to engage with stakeholders as we work towards issuing a full response to the report in the Spring. We will, of course, consider the requirement for legislation in due course.

■ **Gambling: Internet**

Rachael Maskell: [\[98993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will bring forward legislative proposals as part of the Online Harms Bill to tackle online gambling firms making offers to their site users that are harmful, including free loans.

Rachael Maskell: [\[98996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will bring forward legislative proposals in the Online Safety Bill to end the use of online gambling advertising.

Chris Philp:

The Online Harms Bill will bring in a regulatory framework for user-to-user services, such as social media and video sharing sites, and search services, such as search engines. Gambling firms are already subject to the specific gambling regulatory regime set out in the 2005 Gambling Act. We are currently reviewing that Act with a focus on ensuring we have the right protections in place to prevent gambling related harm.

All online gambling operators must already be licensed by the Commission and comply with the strict licence conditions including measures to protect children and vulnerable people. Importantly, this includes a range of controls to ensure that all advertising and marketing, including offers, are provided in a socially responsible way. A number of types of gambling operators are similarly prohibited from providing any form of credit. Those who are able to are subject to the stringent restrictions set out in the Gambling Commission's Social Responsibility Codes.

As part of the Act Review's broad scope, we are looking closely at the effectiveness of the existing measures. We are considering the evidence carefully and will publish a white paper outlining any conclusions and proposals for reform in the coming months.

■ **Gambling: Licensing**

Kevin Brennan: [\[100447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing a statutory timeframe for the review of the Gambling Commission's licence fees.

Kevin Brennan: [\[100448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the proposals for changes to Gambling Commission fees published by the independent review of the regulation of BetIndex Limited in June 2021.

Chris Philp:

The Government's Gambling Act Review is taking a close look at how the Gambling Commission licence fees are set and we are considering all the evidence carefully, including the conclusions of the independent review of the regulation BetIndex Ltd, the operator of Football Index, which we published in September. We will publish a White Paper outlining our conclusions and proposals for reform in the coming months.

■ **Internet: Children****Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[100437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure that children are protected online.

Chris Philp:

Please refer to the answer for PQ 91839.

■ **Live Events Reinsurance Scheme****Owen Thompson:**[\[99010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme at covering live events from the risk of cancellation due to covid-19.

Julia Lopez:

The Government recognises the important contribution the live events sector makes to the UK's culture and economy, and the significant challenges the sector has faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Live Events Reinsurance Scheme provides live events across the country with the confidence to plan ahead, and as such will support the UK's post-Covid economic recovery.

Since the Scheme's launch in September 2021, a wide variety of events, including business events, concerts and theatre performances, have purchased cover. The Scheme will be reviewed in the Spring to assess its effectiveness, including the extent to which it has benefitted the live events sector while also delivering value for money for UK taxpayers.

■ **Mobile Phones: Newport West****Ruth Jones:**[\[99048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the impact of the delayed reintroduction of roaming charges in Europe on mobile phone users in Newport West constituency.

Ruth Jones:[\[99049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the impact of the delayed reintroduction of roaming charges in Europe on people travelling to European countries from Newport West constituency.

Chris Philp:

Since the end of the Transition Period on 31 December 2020, the UK has no longer been part of the EU Roaming Regulation known as 'Roam Like at Home'. This means it is a commercial decision for mobile operators as to whether they impose a surcharge on their consumers travelling abroad to the EU for their mobile phone usage.

As per Ofcom regulations, providers must make sure their contract terms are fair and transparent. They must also tell customers about changes to their contracts. Where those changes will particularly disadvantage customers, providers must give them at least a month's notice and the right to exit their contracts without being penalised. Further requirements to prevent roaming bill-shock include providers publishing roaming charges on their website and sending alerts with pricing information when customers start roaming. They must also apply a default £45-a-month (exc VAT) cut-off limit on data roaming unless customers choose to extend this. Our advice is that consumers check with their operators before travelling abroad.

I welcome the recent decision by VirginMedia and O2 to keep roaming free, meaning UK citizens can still use their mobile data, calls and texts across Europe with no extra charges.

■ Music and Theatre: Coronavirus**Rachael Maskell:**[\[98992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to make additional covid-19 support available for music and theatre productions that have to cancel as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

In response to the rising Omicron infection rates and impact on the arts, culture and heritage sector, £30 million from the Culture Recovery Fund has been made newly available. This funding has been used to increase the budget for the reopened Emergency Resource Support strand of CRF, which supports organisations which are within 12 weeks of no longer trading viably.

Many of those who work in musical and theatrical productions are freelancers. As such, the government, via Arts Council England, is also providing an immediate £1.5 million to support freelancers affected by the pandemic, underpinning a further £1.35 million of funding from the theatre sector.

■ Peers' Interests: Finance**Lucy Powell:**[\[99339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to Lord Brownlow of Shurlock Row's register of interests, whether any funding has been allocated by her Department to any companies or charities, or subsidiaries thereof, that Lord Brownlow has an interest in under the Celebrate 2022: Commonwealth Games, Platinum Jubilee, Unboxed programme.

Chris Philp:

DCMS has not allocated any funding to any companies or charities, or subsidiaries thereof, that Lord Brownlow has an interest in under the Commonwealth Games programme, the Platinum Jubilee, or UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK programme.

■ Rugby: Listed Events**Martyn Day:**[\[98343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with broadcasters on the potential merits of free to view broadcast of international rugby matches involving (a) Scotland, (b) England, (c) Northern Ireland and (d) Wales.

Julia Lopez:

I refer to my previous answer of 19 November 2021 that the Department has discussions regularly with broadcasters on a range of matters including those related to the broadcasting of Sport.

The Listed Events regime is designed to ensure that sporting events of national significance are accessible to as wide an audience as possible by ensuring that coverage of certain sports are offered to free-to-air broadcasters. Currently, matches in the Rugby World Cup finals tournament and Six Nations Rugby matches involving home countries are designated on the listed events regime under Group B. This means that they are protected for delayed coverage and/or highlights packages on free-to-air television but it does not preclude these events from being broadcast live on free-to-air television.

■ Social Media**Julian Knight:**[\[98973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that digital and social media platforms apply equitable (a) terms, (b) conditions and (c) policies to (i) general, (ii) local, (iii) specialist and (iv) individual news reporters.

Chris Philp:

The Online Safety Bill will create a new legal requirement on the biggest social media companies to put in place safeguards for journalistic content shared on their platforms. They will need to put in place policies to ensure that the importance of journalistic content is taken into account when making moderation decisions and apply these consistently and transparently. Platforms will be required to ensure protections are applied to all content produced for the purposes of journalism, irrespective of the individual or organisation that generated the content.

■ Sports: Racial Discrimination**Ruth Jones:** [\[101826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had recent discussions with the Welsh Government on tackling racism within sport.

Nigel Huddleston:

Please refer to the answer for PQ 98428.

Ruth Jones: [\[98428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with the Welsh Government on tackling racism within sport.

Nigel Huddleston:

Racism has no place in sport, or in wider society. The Government is committed to ensuring sport does all it can to tackle racism and all forms of discrimination both domestically and internationally.

Grassroots sport is devolved, however I meet with my counterparts in the devolved authorities, including the Welsh Minister for Sport, at least twice a year to discuss shared areas of interest in sport.

Our respective sports councils are also collaborating on work to tackle racism in sport. In June 2021, Sport England, UK Sport and the other home nations' sports councils published the results of a detailed, independent review into tackling racism and racial inequality in sport. The review agreed on some initial overarching commitments that all five organisations will work on together, relating to people; representation; investment, systems and insights. In December 2021, the five Sports Councils released a [joint update](#) outlining the current actions being taken to address the commitments.

There is still more to do, and we will continue to work with the sports councils to combat racism.

EDUCATION**■ Adult Education: Finance****Mr Toby Perkins:** [\[100489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the financial effect of the adult education clawback for the academic year 2021- 22 on affected further education colleges.

Alex Burghart:

We monitor college financial health on a regular basis and use this information to determine where support and intervention from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and Further Education Commissioner can help colleges to improve their position.

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

The financial impact on further education (FE) colleges who did not meet the Adult Education Budget (AEB) Reconciliation threshold for 2020 to 2021 funding year was assessed using information in the College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR) submitted to the ESFA in July 2021. In addition, eligible FE colleges were able to submit an AEB Reconciliation business case with an updated CFFR or additional financial information, where clawback of funds meant this had a material financial impact on their cashflow in 2021-22 financial year.

■ Apprentices

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[100488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of apprenticeship starts in (a) Quarter 1 of 2021, (b) Quarter 2 of 2021 and (c) Quarter 3 of 2021.

Alex Burghart:

The latest published apprenticeship starts data covers the 2020/21 academic year and was published in November 2021 in the Apprenticeships and traineeships statistics publication: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships/2020-21>.

Quarterly apprenticeship starts breakdowns for the 2021 calendar year show:

- 83,500 starts in the first quarter (January to March).
- 65,900 starts in the second quarter of the 2021 academic year (April to June).
- So far, for the third quarter (only July), 21,300 starts have been reported so far.

The attached file contains monthly breakdowns of starts for the entire 2020/21 academic year.

The first in-year apprenticeship starts data for the 2021/22 academic year (covering August to October 2021) will be published in January 2022.

Attachments:

1. [100488 table](#) [100488_apprenticeship_starts_table.xlsx]

■ Apprentices: Construction and Manufacturing Industries

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[100491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to encourage employers in the (a) construction and (b) manufacturing sectors to offer apprenticeships, particularly to those aged under 25 years old.

Alex Burghart:

Apprenticeships provide people with the opportunity to earn and learn the skills needed to start an exciting career in the construction and manufacturing industries.

Employers in the construction, engineering and manufacturing sectors have developed over 230 high-quality apprenticeship standards in their industries. These range from level 2 to level 7 in occupations such as Stonemason, Town Planning and Process Automation Engineer.

In the 2020/21 academic year there were 20,000 apprenticeship starts in the Construction, Planning and the Built Environment sector subject area, and 39,500 starts in Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies.

The department is making apprenticeships more flexible so that they better meet the needs of employers in all sectors, including construction and manufacturing. This is so more employers and individuals can benefit from the high-quality training apprenticeships.

The department is supporting employers to offer more apprenticeships to young people in the construction sector where flexible working practices are commonplace, including short periods of project-based employment. The department is encouraging the use of more flexible training models, front-loaded training and flexi-job apprenticeships to ensure apprentices are ready to work on-site and can benefit from high-quality long-term training that an apprenticeship provides.

Employers can continue to benefit from the £3,000 incentive payment for hiring new apprentices until January 2022. Over 160,000 incentive payments have been claimed by employers so far, as of 22 December 2021, 78% of claims were for apprentices under 25.

The department continues to provide £1,000 to both employers and training providers when they take on apprentices aged between 16 and 18 years old, or 19-to-24-year-old apprentices who either have an education, health and care plan.

■ Apprentices: Taxation

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[100492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the ability of apprenticeship levy paying employers to transfer levy funds to non-levy paying employers.

Alex Burghart:

The department is committed to supporting more employers to use apprenticeships to develop the skilled workforces they need, and to supporting more people, from all backgrounds, to benefit from the high-quality training that apprenticeships offer.

The department continues to make improvements to the levy transfer system to make it easier for large employers to make full use of their levy funds and support starts in their supply chain, sector, or local area, and to support more employers, including small and medium sized enterprises, to take on new apprentices. In September 2021, the department launched a new online service to allow levy-paying employers to advertise funding pledges, and to enable other businesses to browse and apply for these funds.

It is encouraging to see that employers, including DPD, Mace Group, and Amazon UK, are taking advantage of this opportunity to support new apprenticeship starts in all sectors of the economy. So far in the 2021-22 financial year, over 100 employers have pledged £7 million of levy funds for transfer.

■ BTEC Qualifications

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[100490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has (a) sought and (b) received representations from employers about the value that they place on BTEC qualifications.

Alex Burghart:

The department has consulted in two stages on reforms to level 3 qualifications. For both consultations the department sought responses from employers and their representative bodies about our proposals for the range of qualifications that will be funded alongside T Levels and A levels in future. The review has engaged with employer groups representing a range of industry, including construction, digital, engineering, hair and beauty, as well as bodies representing both small and large employers.

We published our plans for reform in July 2021 alongside a summary of the responses received to the most recent consultation. This summary did not separate the responses by employers and their representatives from wider respondents.

We continue to work with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute) to ensure that employers remain at the heart of our reforms. The Institute works extensively with employers to make certain that qualifications are grounded in the needs of the workplace.

■ Department for Education: Telephone Services

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[100513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 92912 on Department for Education: Telephone Services, how many full-time equivalent staff were available to answer calls to that number in each week from 1 October to 30 November 2021.

Michelle Donelan:

In October 2021, there were 32 full time equivalent staff available to answer calls to the department's COVID-19 helpline each week.

In November 2021, there were 18 full time equivalent staff available to answer calls to the department's COVID-19 helpline each week.

The reduction in staffing during November was a temporary measure in response to a reduction in call volumes to our helpline, the staff were redeployed to support a priority business requirement in another part of the department whilst call volumes remained low.

■ Disability and Special Educational Needs: Slough

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[100659]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the provision of services for children with special educational needs and disabilities in (a) Slough and (b) the South East.

Will Quince:

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission carry out local area special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) inspections. Inspectors will look for evidence of how children and young people with SEND are identified, how their needs are assessed and met, and how they are supported to move on to their next stage of education, the world of work and wider preparation for adulthood.

Slough had a local area SEND inspection between 27 September 2021 and 1 October 2021 and are required to produce a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) to improve in 7 areas of significant weakness, which is concerning. Slough are required to send their proposed WSoA within 70 working days of receiving their Ofsted SEND report (due 18 February 2022), and Ofsted will decide if it is acceptable. The department and NHS England advisers are providing support and challenge to Slough in their producing of the WSoA.

Across the south-east of England, there are 10 local areas that were not required to produce a WSoA following an Ofsted inspection. There are 2 local areas that have an active WSoA, and 3 local areas that have an active Accelerated Progress Plan and are making good progress against their individual plans. One local area has an inspection pending, and one was inspected in December and awaits the inspection report.

■ Education: Yorkshire and the Humber

Louise Haigh:

[100613]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding was received from the £7 million Wellbeing for education recovery grant by (a) Sheffield, (b) South Yorkshire and (c) Yorkshire in 2020-21.

Will Quince:

In May 2021, the government provided £7 million in Wellbeing for Education Recovery grants to Local Authorities, to further help education staff in local schools and colleges to promote and support the wellbeing and mental health of pupils and students during recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak. This built on the £8 million support provided in the 2020-21 financial year under the Wellbeing for Education Return scheme.

A grant determination letter for 2021-22 was published on 10 June 2021, confirming a grant of £53,107 was provided to Sheffield, in addition to £61,556 provided in 2020-21: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wellbeing-for-education-return-grant>

[s31-grant-determination-letter](#). As the funding was distributed to upper tier Local Authorities, funding received by South Yorkshire and Yorkshire cannot be provided.

The grant determination letters for 2021-22 and 2020-21 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wellbeing-for-education-return-grant-s31-grant-determination-letter>.

■ Higher Education: Islands

Bob Seely:

[98420]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to expand the provision of higher education in (a) the Isle of Wight and (b) other isolated areas and island communities.

Michelle Donelan:

It is more crucial than ever before that we tap into the brilliant talent that our country has to offer, and make sure that university places are available to all who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them, and who wish to do so.

It was announced in December 2021 that a proposal led by Solent University, in collaboration with the Isle of Wight College amongst others, has been successful in the government's £120 million competition to establish the next wave of innovative new Institutes of Technology across the country, offering higher technical STEM education and training mainly at levels 4 and 5.

Although there are no immediate plans to expand the provision of higher education to other isolated areas and island communities, this government is committed to a sustainable funding model that supports high-quality provision, which meets the skills needs of the country and maintains the world-class reputation of UK higher education.

■ Noonan Syndrome

Fiona Bruce:

[100493]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what Government support is offered to families in which someone lives with Noonan's Syndrome; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing a blue badge for the carer of that person.

Will Quince:

The department recognises that Noonan's syndrome can cause a range of needs and difficulties for individuals, which may mean that they, or their families, require additional support. For children, support can be provided through both the education system, and through children's social care services.

Schools are required to identify and address the special educational needs (SEN) of the pupils they support and to use their best endeavours to make sure that a child or young person who has SEN gets the support they need. Local authorities (LAs) have a statutory responsibility to assess whether children and young people have SEN that require the support of an education, health and care (EHC) plan. If the local authority

issues an EHC plan, it also has a statutory duty to secure the provision specified in the plan, working with its education, health, and social care partners.

Outside education, the department believes that it is right for LAs, who know their areas' needs best, to determine what services are required locally, including early help. In line with this, respite care services for disabled children (which are sometimes known as Short Breaks) are provided based on an individual assessment of each child and family's needs. The Children and Families Act 2014 (Section 97) requires local authorities to assess and support the needs of parents/carers as well as those of children with SEN or a disability. Assessments are based on individual needs but should include parents' well-being and 'control over day-to-day life'.

This year LAs have access to £51.3 billion to deliver their core services, including a £1.7 billion grant for social care. In addition to statutory services, we are providing £27.3 million to the Family Fund in financial year 2021-22 to support over 60,000 families on low incomes raising children and young people with disabilities or serious illnesses. Grants can be used for a range of purposes, including family breaks.

The Blue Badge Scheme provides a national arrangement of parking concessions for people with a range of disabilities and medical conditions to enable them to park closer to the places they wish to visit. Eligibility for a blue badge is not restricted to specific conditions. People with conditions such as Noonan's Syndrome could receive a badge if they meet the eligibility criteria. It is for the relevant LA to decide if an applicant meets the criteria. If an individual is eligible for a badge, then their carer can use it when accompanying the badge holder.

■ Pre-school Education: Ventilation

Helen Hayes: [\[100625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of CO2 monitors offered to nurseries and early years settings; and what proportion of those monitors are still to be delivered.

Helen Hayes: [\[100626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of CO2 monitors offered to youth clubs; and what proportion of those monitors are still to be delivered.

Helen Hayes: [\[100627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate has his Department made of the number of CO2 monitors offered to special schools; and what proportion of those monitors are still to be delivered.

Will Quince:

The department has now delivered over 353,000 CO2 monitors to over 99% of eligible maintained schools, further education colleges, and the majority of early years providers. Special schools and alternative provision education providers were

prioritised, given their higher than average number of vulnerable pupils. Deliveries to these providers are now complete. Final deliveries to providers will be made shortly.

All education providers should receive approximately one CO2 monitor per two teaching rooms. The monitors are portable and so they can be moved around to test their full estate. Feedback from education providers is that they are finding the monitors helpful to manage ventilation and, in the majority of settings, existing ventilation measures are sufficient.

The private sector is autonomous, and it is up to individual providers to decide on whether they want to purchase CO2 monitors. There is no mandate from government to do so. Youth clubs were not included in the rollout of CO2 monitors as youth clubs are autonomous and able to determine their own arrangements to keep young people and staff as safe as possible.

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the department has emphasised the importance of ventilation and had supplied guidance to education providers on ventilation requirements.

■ Schools: Air Conditioning

Luke Pollard: [\[99045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his announcement of the provision of an additional 7,000 air purifiers for increase classroom ventilation on 2 January 2022, how many of those units will be allocated to schools in (a) Plymouth, (b) Devon and Cornwall and (c) the south west region.

Luke Pollard: [\[99046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the provision of an additional 7,000 air purifiers for increased classroom ventilation announced by his Department on 2 January 2022, whether independent and private schools will receive any of those units.

Luke Pollard: [\[99047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the date by which every classroom in Plymouth will have upgraded ventilation to tackle covid-19 concerns.

Mr Robin Walker:

During the autumn term, the department provided over 353,000 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 schools, colleges and nurseries, existing ventilation measures are sufficient.

Maintaining adequate ventilation remains the responsibility of individual providers. 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 will also make up to 8,000 air cleaning units available for poorly ventilated teaching spaces in state-funded education providers, where quick fixes to improve ventilation are not possible. These department-funded units are only available to state-funded schools, colleges and nurseries. The private sector is autonomous and it is up to independent schools to decide on whether they want to purchase air cleaning units.

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 2021. The second round of applications is open until 9am on 17 January. All state funded schools, colleges and nurseries can apply. Special and alternative provision providers that were not successful or did not apply in the first round are also eligible to apply in this round. Once applications have closed, all applications will be assessed against strict criteria and allocated to providers based on need. 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 can be accessed 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 settings with their queries via the Coronavirus Helpline.

■ Schools: Transport

Bridget Phillipson:

[99331]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the impact of (a) covid-19 in general and (b) the omicron variant on the availability of school transport during the second half of the Autumn term in 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department does not collect data on the availability of home to school transport. However, we are talking regularly to the Department for Transport, local authorities and academy trusts to monitor the situation. Local authorities and transport operators

are working hard to ensure children can get to school. We are aware of some temporary, isolated local issues, but the majority of school transport is operating as normal.

During the 2020/21 academic year, the government provided more than £145 million in additional funding for Local Transport Authorities (LTA) to support increased home to school and college transport capacity whilst social distancing was in place on public transport. This funding has enabled many children and young people to access alternatives to public transport. Further information and LTA funding breakdowns can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extended-rights-to-free-school-travel--2>.

■ Schools: Ventilation

Bridget Phillipson: [\[100514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2022 to Question 94344 on Schools: Coronavirus, on what date between 1 March 2020 and April 2021 officials from his Department first had discussions with the Department of Health and Social Care on the use of ventilation technology in school classrooms to reduce the transmission of covid-19.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[100522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Health and Safety Executive about the suitability of 1500 ppm of carbon dioxide as the threshold for funded Government interventions and the carbon dioxide monitors his Department issued to schools in autumn 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[100523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which models of carbon dioxide monitors issued to schools in the autumn term of 2021 were procured by his Department; what technical standards and specifications those monitors were required to meet; and if he will publish those technical standards and specifications.

Mr Robin Walker:

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the department has emphasised the importance of ventilation and provided guidance to schools, colleges and nurseries on ventilation requirements, including on how to use CO2 monitors effectively to identify areas where ventilation can be improved. This includes comprehensive advice on how settings can improve ventilation from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Where readings are consistently higher than 1500 parts per million (ppm) CO2 concentration in an occupied space, schools, colleges and nurseries should take action to improve ventilation. HSE provides more information on this here: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation/identifying-poorly-ventilated-areas.htm>. This will be indicated by a red light on the CO2 monitors supplied by the department. This does not mean that you need to stop using the room. It is the responsibility of schools, colleges and nurseries to decide on the use of affected rooms in accordance

with their risk assessment procedures and obligations under health and safety law. For further information please refer to our guidance available on our ventilation document sharing platform:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12cU_I5q0v1_my97yPMpb87RsSL5d5lpi.

All CO2 monitors units provided by the department have met an approved technical specification. The department's technical specification used to assess the units was developed in consultation with industry wide experts in ventilation, including chartered engineers, scientists and several government departments. The technical specification has been published along with the contract on Contracts Finder in line with the government's transparency agenda. Further details of the models of CO2 monitors issued to schools can be found here:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12cU_I5q0v1_my97yPMpb87RsSL5d5lpi. If

schools, colleges or nurseries have any technical queries regarding their CO2 monitors they should contact the supplier of their device.

■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes:

[93820]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the spread of the omicron variant of covid-19, what (a) assessment he has made of trends in the levels of staff sickness in special schools and (b) steps is he taking to support those schools to stay safely open.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department understands that the Omicron variant is spreading quickly, and studies are underway to collect data to help us understand the impact, including for staff in special schools and special school providers.

The department regularly reviews workforce absence data and the latest published data as of 6 January shows that 6.2% of teachers and school leaders in state-funded special schools and 6.6% of teaching assistants and other staff were absent due to COVID-19 reasons.

As the situation develops, we will continue to review data, analysis, and advice from a number of different sources including the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), and the Office for National Statistics. We also work closely with the Department of Health and Social Care as well as local authorities and Directors of Public Health to inform our planning and response.

Since the emergence of Omicron, the department has updated the operational guidance for special schools and other specialist providers, which sets out how education providers should ensure that pupils and students who are required to isolate are able to access continued education and support. The guidance is clear that whilst our priority is for face-to-face, high-quality education for all pupils and students, if they are unable to attend then we expect their school or college to be able to offer them access to high quality remote education.

The department has re-introduced the COVID-19 workforce fund to provide financial support to eligible schools and colleges for additional staff absence costs incurred from 22 November until the February spring half term in 2022. The fund is available to support schools and colleges facing the greatest staffing and funding pressures to continue to deliver face-to-face, high-quality education to all pupils.

The government is clear on the critical importance of avoiding disruption to children and young people's education. Schools must continue to comply with health and safety law and put in place proportionate control measures in line with our guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>. We continue to review the guidance regularly.

All secondary schools were asked to test their pupils once on-site, using lateral flow device tests, on return in January. Tests, personal protective equipment and funding to support the school workforce were provided. Secondary schools had the option to stagger the return to school for the first week to accommodate on-site testing. In recognition of the additional considerations specialist providers have to take into account when delivering rapid asymptomatic testing, additional guidance is available for these providers: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>. This was updated on the 2 January 2022 to reflect the recommendation that from 4 January 2022 pupils and students in year 7 and above should wear face coverings in classrooms where they are able to do so.

We have also supported nurseries, schools and colleges to improve ventilation. Over 99% of eligible maintained schools, further education colleges, and the majority of nurseries have now received a carbon dioxide monitor with over 350,000 now delivered.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Chemicals: EU Law

Ruth Jones:

[98424]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what economic assessment he has made of the costs and benefits to the UK of (a) aligning with and (b) diverging from EU REACH and EU Classification, Labelling and Packaging (CLP) controls on hazardous chemicals.

Jo Churchill:

An assessment of the costs and benefits of leaving the EU was presented in a [Regulatory Impact Assessment \(RIA\) for the European Union \(Withdrawal\) Bill](#). Analysis of the wider impacts of the UK's exit from the EU was published in the government's [Long-Term Economic Analysis](#) published in November 2018. [An impact assessment](#) was published alongside the REACH etc. (Amendment etc) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/758) and 'de minimis' assessments were prepared for the subsequent REACH amendment regulations and for the EU Exit Statutory

Instruments that put in place a separate GB/UK chemicals regulatory regime for Classification Labelling and Packaging under the terms of retained EU law as set out in the European Union (Withdrawal) Acts.

Having our own independent regulatory framework for chemicals gives us the opportunity to be ambitious and not look solely to the EU to define a successful chemicals regulation. Instead, it enables us to take our own decisions following the best scientific advice taking account of our own specific assessment of risk and the socioeconomic case for change.

■ Grasslands: Environment Protection

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[96926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of (a) agreements reached and (b) funding commitments made at COP26 on the future of grasslands (i) in the UK and (ii) internationally.

Jo Churchill:

Significant global progress was made at UNFCCC COP26 this year. As presidents of COP26, the UK amplified the critical role of nature and secured agreement of the importance of its protection, conservation and restoration. We actively promoted Nature Based Solutions, which include grasslands, to tackle both climate change and biodiversity loss.

The UK is advocating for the protection of at least 30% of land and ocean globally by 2030. Effective protection, management, and restoration of wildlife rich habitats will be vital for securing nature's recovery. At COP26, we welcomed the support of 11 new countries for this vital 30by30 target, bringing the total to over 100 countries.

The environment is a devolved matter. However, I can advise that in England, our Environment Act requires a new legally binding target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030. A domestic 2030 species target will not only benefit wildlife species but the actions necessary to deliver it will help drive wider environmental improvements, including to grasslands.

We also recognise the value of our own grasslands. England's Sites of Special Scientific Interest protect our most important grasslands, which will form an important part of progress towards our domestic 30by30 commitment. We are investing in nature restoration and in nature-based solutions to support grassland creation and restoration, for example, through over £750 million investment in the Nature for Climate Fund and £80 million Green Recovery Challenge Funds.

We are also introducing three new environmental land management schemes - the Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery. These schemes will reward the delivery of environmental benefits including creation and preservation of grassland.

We will maintain strong UK leadership on nature and climate over our COP26 Presidency year to ensure promises are kept, working closely with partners to advance rapid progress.

■ Ivory

Patrick Grady: [\[100580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to remove unwanted ivory products from the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

The Ivory Act 2018 will introduce one of the toughest bans on elephant ivory sales in the world by banning the dealing in items made of or containing elephant ivory, regardless of their age, unless they fall within one of the narrow and carefully defined exemptions. The ban will come into force in the spring.

It is important to note that the Act will not affect the ownership of ivory items. We recognise that, for some low value items, owners may decide it is not cost-effective to register them for sale. This will be a decision for individual owners. Such items may of course be gifted, donated, or bequeathed rather than discarded. We will explain to owners what options are available to them as part of our awareness raising campaign.

■ Plastics: Recycling

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[98517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage the recycling of alkaline polymers through local authorities.

Jo Churchill:

Alkaline polymers typically have highly specialist applications, and as a result are not a significant part of household waste. As such, they are not currently a priority for local authority recycling.

■ Plastics: Waste Disposal

Ruth Jones: [\[98426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to increase the UK's domestic capacity for disposing flexible plastic waste.

Jo Churchill:

Waste is a devolved matter – this information relates to England only.

Defra, and the Government as a whole, is taking significant steps to increase UK plastics recycling – including of flexible plastics.

The Government-funded UK Research and Innovation Industrial Strategy Challenge invested £20 million into four UK plastic reprocessing facilities to develop new technologies to recycle plastic. Three of these projects include the development of

chemical recycling plants which turn difficult to recycle plastic waste (such as plastic films) back into oil which can be used to replace virgin oil for use in new plastic products. More information about these can be found at:

<https://www.ukri.org/news/ukri-funding-puts-uk-at-the-forefront-of-plastic-recycling/>.

We have also taken a range of measures to boost the market for plastic recycling – delivering the conditions for further private sector investment. The Plastic Packaging Tax comes in from April and will see a charge of £200 per tonne on plastic packaging with less than 30% recycled content and measures such as the deposit return scheme and consistent collections will help ensure a consistent supply of high-quality material for recycling.

This continues to be a priority for the department, and officials will continue to engage with plastic recyclers to identify other suitable routes to promote their important work.

■ Solid Fuels

Geraint Davies:

[\[98193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he will continue to allow new applications for the exemption of a solid fuel burning appliance or appliances under the Clean Air Act 1993 after the Ecodesign regulations enter into force on 1 January 2022.

Jo Churchill:

Applications for the exemption of solid fuel burning appliances under the Clean Air Act 1993 will continue.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Angola: Elections

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[98253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to support (a) the Angolan Government and (b) Angolan civil society groups in preparation for peaceful, free and fair elections in Angola.

Vicky Ford:

The dates for the Angolan general elections in 2022 have not yet been announced by the Angolan President or the National Electoral Commission. Angola held a peaceful and democratic election in 2017, and there is no evidence to suggest that this will not be repeated in 2022. The UK, along with likeminded partners, is monitoring the electoral situation closely, including through engagement with government officials and civil society actors. We will continue to press for an inclusive, fair and transparent election, underlining to the Government of Angola the importance of demonstrating the value of democratic reforms and freedoms that have already been implemented.

■ Burkina Faso: Children**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[98903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to support children affected by recent school closures as a result of insecurity in Burkina Faso.

Vicky Ford:

The UK is concerned about escalating violence in Burkina Faso, including the closure of more than 3000 schools as of December 2021 due to insecurity. The UK is the largest bilateral donor to Education Cannot Wait (ECW), a global fund to transform the delivery of education in emergencies. We have earmarked £30 million of our ECW funding between 2019-24 to the Sahel and surrounding countries, including Burkina Faso. This supports access to quality and safe education for children affected by crisis and conflict.

■ Chad: Internally Displaced People**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[98901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help support people displaced in Chad following recent violence in Cameroon over fishing, pastoral, and agricultural resources.

Vicky Ford:

We are aware of the recent influx of Cameroonian refugees into Chad and continue to monitor this. The UK is providing life-saving humanitarian support through the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for protection and basic needs.

We are concerned by instances of intercommunal violence in the Far North of Cameroon, and the impact this has on communities across the Lake Chad Basin. We urge all to engage in dialogue to de-escalate the situation, and ensure delivery of vital humanitarian assistance.

■ China: Forced Labour**Ms Nusrat Ghani:** [\[100586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Minister for Asia made representations to the Chinese Ambassador on the matter of slave labour in UK supply chains with particular reference to Xinjiang during their meeting of 15 December 2021; and whether the Ambassador provided assurances that UK customers will not be purchasing Uyghur slave made goods.

Amanda Milling:

As referenced in my response to written questions 98338 and 98339, I [Minister Milling] raised the UK's serious concerns regarding human rights in Xinjiang during my meeting with Ambassador Zheng on 15 December. The UK has taken robust action to help ensure that no British organisations are profiting from or contributing to human rights violations against the Uyghurs or other minorities. We have introduced

new guidance for UK businesses on the risks of doing business in Xinjiang - supported by a programme of Ministerial engagement - and announced enhanced export controls, as well as a commitment to introduce financial penalties for non-compliance with section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Uyghur Tribunal**

Ms Nusrat Ghani: [\[100587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has people involved in the Uyghur Tribunal (a) before and (b) after that tribunal's verdict of Uyghur genocide in Xinjiang.

Amanda Milling:

FCDO Ministers and senior officials have engaged extensively with the Chair of the Uyghur Tribunal, Sir Geoffrey Nice, over the last year to discuss the Tribunal's work. We recognise and welcome the Tribunal's contribution to building international awareness and understanding of the human rights violations occurring in Xinjiang.

Ms Nusrat Ghani: [\[100588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Minister for Asia has met people involved in the Uyghur Tribunal (a) before and (b) after that tribunal's verdict of Uyghur genocide in Xinjiang.

Amanda Milling:

FCDO Ministers and senior officials have engaged extensively with the Chair of the Uyghur Tribunal, Sir Geoffrey Nice, over the last year to discuss the Tribunal's work. We recognise and welcome the Tribunal's contribution to building international awareness and understanding of the human rights violations occurring in Xinjiang.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: World Uyghur Congress**

Ms Nusrat Ghani: [\[100589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Minister for Asia has met people involved in the World Uyghur Congress.

Amanda Milling:

FCDO Ministers and officials regularly meet members of the Uyghur diaspora and maintain a dialogue with leading human rights Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) about the situation in Xinjiang. Most recently, in December, I hosted a roundtable for human rights NGOs attended by a representative of the World Uyghur Congress.

Ms Nusrat Ghani: [\[100590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has met people involved in the World Uyghur Congress.

Amanda Milling:

FCDO Ministers and officials regularly meet members of the Uyghur diaspora and maintain a dialogue with leading human rights Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) about the situation in Xinjiang. Most recently, in December, I hosted a roundtable for human rights NGOs attended by a representative of the World Uyghur Congress.

Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria**Florence Eshalomi:**[\[100751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the (a) implications for her policies of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria's 2017 - 2022 strategy and (b) extent of alignment between the Global Fund's strategy and the UK Government's planned international development and Global Health strategies.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is the second largest donor to the sixth replenishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria with our pledge of up to £1.4 billion supporting the implementation of their 2017-2022 strategy.

We are grateful to the Global Fund for submitting evidence to our public Call for Evidence, which will help inform the upcoming UK International Development Strategy. The launch of this strategy in Spring 2022 and the publication of the Global Funds new investment case in the coming months will underpin the UK's contribution to the next replenishment of the Global Fund.

Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria: Finance**Florence Eshalomi:**[\[100750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of whether the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria has adequate resources to deliver on its 2023 - 2028 strategy; and what steps the UK Government has taken to ensure the adequacy of that resourcing.

Amanda Milling:

The UK were pleased to join with others on the Board of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to approve their new strategy for 2023-2028. The Global Fund will outline the resources needed to deliver this new strategy in an investment case in the coming months. We look forward to reviewing this in due course.

Hong Kong: Judges**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**[\[100585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, in the context of the conviction of Hang-tung Chow in Hong Kong and with reference to the Six-monthly report on Hong Kong 1 January to 30 June 2021, published on 14 December

2021, if she will revise her assessment that British judges can continue to play a positive role in supporting this judicial independence.

Amanda Milling:

Hong Kong authorities' decision to target leading pro-democracy figures for prosecution is unacceptable. Freedom of expression and the right to peaceful protest, which are protected in both the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law, are fundamental to Hong Kong's way of life.

The National Security Law poses real questions for the rule of law in Hong Kong and the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms promised by China in the Joint Declaration. Our assessment of Hong Kong's judicial independence is increasingly finely balanced. We will continue to follow developments in this area closely.

■ **Horn of Africa: Humanitarian Aid**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[98899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Humanitarian Bulletin: Ethiopia, published by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on 3 January 2022, what steps she is taking to ensure that adequate (a) nutritional, (b) water, sanitation and hygiene, and (c) education support reaches affected populations in the (i) Somalia, (ii) Southern Oromia and (iii) Eastern Oromia Regions of Ethiopia.

Vicky Ford:

The UK shares the concerns outlined by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in their report on 3 January. We concur with OCHA's analysis that 6.4 million people in Oromia and Somali regions require food assistance due to drought conditions. Humanitarian agencies report alarming nutrition indicators among young children which in some locations in Somali region exceed internationally agreed emergency thresholds. In the financial year 2021/2022 the UK has provided almost £59 million to humanitarian agencies working throughout Ethiopia including Oromia and Somali regions.

■ **Kakwenza Rukirabashaija**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[100542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the arrest of Kakwenza Rukirabashaija in Uganda; what steps her Department is taking to secure his release; and what recent representations her Department has made on the conditions in which Kakwenza Rukirabashaija is detained in Uganda and the legality of his detention in Ugandan law.

Vicky Ford:

We are concerned that the Ugandan novelist, Kakwenza Rukirabashaija, following a series of tweets, was detained at his home on 28 December 2021 and then held without charge for 14 days at an unknown facility. Using legislation, such as the Computer Misuse Act, to stifle freedom of expression is very worrying. We welcome

the decisions of the Chief Magistrate's Court and the High Court in relation to Rukirabashija's release and habeas corpus. We note, however, that Rukirabashija was subsequently charged and placed on remand.

We urge the Government of Uganda to ensure that the rule of law is upheld as a vital component of democracy. Rukirabashija must be afforded all of his rights under the Constitution of Uganda, including access to legal representation. Our High Commission in Kampala issued a tweet on 7 January publicly stating our concern over Rukirabashija's continued detention. The High Commission has also set out our concerns over his detention with the Government of Uganda, Uganda's human rights institutions and the security services. We have urged all to ensure that Uganda honours its constitutional commitments and international human rights law.

■ **Kazakhstan: Financial Services**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[100465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of links between members of the Kazakh elite and London's financial services.

Amanda Milling:

The Government has long recognised the corrosive risks of dirty money being laundered in the UK. We have consistently reinforced our ability to crack down on illicit finance in the UK whether through ground-breaking legislation or a strengthened law enforcement response. Serious criminals, corrupt elites and individuals who seek to threaten the security of the UK and allies are not welcome in the UK.

■ **Kazakhstan: Sanctions**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[100464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans the Government has to place sanctions on members of the Kazakh elite with assets in the UK following the civil unrest in that country.

Amanda Milling:

We keep all evidence and potential designations under close review. We will consider targets, guided by the objectives of the relevant sanctions regime and the evidence. It is not normally appropriate to speculate on who may be designated in the future, as to do so could reduce their impact.

■ **Kenya: Elections**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[98895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help support (a) the African Union and (b) civil society groups in preventing violence associated with the Kenyan Presidential election planned for August 2022.

Vicky Ford:

Upcoming general elections in August are the responsibility of the Government of Kenya, all political parties, and the Kenyan people. Peaceful, free and credible elections, in line with international law, are critical to maintaining long term stability in Kenya. The UK is playing an important role in the international community to encourage all parties to work towards this goal. We are engaging at senior levels to encourage all parties to participate responsibly, avoid the use of inflammatory language, and denounce violence and hate speech.

The UK is also working with media and civil society to help deliver effective and peaceful elections, including through support for short and long term election monitoring, and promoting peace and community security in priority regions of the country - with a focus on elections security and preventing election related violence against women. We also encourage the accurate coverage of sensitive issues through our work with media organisations and journalists. We continue to support the African Union's Department for Political Affairs, Peace and Security to deliver peaceful and credible elections across Africa, including in Kenya. This includes support to short and long-term observation missions, longer-term capacity building and specific areas of technical assistance through third parties.

■ Mali: Security**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[100473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to ensure UK (a) nationals and (b) troops in Mali are safe following the announcement of sanctions by ECOWAS and the closure of borders on 10 December 2022.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[100474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to minimise risks of damage to Malian civilian (a) lives, (b) security, (c) wellbeing following the announcement of sanctions by ECOWAS and the closure of borders on 10 December 2022.

Vicky Ford:

We note that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has imposed a range of measures against Mali, following the Malian transitional authorities request to delay elections by up to five years. These measures include regional border closures and a suspension of non-essential commercial transactions, as announced at the ECOWAS Summit on 9 January. The UK has consistently called for elections and a return to constitutional rule in line with the conditions set out by ECOWAS. I made this clear in my statement on 29 September 2021, and the UK Government again reiterated its position in the joint statement with international partners on 23 December 2021.

We stand behind ECOWAS mediation efforts and continue to call on the Malian transitional authorities to prepare for elections without delay so that constitutional

order can be restored as soon as possible. We are monitoring the situation closely, including risks to UK nationals and troops. We remain committed to providing support to those most in need in Mali. We are in touch with partners, including agencies on the ground, to assess potential unintended consequences for humanitarian needs and the ability of our humanitarian partners to respond.

■ Overseas Investment: Sanctions

Catherine West:

[\[100632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government has plans to discourage firms from investing in companies linked to entities designated under the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020, in response to reports that HSBC has facilitated investment in Xinjiang Tianye Ltd, a sister company of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps Public Security Bureau.

Amanda Milling:

The Government has taken a number of measures to help ensure that no British organisations are profiting from or contributing to human rights violations against the Uyghurs or other minorities. We have introduced new guidance for UK businesses on the risks of doing business in Xinjiang - supported by a programme of Ministerial engagement - and announced enhanced export controls, as well as a commitment to introduce financial penalties for non-compliance with section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act. Our overseas business risk guidance makes clear to UK companies the risks of operating in Xinjiang, and urges them to conduct appropriate due diligence and consider their corporate responsibilities when making investment decisions.

■ Senegal: Elections

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[98896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to support (a) the African Union and (b) civil society groups in ensuring that National Assembly elections in Senegal planned for July 2022 are peaceful, free and fair.

Vicky Ford:

The National Assembly elections in Senegal in July will be the responsibility of the Government of Senegal, all political parties, and the Senegalese people. Peaceful, free and credible elections, in line with international law, are an opportunity to build long-term peace and stability in Senegal. Our Ambassador and Embassy in Dakar regularly engage with government and civil society groups to reinforce these messages.

The African Union (AU) provides important support to African nations' development, cooperation and democratic processes. The UK has pledged £35 million (2018 - 22) towards the African Union's objectives, including on peace and security and governance. The UK provides further support to the AU's Political Analysis Cell,

which supports democratic processes, including free elections, and transitional justice in countries undergoing political transition. I underlined the importance of Senegal as a stable democracy which supports regional security and stability in West Africa, during my visit in November.

■ Southern Africa: Travel Restrictions

Ruth Jones: [\[98431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2021 to Question 83474 on Southern Africa: Travel Restrictions, whether she spoke to the Zimbabwean Government on travel restrictions on Southern Africa introduced in December 2021.

Vicky Ford:

Following the decision to impose travel restrictions on 26 November 2021 I offered a phone call to the Zimbabwean Foreign Minister but he was unable to speak because of diary constraints. The Ambassador spoke to the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately following the announcement alongside numerous other senior government officials. Embassy officials continue to be in close contact with the Government of Zimbabwe, sharing information and updates on COVID-19.

■ West Africa: Food

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[98904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) estimate she has made of the number of people at risk of food insecurity (i) in the Central Sahel region and (ii) across West Africa during (A) the 2021 lean season and (B) the 2022 lean season, and (b) steps she is taking to ensure that adequate nutritional support will be available during the 2022 lean season.

Vicky Ford:

According to the Cadre Harmonise, which analyses current and projected food and nutrition situations across West Africa, over 8.1 million people in the Central Sahel are expected to face severe food insecurity during the 2022 lean season. This is a 25% increase compared to 2021. Across West Africa the Cadre Harmonise estimates that 35.8 million people are expected to face severe food insecurity during the 2022 lean season, a 23% increase compared to 2021.

The UK is a major humanitarian donor in the region and continues to support the humanitarian response in the Sahel and West Africa. We are working with partners to address urgent food insecurity, respond to severe acute malnutrition, and provide basic life-saving assistance to conflict-affected people. Examples of UK support include: contributing towards feeding 1.7 million people in Nigeria, providing 400,000 children and 84,000 pregnant and lactating women in Nigeria with nutrition support in 2021; providing life-saving assistance to 10.5 million people across the G5 Sahel since (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Mauritania) since 2019; and providing

humanitarian assistance including nutrition services and health treatment for children in Cameroon.

■ Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps: Overseas Investment

Catherine West:

[\[100631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government is taking steps to encourage firms to divest from sister companies of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps Public Security Bureau, in response to reports alleging that HSBC has facilitated investment in Xinjiang Tianye Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps.

Amanda Milling:

The Government has taken a number of measures to help ensure that no British organisations are profiting from or contributing to human rights violations against the Uyghurs or other minorities. We have introduced new guidance for UK businesses on the risks of doing business in Xinjiang - supported by a programme of Ministerial engagement - and announced enhanced export controls, as well as a commitment to introduce financial penalties for non-compliance with section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act. Our overseas business risk guidance makes clear to UK companies the risks of operating in Xinjiang, and urges them to conduct appropriate due diligence and consider their corporate responsibilities when making investment decisions.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients: Restraint Techniques

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[100635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been subject to restraint in inpatient mental health units, in each year since 2010.

Gillian Keegan:

A table showing the number of people subject to restraint in inpatient mental health or learning disability and autism services from 2016/17 to 2020/21 is attached. This information is not held prior to 2016.

The use of restraint should only ever be used as a last resort. The Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Act 2018, its accompanying statutory guidance and response to the public consultation for this guidance was published on 7 December 2021.

Attachments:

1. [PQ100635 TABLE](#) [PQ100635 table.xlsx]

■ Coronavirus: Children

Rachael Maskell:

[80370]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of covid-19 infections among primary school age children as of 23 November 2021; and what steps he is taking to tackle that matter.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: No specific assessment has been made for the period to 23 November 2021.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) monitors the number of COVID-19 cases by age group in the weekly COVID-19 surveillance reports which are available at the following link:

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

The Department for Education has published guidance on the actions school leaders should take to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in their school, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/schools-covid-19-operational-guidance>

This includes public health advice endorsed by the UKHSA.

In addition, the contingency framework describes the principles of managing local outbreaks of COVID-19 in education and childcare settings. Local authorities, directors of public health and local health protection teams can recommend measures described in the contingency framework in individual education and childcare settings as part of their outbreak management responsibilities. The contingency framework is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-restrictions-in-education-and-childcare-settings/contingency-framework-education-and-childcare-settings>

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Rachael Maskell:

[100596]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons he has not introduced greater public health measures in response to the pressure on the NHS and mortality levels resulting from the covid-19 outbreak.

Maggie Throup:

The restrictions in place since 8 December 2021 will assist to slow the spread of the Omicron variant and reduce pressure on the National Health Service. The Government monitors a wide range of data to assess the risk to the NHS, including metrics such as hospital occupancy for COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients, admissions in vaccinated individuals and the rate of growth of admissions. The

Government reviewed the current measures on 5 January 2022 and assessed that in response to the latest data, these restrictions should remain in place. We will review these measures before the associated regulations expire on 26 January 2022.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[92835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential effect of vaccine passports on the spread of covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

'Vaccine passports' have not been introduced. Domestic COVID-19 status certification can be acquired via a recent test, a full course of vaccination or a medical exemption or participation in a clinical trial for a COVID-19 vaccine.

Mandatory domestic vaccination or test certification is included in a range of measures aimed at reducing pressure on the National Health Service. Negative test results provide assurance that an individual is not infectious when the test is taken and for a short time afterwards. Evidence suggests that vaccination reduces the likelihood of infection or transmission by a small degree in the context of the Delta variant, which continues to circulate. Early evidence suggests that vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic infection after two doses is significantly lower against infection by the Omicron variant. However, moderate to high vaccine effectiveness is seen in the early period after a booster dose. Effectiveness is also likely to be higher for preventing severe disease and continues to be vital in response to high levels of cases of the Delta variant.

Domestic vaccine or test certification will reduce risks in certain settings in comparison with no intervention. However, it will not eliminate the possibility of infectious people attending or transmitting the virus in these settings so individuals should continue to exercise caution.

■ Coronavirus: Drugs

Stella Creasy:

[\[99334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been treated with (a) Ronapreve, (b) Sotrovimab or (c) molnupiravir for covid-19 in each week since the start of December 2021.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 12 January 2022]: Ronapreve is available to treat patients in hospital who have confirmed COVID-19 and have either been hospitalised for the management of symptoms or are at high-risk of progression to severe illness. To 5 January 2022, 78 patients had been treated through the COVID Medicines Delivery Units (CMDUs).

The deployment of Sotrovimab began on 20 December 2021. To 5 January 2022, 1,961 patients had been treated through the CMDUs. The deployment of molnupiravir began on 16 December 2021. To 5 January 2022, 2,883 patients had been treated

through the CMDUs. To 10 January 2022, 2,875 people enrolled on the PANORAMIC national study which has a molnupiravir treatment ratio of 1:1.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Rachael Maskell: [\[93795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the level of covid-19 infection risk from non-mask wearing in the hospitality sector; and what steps he plans to take to manage that risk.

Maggie Throup:

No estimate has been made. However, in deciding whether to mandate the wearing of face coverings in hospitality settings, the Government considered health, economic, societal and practical issues and concluded that it was impractical to require people to remove their face covering in settings primarily used for eating and drinking. To mitigate this risk, we continue to recommend that people wear face coverings in indoor settings, even where not mandated and to receive their primary or booster doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Christian Matheson: [\[98972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2022 to Question 87696 on Protective Clothing: Coronavirus, if he will list the number of sites where unused personal protective equipment is being stored, by county.

Edward Argar:

The information requested is shown in the following table.

LOCATION	NUMBER OF FACILITIES
Durham	3
Essex	2
Leicestershire	4
Greater Manchester	1
Staffordshire	1
Stirlingshire	1
South Yorkshire	2
Suffolk	5
Warwickshire	1
West Yorkshire	2
Shanghai	1

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Ruth Cadbury: [\[96894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the availability of lateral flow covid-19 tests in the London Borough of Hounslow.

Maggie Throup:

We continue to procure stock to meet ongoing demand, including in Hounslow, through national and local delivery channels. We have significantly increased distribution capacity to meet the demand for tests to be delivered to homes. Lateral flow devices can also be collected from local pharmacies and some community sites. We expect to deliver 90 million tests a week across the United Kingdom. In England, this includes approximately 12 million tests a week through pharmacies and seven million a day through GOV.UK.

Paul Girvan: [\[97027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what accountability and scrutiny measures are in place to ensure that private companies endorsed by the Government to carry out covid-19 PCR testing are supplying customers with tests and test results promptly.

Maggie Throup:

All providers must complete a declaration stating that their testing services meet certain minimum standards. We monitor the performance, including delivery and testing services, of private providers to ensure a high quality service. This includes issues raised by the public, data submitted by the provider and reports from regulatory and oversight bodies where applicable.

Where the UK Health Security Agency becomes aware that a provider is no longer meeting the minimum standards or that its activities may be putting public safety at risk, the provider will be required to undertake remedial action. We reserve the right to remove a provider's listing from GOV.UK in the interim whilst remedial action is being undertaken.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[100421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 20 December 2021 to Question 88623 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, what information the Government holds on the number of people who arrived in the UK in 2021 and claimed asylum who have been given (a) one, (b) two and (c) three covid-19 vaccinations.

Maggie Throup:

The information requested is not held centrally. Vaccination is offered free of charge to every adult and eligible child living in the United Kingdom, regardless of immigration status.

Rachael Maskell:[\[100595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what is the current average efficacy of the covid-19 booster vaccine after (a) 4 weeks, (b) 8 weeks and (c) 4 months.

Maggie Throup:

Data on the current average efficacy of the COVID-19 booster vaccine is not available in the format requested. However, recent data on the Omicron variant shows that two to four weeks after a COVID-19 vaccine booster dose, vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic infection ranged from approximately 65 to 75%, reducing to 55 to 70% at five to nine weeks and 40 to 50% from 10 or more weeks after the booster dose. Vaccine effectiveness against hospitalisation is much higher, at approximately 95% at two to nine weeks after a booster dose and remaining at approximately 90% at 10 or more weeks in those aged 65 years old and over following a booster vaccination.

Jonathan Ashworth:[\[60429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 vaccination sites were open in England in (a) July, (b) August, (c) September and (d) October 2021.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 26 October 2021]: The following table shows the number of vaccination sites open in England in each month from July to October 2021.

MONTH	NUMBER OF SITES
July	1,989
August	1,869
September	1,887
October	2,447

This data does not include pop-up or roving sites, as these numbers fluctuate on a regular basis and may be operational for a defined period of time.

Ruth Cadbury:[\[75906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who have received an MHRA approved covid-19 vaccination outside of the UK are able to receive a third vaccination in the UK.

Ruth Cadbury:[\[75907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who received their covid-19 vaccination outside of the UK are able to receive a third vaccination in the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 22 November 2021]: Many of those who received an approved COVID-19 vaccination outside the United Kingdom will be able to receive a third vaccination or booster dose when they become eligible.

Everyone aged 16 years old and over, those aged 12 to 15 years old in a clinical risk group, or a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed or severely immunosuppressed themselves and received a third primary dose, are eligible for a booster vaccine three months after their primary course.

Sir Desmond Swayne:[\[79255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that housebound patients can receive covid-19 vaccinations and boosters at home.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 25 November 2021]: For patients who usually receive their treatment at home and are considered to be housebound, general practitioners (GPs) and community teams will determine the best approach to vaccination, based on their knowledge of the patient and their circumstances. Some patients may be able to attend a Primary Care Network (PCN) designated site with assistance and a discussion should be held with the patient's family and/or carer to facilitate this.

Where a GP practice participates in the Enhanced Service for the COVID-19 vaccination programme, the practice should make provision for booster doses for to be given to patients who are housebound and are unable to attend a PCN site.

Where a practice is not part of the Enhanced Service, the practice should contact their local clinical commissioning group to make alternative arrangements for such patients via another PCN grouping. PCNs have also established mobile vaccination teams, which are aimed at those who are unable to leave their homes. NHS England and NHS Improvement have also introduced a range of measures to support GP practices to increase capacity, from additional workforce availability to increases in the supplement paid for booster vaccinations of housebound patients.

Emma Hardy:[\[79453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to support people who are unable to leave their homes to get the booster covid-19 vaccination.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: For patients who usually receive their treatment at home and are considered to be housebound, general practitioners (GPs) and community teams will determine the best approach to vaccination, based on their knowledge of the patient and their circumstances. Some patients may be able to attend a Primary Care Network (PCN) designated site with assistance and a discussion should be held with the patient's family and/or carer to facilitate this.

Where a GP practice participates in the Enhanced Service for the COVID-19 vaccination programme, the practice should make provision for booster doses for to be given to patients who are housebound and are unable to attend a PCN site. Where a practice is not part of the Enhanced Service, the practice should contact their local clinical commissioning group to make alternative arrangements for such patients via another PCN grouping. PCNs have also established mobile vaccination teams, which are aimed at those who are unable to leave their homes. NHS England and NHS Improvement have also introduced a range of measures to support GP practices to increase capacity, from additional workforce availability to increases in the supplement paid for booster vaccinations of housebound patients.

Justin Madders:

[\[87709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) relevant stakeholders on ensuring that under 16s can demonstrate their vaccination status via the NHS Covid Pass.

Maggie Throup:

While we have had no specific discussions, officials have regular contact with other Government departments and relevant stakeholders. Children in England aged 12 to 15 years old who have received a full course of COVID-19 vaccination are now eligible for a NHS COVID Pass letter for travel. A digital solution via NHS.UK will be available early in 2022.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[100419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 December to Question 86035 on Coronavirus: Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme; for what reason the number of staff in his Department engaged in assessing applications to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme on the covid-19 vaccine was not provided; and how many staff were engaged in assessing those applications on (a) 2 December 2021 and (b) 10 January 2022.

Maria Caulfield:

There are no Departmental staff assessing applications to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS). Following the transfer of the VDPS administrative function to the NHS Business Services Authority in November 2021, there are currently 26 members of staff processing claims, increased from 15 members of staff in December 2021. Once sufficient evidence is gathered on a VDPS claim they are medically assessed by an independent, experienced medical adviser.

■ **Dementia**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[100543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of implications for its policies of the Global Burden of Disease

study findings, published on 7 January 2022, that dementia cases in the UK will increase by 75 per cent by 2050.

Gillian Keegan:

We are aware of the findings of the study, although no formal assessment has been made.

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) has been co-ordinating and delivering work relating to dementia risk reduction. This includes producing the Productive Healthy Ageing profile, which contains data for local areas on the risk factors for dementia and working with voluntary sector partners to raise awareness of dementia risk reduction messages. OHID also has responsibility for national oversight of the NHS Health Check programme which aims to prevent some forms of dementia.

We will be setting out our plans on dementia for England for future years in 2022. This will include a focus on prevention and risk reduction.

■ **Diabetes: Health Services**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[100534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of missed routine diabetes appointments on the number of patients who are presenting with complications from that disease.

Maria Caulfield:

No formal assessment has been made. However, we are analysing the impact of the pandemic on major health conditions to inform how we can recover the provision of routine care.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[100535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of the suspension of the Quality and Outcome Framework on the size of the backlog of diabetes patients.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made.

In December 2021 measures were announced to increase general practice capacity and financial support to deliver an expanded vaccine programme, including part-income protecting the 2021/22 Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF). However, to be eligible for income protection, practices were required to agree a plan with their commissioners to deliver QOF care where possible according to clinical risk and accounting for inequalities, in order to target and support the most vulnerable patients.

■ General Practitioners: Coronavirus**Paul Howell:** [\[99091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to decrease GP surgery appointment waiting times in the context of the pressure placed on those services by the Omicron variant.

Maria Caulfield:

General practitioners (GPs) have been asked to prioritise COVID-19 booster vaccinations and emergency care. While appointments may be postponed, NHS 111 and community pharmacy teams are available to provide health advice.

We have agreed temporary changes to increase capacity in general practice. This includes extending the period of self-certification to access Statutory Sick Pay, suspending requests for medical information from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (excluding bus and lorry drivers) and suspending the re-certification requirement for existing prescription charge medical exemptions.

■ Health Services: Standards**Theresa Villiers:** [\[100458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the elective recovery plan with details of meeting workforce requirements referred to in his oral evidence to the Health Select Committee, Clearing the backlog caused by the pandemic, HC 599, taken on 2 November 2021.

Edward Argar:

This will be published in due course.

■ Health: Females**Sarah Olney:** [\[100637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which Minister in his Department has responsibility for the Women's Health Strategy.

Maria Caulfield:

I have Ministerial responsibility for the Women's Health Strategy.

■ Travel: Coronavirus**Justin Madders:** [\[48263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2021 to Question 35710 on Travel: Coronavirus, what discussions he has had with (a) Member States, (b) the International Civil Aviation Organisation and (c) the WHO on the recognition of certain AstraZeneca covid-19 vaccine batches by the EU Digital Covid-19 Certificate.

Maggie Throup:

Following discussions with Member States, the European Union published a list of vaccines it considers as equivalent to those authorised by the European Medicines Agency for the purposes of travel. This recognised all vaccines administered in the United Kingdom, including all batches of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccines.

Discussions with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) focused on strategies for the safe and sustainable reopening of international travel. This consisted of common standards on certification, including for all COVID-19 vaccines deployed in the UK. Through our membership of ICAO's Council Aviation Recovery Taskforce, we assisted the delivery of a global harmonised approach to restart and recovery. We are working with the WHO as it develops its policy on vaccination travel risks and smart COVID-19 status certification. The ICAO will then develop further international aviation guidance to build a more resilient and sustainable international civil aviation system. This was discussed further during the ICAO's Conference held in October 2021.

Gill Furniss:[\[56691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that approved covid-19 vaccines delivered in Pakistan are recognised in the UK to allow fully vaccinated travellers from Pakistan to travel to the UK without the need for quarantine.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 October 2021]: Since 9 January 2022, eligible fully vaccinated travellers from Pakistan can take a lateral flow device test on or before day two of their arrival in England, without the need to quarantine. Those who receive a positive result must self-isolate immediately and order a National Health Service polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test through GOV.UK. Positive PCR tests for these arrivals will be sequenced to understand the potential for variants of concern.

■ Virgin Care: Somerset**David Warburton:**[\[100755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in the context of NHS commissioning services from Virgin Care, what assessment he has made of the potential reduction in services provided by Virgin Care across Somerset following its purchase by Twenty20 Healthcare; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

No specific assessment has been made. However, NHS England and the local clinical commissioning group are ensuring that safe, high quality services are commissioned to meet the needs of their residents.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Afghanistan**

Stuart C McDonald: [\[100571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to expedite outstanding asylum applications from Afghan nationals who are in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

The UK has a proud history of providing protection to those who need it, in accordance with our international obligations.

All asylum claims are considered on a case by case basis and in line with published policy. Claims by Afghan nationals will be considered in the same way as claims from any other nationality.

We do not believe it is appropriate to prioritise claims from one nationality over another as many claimants, irrespective of nationality, are potentially vulnerable and no one is expected to leave the UK while they have a claim outstanding.

Stuart C McDonald: [\[100572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether it is her policy that no Afghan nationals currently in the UK asylum system will be returned to Afghanistan.

Kevin Foster:

No one who is at real risk of persecution or serious harm in Afghanistan will be expected to return there, and enforced returns of those who have been refused asylum and have exhausted all rights of appeal are currently paused.

Imran Hussain: [\[96907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan refugees have been housed in hotels in the Bradford district since August 2021.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 12 January 2022]: There are currently over 12,000 evacuees from Afghanistan in bridging hotel accommodation nationally across the UK. We are proud this country has provided homes for more than 4000 evacuees in such a short space of time.

There is a huge effort underway to get families into settled homes so they can settle and rebuild their lives. We don't want to see families remain in hotel accommodation for long periods. There is 1 hotel in Bradford with capacity for 100 residents. We do not give running commentaries on how many rooms in which hotels are occupied.

Data on relocation will be published as part of our quarterly release which can be found at this link: [Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/data-and-statistics/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets)

■ Immigration: Fees and Charges

Peter Kyle:

[\[100624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October 2021 to Question 57193 on Immigration: Fees and Charges, when the revised policy on overseas fee waivers will be published.

Kevin Foster:

The overseas fee waiver policy is being revised to include an assessment of affordability for specified applications on the human rights route.

The revised policy and related application system is currently being developed and is expected to be published shortly.

■ Joint Fraud Taskforce

Emily Thornberry:

[\[98228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the (a) structure, (b) goals, (c) strategy and (d) remit of the Joint Fraud Taskforce re-launched by her Department on 28 October 2021.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 10 January 2022]: The Joint Fraud Taskforce (JFT) is a joint public and private sector Board, chaired by the Security Minister. Its mission statement is:

To bring together partners from across the public and private sectors to tackle fraud and substantially improve the protections in place for the public and businesses.

The goals of the JFT are to:

- Help prevent the public from falling victim to fraud by working across industry sectors, regulators, the third sector and law enforcement.
- Develop technical innovation and solutions to harden systems and close vulnerabilities that criminals exploit.
- Apply dynamic and meaningful protect messaging designed to induce more cautious behaviour when making financial or data transactions.

The JFT's remit and structure is built around formulation and delivery of the voluntary industry elements of the Fraud Action Plan, which will be published in full in 2022.

This work includes:

- Overseeing the delivery and success of the sector charter programme, (through charter working groups);
- Overseeing work on cross-industry action to tackle online fraud (through the Online Fraud Steering Group);
- Overseeing work by industry, government and the third sector to better support victims (through the Victims Working Group);

- Overseeing work to better align and improve messaging and communications campaigns on fraud (through the Communications Group).

Following its relaunch on 21st October, the JFT Board is working with industry to develop quantitative and qualitative targets for each working group.

Membership information is available on GOV.UK. The following organisations make up the current membership of the JFT:

- Home Office
- National Economic Crime Centre (NECC)
- City of London Police
- National Trading Standards
- UK Finance
- British Retail Consortium (BRC)
- Cifas
- National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC)
- OFCOM
- Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales
- Victims Commissioner
- Citizens Advice
- Victim Support
- FCA
- Law Society of England and Wales
- Association of British Insurers (ABI)
- TechUK
- Communications Crime Strategy Group (CCSG)
- TUFF
- Serious Fraud Office
- DCMS
- HMT

Individual attendance may vary and full lists of attendees for each meeting are published with the minutes of JFT after the meeting has taken place.

The JFT Board will meet at least three times a year, and the second meeting will take place in early 2022.

Previous dates of meetings and attendance information is available on GOV.UK. Prior to 21 October 2021, the Joint Fraud Taskforce last met on 18 November 2020.

The meeting was chaired by Mike Haley of Cifas and was attended by representative from the following organisations:

- City of London Police
- National Economic Crime Centre
- National Trading Standards
- Nationwide
- Telefonica
- UK Finance
- BRC
- NCSC
- Home Office

Emily Thornberry: [\[98229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) qualitative and (b) quantitative targets the Joint Fraud Taskforce, re-launched by her Department on 28 October 2021, is using to measure its impact.

Emily Thornberry: [\[98230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which (a) organisations and (b) individuals make up the current membership of the Joint Fraud Taskforce.

Emily Thornberry: [\[98231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how regularly the Joint Fraud Taskforce is intended to meet; and on what dates the Taskforce has met since it was re-launched by her Department on 28 October 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[98232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Joint Fraud Taskforce last met prior to its re-launch on 28 October 2021; and which organisations and individuals were in attendance at that meeting.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 10 January 2022]: The Joint Fraud Taskforce (JFT) is a joint public and private sector Board, chaired by the Security Minister. Its mission statement is:

To bring together partners from across the public and private sectors to tackle fraud and substantially improve the protections in place for the public and businesses.

The goals of the JFT are to:

- Help prevent the public from falling victim to fraud by working across industry sectors, regulators, the third sector and law enforcement.
- Develop technical innovation and solutions to harden systems and close vulnerabilities that criminals exploit.

- Apply dynamic and meaningful protect messaging designed to induce more cautious behaviour when making financial or data transactions.

The JFT's remit and structure is built around formulation and delivery of the voluntary industry elements of the Fraud Action Plan, which will be published in full in 2022.

This work includes:

- Overseeing the delivery and success of the sector charter programme, (through charter working groups);
- Overseeing work on cross-industry action to tackle online fraud (through the Online Fraud Steering Group);
- Overseeing work by industry, government and the third sector to better support victims (through the Victims Working Group);
- Overseeing work to better align and improve messaging and communications campaigns on fraud (through the Communications Group).

Following its relaunch on 21st October, the JFT Board is working with industry to develop quantitative and qualitative targets for each working group.

Membership information is available on GOV.UK. The following organisations make up the current membership of the JFT:

- Home Office
- National Economic Crime Centre (NECC)
- City of London Police
- National Trading Standards
- UK Finance
- British Retail Consortium (BRC)
- Cifas
- National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC)
- OFCOM
- Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales
- Victims Commissioner
- Citizens Advice
- Victim Support
- FCA
- Law Society of England and Wales
- Association of British Insurers (ABI)
- TechUK
- Communications Crime Strategy Group (CCSG)

- TUFF
- Serious Fraud Office
- DCMS
- HMT

Individual attendance may vary and full lists of attendees for each meeting are published with the minutes of JFT after the meeting has taken place.

The JFT Board will meet at least three times a year, and the second meeting will take place in early 2022.

Previous dates of meetings and attendance information is available on GOV.UK. Prior to 21 October 2021, the Joint Fraud Taskforce last met on 18 November 2020. The meeting was chaired by Mike Haley of Cifas and was attended by representative from the following organisations:

- City of London Police
- National Economic Crime Centre
- National Trading Standards
- Nationwide
- Telefonica
- UK Finance
- BRC
- NCSC
- Home Office

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Caroline Lucas:

[\[96840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the changes to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy published on 14 December 2021, how (a) Afghan Chevening Scholars and (b) Afghans who worked for or with the Government but not directly on military or security objectives and who are at risk as a result of those activities can apply to be resettled in the UK; and if she will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 12 January 2022]: We have helped over 15,000 people to safety in the largest and fastest emergency evacuation in recent history, and we have continued to bring people to the UK, with around 1,500 people helped to enter since the evacuation.

The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) will continue to offer current or former locally employed staff who are assessed to be under serious threat to life priority relocation to the UK.

During the first year the Government will offer Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) places to the most at risk British Council and GardaWorld contractors, and Chevening alumni as set out in the Oral Statement on 6th January. These cohorts played a key role in supporting the UK mission in Afghanistan, and it is right that we honour our commitments to them. Due to the success of Op Pitting and larger than anticipated number of people brought over to the UK, we plan to exceed our initial aim of 5,000 people in the first year of the ACRS.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will be in touch with those eligible to support them through the next steps. Beyond the first year of the ACRS, we will work with international partners and NGOs to welcome wider groups of Afghans most.

Further details on referral for resettlement can be found in the recent statement to Parliament on 6 January: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/oral-statement-on-the-afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

Vicky Foxcroft:

[96984]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether Government Liaison Officers are still assigned to bridging hotels for Afghan refugees; and if she will provide to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford the contact details for the officer based at the Holiday Inn, Stoke.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 12 January 2022]: We can confirm that Hotel Liaison Officers (HOLOs) continue to provide ongoing support and advice to those residing in all of our Bridging Hotel Accommodation.

The role of the HOLO is to provide both face to face support and remote support when not physically present, they are reactive to the needs of those accommodated in hotels.

We have provided the details of the Hotel Liaison Officer for Stoke directly to the Member for Lewisham, Deptford.

Layla Moran:

[99037]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when year one of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme started.

Layla Moran:

[99038]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the total number of (a) women and girls and (b) individuals from minority groups who have been resettled under the ACRS scheme as of 6 January 2022.

Layla Moran:

[99039]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether there is a target for each of the three referral pathways under the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme.

Layla Moran: [\[99040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether persons who had made an application to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy before criteria was changed in December 2021 will have their referrals rolled over to the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme.

Layla Moran: [\[99041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of people in the UK who are eligible for resettlement under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will provide up to 20,000 women, children and others at risk with a safe and legal route to resettle in the UK over the coming years. The scheme opened on 6th January.

Further details on how the scheme will operate can be found in the policy statement on Afghanistan resettlement and immigration on 13 September and my statement to the House here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/oral-statement-on-the-afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

As set out in September 2020, those eligible for the scheme include individuals evacuated during Operation Pitting.

The Government has already evacuated thousands of women and girls from Afghanistan - for example female judges, women's rights activists and a girls' football team. As each ACRS pathway opens, those at most risk, including women and children and minorities will continue to be prioritised. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) will refer refugees most at risk to the ACRS, including women and girls as per their vulnerability criteria.

The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) will continue to offer current or former locally employed staff who are assessed to be under serious threat to life priority relocation to the UK. During the first year the Government will offer ACRS places to the most at risk British Council and GardaWorld contractors, and Chevening alumni. These cohorts played a key role in supporting the UK mission in Afghanistan, and it is right that we honour our commitments to them.

In the first year of the ACRS the Government plans to exceed our initial aim to resettle 5,000 people. In addition to those already in the UK, we are working with the UNHCR to receive referrals of vulnerable refugees in need of protection in year 1 of the ACRS, and we will continue to receive referrals to the scheme in coming years. Beyond the first year of the ACRS, we will work with international partners and NGOs to welcome wider groups of Afghans most at risk.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION**■ Big Ben: Repairs and Maintenance****Alan Brown:**[\[96954\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the cost was of the set-up, trials and tests of the temporary bell striking mechanism in the Elizabeth Tower.

Sir Charles Walker:

The approximate cost of commissioning, out of hours attendance, set up and testing of the temporary mechanism for all the occasions during the project when Big Ben has sounded is £96,000.

The overall contract value for the project includes all the costs of initial commissioning of the temporary mechanism used for this purpose and testing and operating it on each occasion it has been used since the project started in 2017. The mechanism was used on 10 occasions, with Big Ben also being sounded several times in the run-up to each New Year's Eve, as well as for testing in advance of each occasion that was marked.

Arrangements for striking Big Ben were coordinated round the planned works so as to minimise the impact on the project costs and to ensure there was no delay to the project. The temporary striking mechanism used during the project will be kept as an integral part of the refurbished clock mechanism's contingency arrangements.

The Elizabeth Tower and the Great Clock are currently undergoing the most extensive conservation project ever carried out in the 160 years since the bell began to strike. The clock mechanism, which usually powers the hammer that strikes the Great Bell (Big Ben), has been dismantled and removed for refurbishment.

In 2017 the House of Commons Commission decided that during the Elizabeth Tower refurbishment project, Big Ben should only sound for Remembrance Sunday, Armistice Day and New Year's Eve, to allow the project team to schedule works around those occasions. The Commission reconfirmed the decision in 2018.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Arms Trade: Arab States****Ruth Cadbury:**[\[100568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the Written Statement of 8 December 2021, HCWS449 on Trade Policy Update, what assessment her Department made of the potential effect of those changes on levels of arms exports to (a) Saudi Arabia and (b) United Arab Emirates.

Penny Mordaunt:

We do not expect the revised Strategic Export Licensing Criteria to have a significant impact on the level of arms exports to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Risks in relation to human rights and international humanitarian law remain key parts of our assessment.

■ Arms Trade: Export Controls

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[100569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the Written Statement of 8 December 2021, HCWS449 on Trade Policy Update, whether her Department has undertaken an impact assessment on the recent changes announced to UK arms export control.

Penny Mordaunt:

On the revised Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, no impact assessment was carried out as we do not expect the changes to have a significant impact on the level of arms exports.

An impact assessment was carried out on the proposed changes to the Military End-Use Control. The assessment concluded the changes would have a minimal impact on legitimate trade while allowing the Government to prevent exports of otherwise non-controlled items that pose threats to national security, international peace and security, and human rights in embargoed destinations.

■ Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[100566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the Written Statement of 8 December 2021, HCWS449, on Trade Policy Update, whether she received representations from the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on the impact of those changes on arms exports to Saudi Arabia.

Penny Mordaunt:

My Rt. Hon. Friends, the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and the Secretary of State for Defence, were fully involved in the preparation of the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. The revised Criteria were agreed by all three Secretaries of State.

■ Energy: Kazakhstan

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[100704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what data her Department holds on how much funding the UK has invested in Kazakhstan's energy sector in each of the last ten years.

Mike Freer:

The Department for International Trade does not produce or hold data on how much funding the UK has invested in Kazakhstan's energy sector. However, data on UK investment is published by the Office for National Statistics, and can be accessed via

the Department for International Trade and Investment Factsheets:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/trade-and-investment-factsheets>

JUSTICE

■ Prisoners' Release

Steve Reed:

[\[100557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 15 December 2021 to Question 90879, on Prisoners' Release, how many prisoners released in error had been convicted of rape; and for how long those prisoners remained at large before being returned to custody.

Victoria Atkins:

A prisoner is released in error if they are released earlier than their correct release date, they will be unlawfully at large until and unless they are subsequently released correctly or returned to custody. If the person released is not aware of the error and makes no attempt to evade arrest, then they have committed no offence and, in that sense, they may not be at fault.

Releases in error are monitored closely to analyse the frequency across the estate and identify any trends nationally, while taking into consideration the management of risk to the public.

(i) How many prisoners released in error had been convicted of rape; and for how long these prisoners remained at large before being returned to custody

If a request is made for information where very small numbers are involved, the MoJ must consider whether this could lead to the identification of individuals. Since the total number of prisoners released in error where their main offence was rape is two or fewer, we are not able to give further details either by year or for the whole period.

Steve Reed:

[\[100559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 10 January 2022 to Question 98316, if he will publish the eligibility criteria for early release under the End of Custody Temporary Release scheme.

Steve Reed:

[\[100560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 10 January 2022 to Question 98316, how many risk assessments of inmates were carried out under the End of Custody Temporary Release scheme.

Kit Malthouse:

The End of Custody Temporary Release scheme (ECTR) operated between April and August 2020. Full eligibility details were published at the time. These included minimising the risk to public protection, with those assessed as a high risk of serious harm or convicted of sexual or violent offences excluded; only those who were already close to release and had already served at least half of their time in prison

were eligible. In order to comply with contemporaneous Government directions on Covid-19 prisoners would have to have suitable accommodation and healthcare provision available outside of custody.

When considering who would be eligible for the scheme, establishments assessed their entire populations to find those potentially eligible based on sentence length, and offence type among other factors. Those who met the initial criteria were then assessed based on their behaviour in custody and healthcare needs among other factors prior to deciding if they were suitable for release. Data on the number of prisoners who reached the final stages of risk assessment for the ECTR could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

Alex Norris: [\[100666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, [with reference to the policy paper entitled Protecting the integrity of our elections: Voter identification at polling stations and the new Voter Card, published by the Cabinet Office on 6 January 2022, what assessment he has made of the demographic composition of the 2 percent of voters which the Cabinet Office estimates will not have the required documents for voting after the changes proposed in the Elections Bill.

Alex Norris: [\[100667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of the potential number of cases of voter fraud which proposed changes to voter identification procedures will prevent each year.

Alex Norris: [\[100668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many cases of (a) alleged and (b) confirmed voter fraud were identified in 2020.

Alex Norris: [\[100669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the report entitled Photographic ID Research - Headline Findings, published by the Cabinet Office on 31 March 2021, what steps the Government plans to take to help ensure that the 5 percent of respondents who said changes to voter ID would make them less likely to vote are not deterred from voting.

Alex Norris: [\[100670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of the cost of introducing voter cards.

Kemi Badenoch:

Under our proposals for introducing voter identification, everyone who is eligible to vote will continue to have the opportunity to do so. Any eligible voter who does not

have one of the wide range of acceptable forms of photographic identification, can apply for a free, local Voter card from their local authority. The Electoral Commission will provide a comprehensive, targeted communications campaign and guidance, raising awareness throughout the electorate of the new voter identification requirements. Likewise, the Government will continue to work with charities and civil society organisations across the UK to ensure that voter identification works for all voters, and all groups are aware of the new requirements.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries

Helen Hayes: [\[99017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the impact of alleged price fixing by truck manufacturers on (a) local authorities finances and (b) costs of essential services.

Helen Hayes: [\[99018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he is taking steps to support local authorities to manage increased costs for the purchase or lease of trucks in response to alleged price fixing by truck manufacturers.

Kemi Badenoch:

Local authorities should not lose out as a result of illegal anti-competitive activity. Civil claims for damages or other redress arising from infringements of competition law may be brought before the High Court or the Competition Appeal Tribunal, which is the UK's specialist judicial body for determining competition law disputes

On 16 December, the Government announced the provisional Settlement, which makes available an additional £3.5 billion to councils. This is an increase in local authority funding for 2022-23 of over 4% in real terms, which will ensure councils across the country have the resources they need to deliver key services. In total, we expect Core Spending Power to rise from £50.4 billion in 2021-22 to up to £53.9 billion next year.

■ Local Plans: York

Rachael Maskell: [\[100592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will require the York planning inspectors to develop an evidence-based Local Plan.

Rachael Maskell: [\[100593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the length of time that greenbelt boundaries should endure beyond the period of the Local Plan.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[100594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to ensure that the City of York Local Plan includes provision for self-build and custom housing.

Christopher Pincher:

The Local Plan remains at examination and the independent Inspector plays an important role in examining plans impartially to ensure that they are legally compliant and sound.

Due to the quasi-judicial role of Ministers in the plan, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on a plan at examination. It is for the independent Inspectors to address these issues.

Only in exceptional circumstances may a local authority alter a Green Belt boundary – using its local plan – and only if it can show evidenced justification that it has examined all other reasonable options for meeting its identified development needs.

The Inspectors intend to hold further hearings in line with an indicative timetable between February and June to revisit a number of topic areas in order to move the examination forward as efficiently and effectively as possible.

It is important to ensure that progress on the York local plan is maintained and the Inspectors given the opportunity to issue their final report. The Government has set a deadline for all local planning authorities to have up-to-date local plans by the end of 2023. This will help deliver the certainty that local communities and businesses deserve.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[100449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he plans to reply to the correspondence from the hon. Member for East Londonderry of 28 October 2021 on Policing Ombudsman delays regarding a murder case in Londonderry.

Conor Burns:

A response was issued from my office on 11 January 2022.

■ **UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**

Jim Shannon:

[\[98282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent steps have been taken by the EU to facilitate trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and what steps he is taking to help ensure that business are able to source parts from Great Britain for (a) vehicles and (b) lawn mowers.

Conor Burns:

The Government welcomed the European Union's acknowledgement in October last year that the current operation of the Protocol is having considerable impacts on Northern Ireland businesses and on the people of Northern Ireland more widely.

In December, the European Union published proposals with the intention to facilitate medicine supply to Northern Ireland. The Government is considering these proposals carefully.

In relation to movement of goods, whilst the Trader Support Service and the Movement Assistance Scheme provides support to traders moving goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, businesses continue to raise significant concerns with me and it is clear that there needs to be substantively different processes for goods remaining in the UK, in order to deal with these very real challenges.

The Government has made clear that discussions with the EU need to proceed with renewed urgency and our continued preference is to reach a comprehensive solution dealing with all the issues now. However, as long as there is no agreed solution, Article 16 safeguards remain on the table to deal with the very real problems faced in Northern Ireland.

SCOTLAND**■ INTERREG Programme: Scotland****Ian Murray:**[\[100496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will list the Scotland-based organisations currently in receipt of Interreg Funding from the European Regional Development Fund.

Mr Alister Jack:

Interreg (or European Territorial Cooperation) programmes are not managed directly by the UK Government, but by independent Managing Authorities who are responsible for making payments to organisations acting as project partners. Each Managing Authority has a regulatory responsibility to publish details of the organisations in receipt of funding.

■ Scotland Office: Buildings**Rachel Hopkins:**[\[99110\]](#)

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

Mr Alister Jack:

The floor area of the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland's (OSSS) managed estate for the period requested is shown below.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND

Year	Holding Floor Area (sqm)
2020-21**	0
2019-20*	767
2018-19	2,613
2017-18	2,613
2016-17	2,613
2015-16	2,613
2014-15	2,653
2013-14	2,653
2012-13	2,653
2011-12	2,653
2010-11	2,653

* The lease of our London office was passed to the Government Property Agency.

** Our Edinburgh office moved to the UK Government Hub in Edinburgh.

TRANSPORT

■ **Airlines: Dispute Resolution**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[100662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a proposed mandatory dispute resolution scheme for the airline industry.

Robert Courts:

The Government remains absolutely committed to ensuring consumers are protected when travelling by air. As announced in both the Global Travel Taskforce report in April, and the 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: [\[100660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of passengers who have yet to receive a refund from flights cancelled as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Robert Courts:

The data requested for the number of individuals due to receive refunds for cancelled flights is not centrally recorded by the Department for Transport.

The UK Civil Aviation Authority reviewed airline compliance on refunds and worked collaboratively to improve performance on consumer obligations, over the summer of 2020. The majority of airlines now pay refunds within seven days. During the pandemic Government made clear, including through the publication of the Passenger COVID-19 Charter, that everyone should be as flexible as possible during whilst travelling during the pandemic, and the industry has responded with flexibility.

■ Aviation: Fares

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[100661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions his Department has had with airlines to ensure that passengers are provided with refunds in the event of flight cancellations.

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 compliant on refunds and worked collaboratively to improve performance. The majority of airlines now pay refunds within seven days.

■ Bus Services: Newcastle upon Tyne

Chi Onwurah: [\[100537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help ensure that Newcastle's live bus service data is available for third party applications.

Trudy Harrison:

Since 7 January 2021, it has been legally required that operators of local bus services across England openly publish their bus live location data to the Bus Open Data Service. Currently, 98% of vehicles are currently fitted with Automatic Vehicle Location devices.

Third party application developers are able to access this open data online via the [Find Bus Data Service](#) for inclusion in journey planners and applications, helping passengers plan their journey on public transport on their mobile phone or computer.

While DfT does not offer funding for the publication of this data, guidance on data publication can be accessed online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-open-data-implementation-guide>

Business change support is offered to bus operators to help them meet their statutory requirement of publishing data, due to higher levels of digital exclusion particularly for smaller operators.

■ Bus Services: Travel Information**Chi Onwurah:****[100536]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what (a) requirements and (b) guidance his Department has for bus operators in receipt of public funds on making live service information accessible to third party apps via open data interfaces.

Trudy Harrison:

Since 7 January 2021, it has been legally required that operators of local bus services across England openly publish their bus live location data to the Bus Open Data Service. Currently, 98% of vehicles are currently fitted with Automatic Vehicle Location devices.

Third party application developers are able to access this open data online via the [Find Bus Data Service](#) for inclusion in journey planners and applications, helping passengers plan their journey on public transport on their mobile phone or computer.

Guidance on data publication can be accessed online:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-open-data-implementation-guide>

■ Clean Air Zones: Greater Manchester**Lisa Nandy:****[100531]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of global supply chain issues in the automotive sector on the ability of businesses, organisations and individuals in Greater Manchester to upgrade to cleaner, compliant vehicles under the plans for the introduction of a Greater Manchester Clean Air Zone.

Trudy Harrison:

Under the 2017 UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) Concentrations, a number of local authorities including those in Greater Manchester were required to take urgent action to address NO₂ pollution.

Greater Manchester authorities identified a Clean Air Zone (CAZ) as the means of achieving compliance with NO₂ levels in the shortest possible time.

We have provided for a Clean Air Fund (CAF) to help local authorities support individuals and businesses affected by local air quality plans and least able to adapt. This includes making a substantial £132 million CAF award to Greater Manchester to help businesses upgrade to compliant vehicles. The HGV support scheme has recently opened for applications. Schemes for those vehicles that will initially be exempted from the CAZ are due to launch later in the year. As such, most of the funding already provided is yet to be allocated.

We have also agreed with Greater Manchester authorities we will continue to work with them to understand the situation in the future based on the monitoring and evaluation of progress and to keep the position of further funding under review subject to clear evidence of need and have agreed a process for doing so.

We understand that Greater Manchester authorities will also provide an exemption from charging for people and businesses who can show they are awaiting the delivery of a compliant vehicle.

■ Electric Scooters

Alun Cairns: [\[98933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he will publish the findings of the trials conducted by the Government on E-scooters.

Alun Cairns: [\[98934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on providing guidance to the police on tackling (a) illegal or (b) unsafe usage of E-scooters.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department has in place a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation programme for the trials. The interim report should be published shortly, and we expect to publish the final report in spring 2022.

Officials have been in regular contact with the National Police Chiefs' Council who are developing a national strategy for tackling the illegal use of e-scooters (both private use and illegal use in trial areas – pavement and twin riding) to ensure a more uniform approach, but it is not our intention to provide guidance to the police. Enforcement of offences relating to unlawful use of e-scooters is an operational matter for individual Chief Officers of police in conjunction with local policing plans.

Officials have also been in contact with their counterparts at the Home Office to provide briefing for Ministers on the e-scooter trials.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Vacancies

Ian Lavery: [\[98956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle the shortage of heavy goods vehicle drivers who provide (a) refuse collection and (b) other local services.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government has taken 32 specific measures to deal with the shortage of HGV drivers across all sectors including refuse collection and other local services. These measures include funding for HGV driving apprenticeships such as the Category C Urban Driver standard, Skills Bootcamps to train 11,000 more drivers, and support for jobseekers.

In addition, we have taken steps to increase DVSA's capacity for HGV driving tests to 3,200 per week, an increase of over 100% compared to pre-pandemic levels. Test capacity now exceeds demand. Despite the increase in vocational driving licence applications and licence renewals there are no delays in processing, and all vocational provisional licences and licence renewals are being processed within five working days, unless further medical checks are required.

■ London Northwestern Railway: Crew

Mohammad Yasin: [\[99364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to tackle the driver shortages disrupting the Marston Vale Line run by London North Eastern Railway.

Wendy Morton:

In common with other train operators, the Omicron COVID-19 variant has significantly affected staff availability on London Northwestern Railway (LNR). As a result, LNR has temporarily focused its reduced resources on providing a resilient train service on those routes with the most passengers and where bus replacement would be impractical.

The inconvenience to passengers on the Marston Vale line is regrettable, and we will be working with LNR to ensure that the train service is restored as soon as it can be reliably provided.

■ Motor Vehicles: Registration

Greg Smith: [\[99072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average amount of time required by the DVLA is to process a new V5C registration application form for a historic vehicle.

Greg Smith: [\[99073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to reduce incorrect rejections of historic vehicles V5C forms.

Greg Smith:[\[99074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure historic marque specialists are consulted in the appeals process for rejected VC5 applications for historic vehicles.

Trudy Harrison:

An application to register a used vehicle (which includes historic vehicles) with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) for the first time takes on average between four to six weeks. A vehicle registration certificate (V5C) is then issued for the vehicle.

The DVLA advises applicants on how best to proceed with their application if further evidence is needed and information is also available on GOV.UK.

The DVLA regularly engages with historic vehicle owners' clubs and takes into account information received from historic marque specialists in support of applications. The DVLA recognises that some vehicles require the expert opinion of specialists to ensure that historic vehicles are preserved. Every effort is made where evidence allows to reunite vehicles with their original registration numbers and if that is not possible to allocate alternative age-appropriate registration numbers.

The DVLA has recently set up a user group to support the historic vehicle sector. This promotes collaborative working between representatives from the historic and classic vehicle sector in relation to the DVLA's services, policies, and initiatives.

■ Offshore Industry: Shipping**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[98455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the specified requirements are for supply boats working in the offshore renewables sector when licences are approved.

Robert Courts:

There is no direct connection between the licensing of offshore renewables projects and the standards for living and working conditions applying to supply boats working in the sector. The standards for living and working conditions for seafarers on all merchant ships is the International Labour Organization's Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 ("the MLC"). The UK's Maritime and Coastguard Agency has the powers to enforce the standards of the MLC on all UK flagged ships and all other merchant ships calling in UK ports or operating in UK territorial waters.

■ Oxted Line: Electrification**Tom Tugendhat:**[\[100591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether electrification of the Uckfield Line will form part of projects to be implemented, as part of the Williams-Shapps plan for rail.

Wendy Morton:

The Department for Transport is in the process of considering how the recently concluded Spending Review 2021 will impact on a range of rail projects, including the

proposed electrification of the line between Hurst Green and Uckfield. A decision as to whether the scheme will progress further will be made in due course.

■ Railways: North of England

Louise Haigh: [\[100616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of fast trains that would run between Leeds and Manchester per hour under (a) Transport for the North's preferred option and (b) the Integrated Rail Plan.

Andrew Stephenson:

The same number of fast trains per hour (6) would run between Leeds and Manchester under (a) Transport for the North's preferred option and (b) the Integrated Rail Plan proposals.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Louise Haigh: [\[99009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the total Highways Maintenance funding allocation was for (a) Hertfordshire Council, (b) Lancashire County Council, (c) Oxfordshire County Council, (d) Cumbria County Council and (e) Walsall Council in (i) 2019-20 and (ii) 2020-21.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department for Transport provides funding by formula to all eligible local authorities, outside of London, to support the maintenance of the local road network, including Hertfordshire Council, Lancashire County Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Cumbria County Council, and Walsall Council. This funding is not ring-fenced, allowing local highway authorities to spend their allocations according to their own priorities.

Walsall Council is a constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). For both 2019/20 and 2020/21, all their formula funding for maintenance was paid directly to the Combined Authority so the table below lists the total funding provided to WMCA.

£ MILLION	2019/20	2020/21	TOTAL
Hertfordshire	18.201	28.673	46.874
Lancashire	23.676	38.325	62.001
Oxfordshire	17.096	27.315	44.411
Cumbria	27.745	44.305	72.050
WMCA	16.785	33.705	50.490

■ Train Operating Companies: Contracts**Andy McDonald:** [\[100564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many organisations attended the rail passenger service contract market engagement day on 4 November 2021; and which owning groups attended that day.

Wendy Morton:

550 individuals registered for the Rail Passenger Service Contract (PSC) day on the 4 November representing 228 organisations. These organisations included existing or potential investors, owning groups or operators; other attendees included advisors, rolling stock companies and infrastructure providers.

■ Train Operating Companies: Industrial Disputes**Andy McDonald:** [\[100561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, who will be responsible for risks arising from industrial action under rail passenger service contracts.

Trudy Harrison:

Officials continue to consider the financial implications and approach to risks arising from industrial action under the Passenger Service Contracts; no policy decisions have yet been made.

Andy McDonald: [\[100562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether there are any financial implications for operators of (a) National Rail Contracts and (b) rail passenger service contracts in the event of industrial action.

Wendy Morton:

(a) The financial implications for operators would depend on the nature of the industrial action and the actions of the operator. Where an operator failed to take appropriate action to mitigate the risk of industrial action in line with its NRC obligations, then potentially it may be liable for any revenue lost as a result. Further information on DfT payments to passenger rail operators under emergency agreements and National Rail Contracts is available on gov.uk. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dft-payments-to-passenger-rail-operators-under-emergency-agreements>).

(b) Officials continue to consider the financial implications and approach to risks arising from industrial action under the Passenger Service Contracts; no policy decisions have yet been made.

Andy McDonald: [\[100563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the rail passenger service contract market engagement day on 4 November 2021, what discussions took place on the risks arising from industrial action; and what the outcomes of those discussions were.

Wendy Morton:

As communicated to participants, information provided at the market engagement day was indicative in nature. No overall decision on the future solution, technical elements, funding or commercial approach to passenger service contracts has yet been agreed.

Officials from the Department communicated an emerging policy position that Operators will continue to be responsible for the management of relationships with staff and unions, and that the Department are considering the possibility of offering operators some conditional relief from performance penalties in the event of industrial action, provided that the relevant operator acts in a good and efficient manner.

■ Transport for London: Property Transfer**Theresa Villiers:**[\[100459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 9 December 2021 to Question 87625, on Transport for London: Property Transfer, if he will set out his reasons for approving the applications submitted by Transport for London under section 163 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 to dispose of operational land at (a) Arnos Grove Underground Station in 2020-2021, (b) Canons Park Underground Station in 2019, (c) Rayners Lane Underground Station in 2019 and (d) Stanmore Underground Station in 2019.

Trudy Harrison:

The Secretary of State granted consent to the application at Arnos Grove Underground Station based on TfL's application and the consideration as to whether the operational land was no longer required by TfL for discharging its functions. This is in line with the requirements under section 163 of the Greater London Authority Act. The applications relating to Canons Park, Rayners Lane and Stanmore Underground stations were consented to by the previous Secretary of State, in accordance with the same requirements.

Theresa Villiers:[\[100460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 9 December 2021 to Question 87625, on Transport for London: Property Transfer, if he will place in the Library a copy of the application submitted by Transport for London under section 163 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 to dispose of operational land at Cockfosters Underground Station.

Trudy Harrison:

The application relating to Cockfosters Underground Station is still under consideration. It would not therefore be appropriate to publish a copy of the application submitted by Transport for London in the House of Commons Library at this time.

Theresa Villiers:

[\[100461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 9 December 2021 to Question 87625, on Transport for London: Property Transfer, whether he plans to undertake a public consultation in respect of his decision on the application submitted by Transport for London under section 163 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 to dispose of operational land at Cockfosters Underground Station.

Trudy Harrison:

The application at Cockfosters Underground Station is still under consideration. Section 163 applications are submitted by TfL and as part of this process, the Secretary of State is informed of any public consultation that has been undertaken. This forms part of the Secretary of State's consideration as to whether operational land is no longer required by TfL for discharging its functions, as per the requirements under section 163 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999.

■ Travel: Night-time Economy

Louise Haigh:

[\[100617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the (a) availability and (b) affordability of (i) public and (ii) other forms of transport on the safety of workers in the nighttime economy; and if he will make a statement.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government recognises the vital role that safe public transport, including taxi and private hire vehicles, plays in getting people to and from work at all times of the day and night.

Bus Back Better, the Government's national bus strategy published last year, recognises the important role buses have to play in meeting local transport needs. Through the Bus Service Operators Grant £259 million of funding is available annually to be claimed by operators of qualifying services. This enables operators to keep fares down and ensure services are run which otherwise would not be, providing greater accessibility to bus services than otherwise would be the case. As part of the strategy the Government plans to issue new guidance on 'socially necessary' services, expanding the category to include 'economically necessary' services such as those supporting the night time economy.

Taxis and private hire vehicles play an important role in supporting the night-time economy when mass transit may not be so readily available. As of 31 March 2021, there were 251,100 licensed taxis and private hire vehicles. Local authorities have the power to set taxi fares for journeys within their area, and most authorities do so. Local authorities have no power to set fares for private hire vehicles. Fares for private hire vehicles, which must be pre-booked with a licensed operator, are set by the operator. The competitive pre-booked market allows operators to compete on price as well as other factors such as quality of service.

The Department has worked with Local Transport Authorities and light rail operators to ensure the availability of light rail public transport is correct for the conurbations they serve. Light rail coronavirus (COVID-19) funding has ensured Local Transport Authorities can continue to operate services for the people of their region allowing for access to jobs and leisure, and that this remains unaffected by any impacts the pandemic may have had.

Maintaining a safe and secure railway remains a priority for Government, through initiatives such as the British Transport Police's 61016 campaign.

TREASURY

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Neil Coyle: [\[100565\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support businesses that have not sufficiently recovered from the impact of the covid-19 pandemic to be able to afford repayments on their Bounce Back Loans, even after they have taken advantage of the six month repayment holiday.

John Glen:

Any business concerned about repayments should get in touch with their lender who will be able to provide support and talk them through their options.

In order to give businesses who have borrowed under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme further support and flexibility in making their repayments, the Chancellor announced "Pay as You Grow" (PAYG) options in September 2020. In addition to the six month full repayment holiday, PAYG gives businesses the option to extend their Bounce Back Loan repayments over ten years, reducing their average monthly repayments on the loan by almost half. Businesses also have the option to move to interest-only payments for periods of up to six months (an option which they can use up to three times). If borrowers want to take advantage of these options, they should notify their lender.

■ Cryptocurrencies

Rachel Reeves: [\[100509\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential risks to financial stability of the growth in cryptocurrency and other cryptoasset holdings; and if he will place a copy of that assessment in the Library.

Rachel Reeves: [\[100510\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the estimated value of cryptocurrencies and other cryptoassets held in the UK by (a) households, (b) non-financial businesses, (c) financial businesses and (d) other organisations; and if he will place a copy of those estimates in the Library.

John Glen:

The Bank of England's Financial Policy Committee (FPC) noted in its December 2021 [Financial Stability Report](#) that direct risks to the stability of the UK financial system from cryptoassets are currently limited. However, it also noted at the current rapid pace of growth, and as these assets become more interconnected with the wider financial system, cryptoassets will present a number of financial stability risks.

The Chancellor laid the Financial Stability report in Parliament on the 14th December.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) published consumer research in June 2021, which offered insight into the cryptoassets market in the UK. The FCA found that 4.4% of UK adults currently hold cryptocurrency, or approximately 2.3 million consumers. The FCA also found that the median value of holdings of crypto owners was £300, and 47% of crypto owners (who chose to declare their holdings) had £260 or less in crypto.

According to the December 2021 Financial Stability Report, no major UK banks have reported having direct exposures to cryptoassets as yet, some UK and global banks are starting to offer a variety of services, such as cryptoasset derivatives trading, and custody services.

The UK authorities continue to monitor developments in this area very closely and have already taken a series of actions to support innovation while mitigating risks to stability and market integrity. These include launching a new anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing regime for cryptoassets in 2020; consulting on proposals to ensure cryptoasset promotions are fair, clear and not misleading; and consulting on a proposal to ensure cryptoassets known as 'stablecoins' meet the same high standards expected of other payment methods. The Government will issue responses to the consultations shortly.

■ Debts: York**Rachael Maskell:**[\[98988\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the number of adults in (a) York and (b) York Central constituency living in households where there is personal debt.

John Glen:

The Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) monitors financial difficulty in the UK through the Debt Need Survey, with data on levels of over-indebtedness at a local authority level last published in 2018. MaPS will publish the results of the 2021 Debt Need Survey early this year, which will include a regional breakdown of their new Need for Debt Advice measure.

WALES**■ Fisheries: Wales****Ruth Jones:**[\[99058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Welsh fishing industry on the effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on their ability to operate.

Simon Hart:

I have regular discussion with representatives from various stakeholders in relation to UK-EU trade. My officials have also met with representatives from the Welsh fishing industry.

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) upholds UK sovereignty, protects our rights as an independent coastal state and takes back control of our waters. Throughout the five and a half year adjustment period, the UK Government will invest in fishing communities, and will do everything it can to rebuild the industry after more than forty years of being bound to the Common Fisheries Policy.

Furthermore, the UK Government has gone well beyond its manifesto commitment to replace EU funding, by investing an additional £100 million through the UK-wide UK Seafood Fund (UKSF). A year on from the TCA, a positive picture is emerging for the fishing industry. The UKSF is tangible evidence of the UK Government's commitment to Wales' fishing industry and ensuring that it has a sustainable and prosperous future.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan**Ruth Jones:**[\[99051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme.

Simon Hart:

Representatives from across Government, including the Minister for Afghan Resettlement, meet frequently with colleagues in the Welsh Government and across the Devolved Administrations to update them on the resettlement of Afghans in the UK.

Through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, the government will resettle up to 20,000 people over the coming years, and 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 the rule of law, as well as vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk (including ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT+).

■ Television Licences: Older People

Ruth Jones:

[\[99060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the removal of free TV licences for people aged over 75 on people affected by that change in (a) Newport West constituency and (b) Wales.

Simon Hart:

The Government recognises the value of free TV licences for over-75s and believes they should be funded by the BBC. Television is important to people of all ages, particularly for older people across the UK, including those in Newport West and Wales as a whole, who may value television as a way to stay connected with the world.

The Digital Economy Act 2017 provides that the future of the licence fee concession is the responsibility of the BBC, not the government. The BBC must look at how it uses its substantial licence fee income to support older people. The BBC must also ensure it provides support to those affected by its decision on the over-75s concession and we expect them to do so with the utmost sensitivity.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland and Wales

Ruth Jones:

[\[99053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of a failure to reach agreement with the EU on the Northern Ireland protocol on trade between Wales and Northern Ireland.

Simon Hart:

The Government is monitoring and assessing these critical trade routes between Wales, Northern Ireland, Ireland and the rest of the UK. Ministers meet regularly to discuss such matters, to ensure effective implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement and support the implementation of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Our overall aim is to re-negotiate the Northern Ireland Protocol and any solution must respect the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. We have worked hard, and in good faith, to make the Protocol work, while the EU finally acknowledged in October that the operation of the Northern Ireland Protocol is causing problems for people and businesses. Our preference is to reach a comprehensive solution dealing with all the issues now.

We want a positive relationship with the EU, underpinned by trade and our shared belief in freedom and democracy. Resolving the current issues is critical to unleashing that potential.

■ Wales Office: Buildings

Rachel Hopkins: [\[99111\]](#)

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

David T C Davies:

The floor area of the Office of the Secretary of Wales' estate between 2010-11 to 2020-21 was

REPORTING PERIOD	TOTAL NET INTERNAL FLOOR AREA (M2) *
2010: 31/12//10	1,106
2011: 01/01/11	1,106
2012: 01/01/12	1,106
2013: 01/01/13	1,106
2013-14	1,141
2014-15	1,141
2015-16	1,141
2016-17	1,141
2017-18	1,141
2018-19	1,141
2019-20	1,141
2020-21	1,141

* The floor area is taken from the "State of the Estate Reports" which are laid in Parliament and provide an annual summary of the central government estate.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Poverty: York

Rachael Maskell: [\[98987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the number of people living in (a) poverty and (b) relative poverty in (i) York and (ii) York Central constituency.

Rachael Maskell:

[98989]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many children in (a) York and (b) York Central constituency are living in (i) poverty and (ii) relative poverty.

David Rutley:

The latest information on the number and proportion of children who are in low income families in York and York Central constituency, covering the six years, 2014/15 to 2019/20, can be found at: [Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014 to 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2020).

National Statistics on the number of people in low income are published annually in the "Households Below Average Income" publication. Data for York and York Central constituency is unavailable due to insufficient sample size.

Latest statistics for the number of people who are in low income in Yorkshire and the Humber and England, covering 2019/20, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2020> in population-hbai-timeseries-1994-95-2019-20-tables data table 3.20ts (absolute low income, before and after housing costs) and 3.18ts (relative low income, before and after housing costs).

This Government is wholly committed to supporting those on low incomes, and continues to do so through many measures, including by spending over £110 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2021/22 and by increasing the National Living Wage by 6.6% to £9.50 from April 2022.

As our recovery gathers pace and with record vacancies, our focus now is on continuing to support parents into and to progress in work. This is because we know that work, particularly where it is full-time, substantially reduces the risks of child poverty and improves long-term outcomes for families and children. Our multi-billion-pound Plan for Jobs, which has recently been expanded by £500 million, will help people across the UK to find work and to boost their wages and prospects.

Universal Credit recipients in work can now benefit from a reduction in the Universal Credit taper rate from 63% to 55%, and an increase in the work allowance by £500 per year meaning that working households will be able to keep substantially more of what they earn. These measures effectively represent a tax cut, worth around £2.2bn a year in 2022-23, for the lowest paid in society and will benefit almost two million of the lowest paid workers by £1000 a year on average.

We recognise that some people may require extra support over the winter, which is why vulnerable households across the country are now able to access a new £500 million support fund to help them with essentials. The Household Support Fund provides £421 million to help vulnerable people in England with the cost of food, utilities and wider essentials. The Barnett Formula applies in the usual way, with the devolved administrations receiving almost £80 million (£41m for the Scottish Government, £25m for the Welsh Government and £14m for the NI Executive), for a total of £500 million. City of York Council are receiving £1,037,906.47 of this funding.

To support low-income families further we have also increased the value of Healthy Start Food Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25, helping eligible low income households buy basic foods like milk, fruit and vitamins, and we are investing over £200m a year to continue our Holiday Activities and Food programme, which is already providing enriching activities and healthy meals to children in all Local Authorities in England.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Disqualification**

Kate Osamor:

[\[97005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claims suspended under the Risk Review process have been reinstated as of 24 December 2021.

David Rutley:

Approximately 3% of cases reviewed under the Risk Review Process between May 2020 and the beginning of January 2022 have been re-instated.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Gibraltar: UK-EU negotiations

Minister for Europe (Chris Heaton-Harris):

[\[HCWS534\]](#)

On 14 and 15 December 2021 the UK hosted a fourth round of negotiations with the European Union (EU) on Gibraltar, following previous rounds in December, November and October 2021.

Talks have been constructive and are making positive progress. Discussions have covered a range of issues within the Political Framework agreed between the UK Government, together with the Government of Gibraltar, and the Kingdom of Spain on 31 December 2020.

Ensuring the fluid movement of people between Gibraltar and the EU has been the key area of discussion. Other areas have included the movement of goods, law enforcement and criminal justice, transport, social security coordination, citizens' rights, and data protection.

Negotiations with the EU will continue in the coming weeks. The UK remains fully committed to seeking a treaty based on the careful and pragmatic balance achieved by the Political Framework. The UK has been clear we will not agree to anything which compromises UK sovereignty.

We are, of course, working closely with our Gibraltarian friends for a solution that works for the people of Gibraltar so they can go about their business. The UK Government and Government of Gibraltar agreed our joint approach to negotiations at the UK-Gibraltar Joint Ministerial Council on 29 March 2021. Since then, we have and will continue to work closely together as discussions with the EU progress.

The UK Government and Government of Gibraltar have also continued work to ensure robust plans are in place for all eventualities, including a no negotiated outcome. While the Political Framework provides the route to a treaty it is only prudent to prepare for all eventualities.

In parallel to the UK-EU negotiations the UK Government, with the Government of Gibraltar, is maintaining a regular dialogue with the Kingdom of Spain.

In December, the Foreign Secretary travelled to Madrid to meet the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs José Manuel Albares to discuss strengthening the bilateral relationship between our two nations. The Ministers also welcomed the constructive nature of negotiations between the EU and the UK, reaffirmed their shared commitment to the Political Framework and agreed that it is in everyone's interest to conclude these talks in the first quarter of 2022. The UK looks forward to hosting the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs on a visit to London in the coming weeks.

■ The Sanctions Regulations Report on Annual Reviews 2021

Minister for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (Vicky Ford): [\[HCWS535\]](#)

My noble Friend the Minister for South and Central Asia, United Nations and the Commonwealth (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon), has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today I am pleased to publish “The Sanctions Regulations Report on Annual Reviews 2021”.

Section 30 of the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 requires the Minister to annually review each set of sanctions regulations to assess whether they are still appropriate for the purpose stated in them. The Minister must lay before Parliament a report containing conclusions of the review, the reasons for those conclusions, and a statement of any action that that Minister has taken or proposes to take. The Sanctions Regulations Report on Annual Reviews 2021 meets the requirement of Section 30.

Since the end of the Transition Period, the UK has been pursuing an independent sanctions policy, driven by our foreign policy objectives and projecting the UK as a network of liberty and defender of human rights. As set out in the Integrated Review, the UK uses our sanctions regimes as part of an integrated approach to promote our values and interests, and to combat state threats, terrorism, cyber-attacks, and the use and proliferation of chemical weapons.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Trade Update

Secretary of State for International Trade (Anne-Marie Trevelyan): [\[HCWS533\]](#)

Today I am formally launching free trade negotiations between the UK and India from New Delhi, where I am meeting my Indian counterpart, Honourable Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal.

In line with our commitments to scrutiny and transparency, the Department for International Trade has published, and placed in the House libraries, more information on these negotiations. This includes;

1. The UK’s strategic case for a UK-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA)
2. Our objectives for the negotiations
3. A summary of the UK’s public consultation on trade with India
4. A scoping assessment, providing a preliminary economic assessment of the impact of the agreement

A UK-India FTA would be a substantial opportunity for both of our economies and a significant moment in the UK-India bilateral relationship.

Trade negotiations are a priority for both countries and build upon the Enhanced Trade Partnership launched by Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in May 2021.

The UK-India bilateral trading relationship is already significant, amounting to over £23 billion in 2019, and both sides have agreed to double bilateral trade by 2030. The UK and India will seek to agree a mutually beneficial agreement supporting jobs, businesses and communities in both countries.

By 2050 India will be the third largest economy in the world. The size and growth of the Indian economy means a deal would unlock opportunities in every nation and region of the UK and across all parts of our economy. Tens of thousands of UK jobs are already supported by trade with India, and a trade deal has the potential to almost double UK exports to India, boost our total trade by as much as £28 billion a year by 2035, and boost wages across the UK by as much as £3 billion.

The opportunity is illustrated further by looking at some specific sectors. UK exports like Scotch whisky and cars currently face large duties of 150% and 125% respectively. A deal that removed these significant barriers to trade would make UK firms like car-makers in England's North East and whisky distilleries more competitive.

Services account for almost half of current exports to India and our analysis shows UK companies – from insurance providers, to construction firms, to financial services – are set to gain from a deal as India's economy continues to grow. This could include opportunities for companies that trade digitally, as the Indian government aims to have a trillion-dollar online economy by 2025 and increase internet access to more than 600 million people.

In addition, India's plan to rapidly expand offshore wind power generation is a major opportunity for the UK's world-leading renewable industry that could see UK wind turbines making a major contribution to helping the world reach net zero. UK exporters would benefit from a reduction of tariffs such as a 15% tax on certain wind turbine parts.

A deal with India would be a big step forward in the UK's strategy to refocus UK trade on the Indo-Pacific, where half the world's people live and 50% of global economic growth is produced. A new economic partnership with India, alongside UK membership of the Asia-Pacific trading bloc, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), would create a pillar in the region supporting free and fair trade.

During negotiations, and on the path to a comprehensive agreement, both Governments will consider the option of an Interim Agreement that generates early benefits for both countries. In parallel to trade negotiations, the UK-India Joint Economic and Trade Committee will continue to work in improving the UK-India trading relationship and addressing market access barriers outside of a trade agreement.

The first round of FTA negotiations will begin on 17 January. As negotiations progress, I will ensure that Parliamentarians, UK citizens and businesses are provided with regular updates.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ The Review of Intergovernmental Relations**

Secretary of State for Levelling UP, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS536\]](#)

Today the UK government has published an update on how the UK government and the devolved administrations intend to conduct formal intergovernmental relations with each other. All four governments have agreed to work under these new arrangements. I will be depositing the Review of Intergovernmental Relations in both House libraries.

The Review of Intergovernmental Relations, developed jointly by all four governments, provides an up-to-date and fit-for-purpose system, introducing new structures for more regular, formal intergovernmental engagement and new processes to increase impartiality and to avoid, resolve and, where necessary, escalate disputes. It is a commitment to a cooperative spirit and to constructive collaboration with the devolved administrations, through more transparent and accountable arrangements, and will be to the benefit of citizens in every part of the UK.

TREASURY**■ Penalty Reform for VAT**

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Lucy Frazer): [\[HCWS537\]](#)

In Finance Act 2021, the Government legislated to reform penalties for late submission and late payment of tax, initially from 1 April 2022, and to align interest charges for VAT with other major taxes.

Today, I am announcing that these changes for VAT businesses will now be introduced 9 months later, on 1 January 2023.

HMRC is committed to becoming one of the most digitally advanced tax authorities in the world. The ambition and pace of change needs to be balanced with well-tested systems and good customer service, particularly when businesses are facing additional challenges and uncertainty.

This extra time allows HMRC to ensure the IT changes necessary for the new penalties and interest charges can be introduced as effectively as possible, ensuring a high standard of service to customers.