



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 17 January 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:06 P.M., 17 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

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Admiral Group: Newport	6
■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Working Hours	6
■ Electricity and Natural Gas: Prices	6
■ Energy	7
■ Energy Company Obligation	7
■ France: Aquind	8
■ Fuel Poverty: Newport West	8
■ Fuels: Prices	8
■ Wood-burning Stoves: Regulation	9

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office: Consultants	9
■ Cot Deaths	10
■ Government Departments: Buildings	10
■ Government Departments: Operating Costs	11
■ Government: Disclosure of Information	11
■ Government: Procurement	11

■ Lord Brownlow of Shurlock Row	12
■ Public Appointments: Equality	12
■ Public Sector: Coronavirus	13
■ UK Trade with EU: VAT	14
DEFENCE	14
■ Afghanistan: Refugees	14
■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and War Pensions	14
■ Australia and Japan: Military Alliances	15
■ Australia: Nuclear Submarines	16
■ Children: Maintenance	16
■ Maritime Patrol Aircraft: Procurement	17
■ Medals: Platinum Jubilee 2022	17
■ Ministry of Defence: Cost Effectiveness	18
■ National Flagship	18
■ Queen's Guards: Uniforms	19
■ RAF Linton-on-Ouse	19
■ Scotland: Armed Forces	19
■ Veterans: Medical Examinations	20
■ Veterans: Suicide	20
■ War Pensions	20

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND
SPORT 21

■ BetIndex	21
■ Broadband: Kensington	21
■ Broadcasting: Scots Gaelic Language	22
■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Horseracing Bettors Forum	22
■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Working Hours	23
■ EU Countries: Mobile Phones	23
■ Football	24
■ Medals: Platinum Jubilee 2022	24
■ Mobile Phones: Surcharges	24
■ National Lottery: Licensing	25
■ Streaming: Children	25
■ Voluntary Organisations: Telecommunications	25

EDUCATION 26

■ Children: Social Services	26
■ Department for Education: Staff	27
■ National Tutoring Programme	27
■ Ofsted: Directors	27
■ Ofsted: Inspections	28
■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus	28
■ Pre-school Education: Ventilation	30
■ Pupils: Absenteeism	31
■ Schools: Air Conditioning	32
■ Teachers: Absenteeism	35
■ Teachers: Recruitment	36

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND
RURAL AFFAIRS 36

■ Air Pollution	36
■ Air Pollution: Greater Manchester	37
■ Ammonia: Fertilisers	38
■ Avian Influenza	38
■ Carbon Dioxide	38
■ Chemicals: Regulation	39
■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Buildings	40
■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Working Hours	40
■ Environment Agency: Pay	40
■ Environmental Land Management Scheme	41
■ Firewood	43
■ Food: Innovation	43
■ Hunting	44
■ Plants: Imports	45
■ Plastics: Recycling	45
■ Proteins	46
■ Tree Planting: Finance	47
■ Wood-burning Stoves	48
■ Wood-burning Stoves: Regulation	49
■ Wood-burning Stoves: Smoke Control Areas	50
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	50
■ Foreign Investment in UK: Visas	50
■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff	51

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: World Uyghur Congress	51	■ Coronavirus: Drugs	68
■ Iran: Guided Weapons	51	■ Dental Services and Pharmacy: Isle of Wight	68
■ Kazakhstan: Politics and Government	52	■ Dental Services: Rural Areas	69
■ Kenya: British Council	53	■ Dentistry: Qualifications	69
■ Mehran Raoof	53	■ Eating Disorders: Mental Health Services	70
■ Myanmar: Homicide	53	■ Eyesight: Health Services	71
■ Overseas Aid: Tropical Diseases	54	■ General Practitioners	71
■ Philippines: Storms	55	■ General Practitioners: Liverpool City Region	71
■ Sanctions	55	■ General Practitioners: Liverpool West Derby	72
■ Uganda: Freedom of Expression	56	■ Health: Females	72
■ Xinjiang: Uighurs	57	■ Hospitals: Discharges	72
■ Yemen: Armed Conflict	57	■ Hospitals: Shropshire	73
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	58	■ In-FACT	73
■ Abortion	58	■ Long Covid	74
■ Alzheimer's Disease	58	■ Long Covid: Health Services	74
■ Bowel Cancer	59	■ Long Covid: Research	75
■ Bowel Cancer: Screening	60	■ Long Covid: Young People	75
■ Brain: Tumours	60	■ Members: Correspondence	75
■ Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust: Surgery	61	■ Mental Health Services	76
■ Care Homes: Coronavirus	61	■ Mental Health Services: Coronavirus	76
■ Care Workers and Health Services: Coronavirus	62	■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists	76
■ Care Workers: Coronavirus	62	■ NHS Trusts: Health Services	77
■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Exercise	63	■ NHS: Negligence	77
■ Coronavirus	63	■ NHS: Vacancies	77
■ Coronavirus: Drugs	63	■ Novavax: Licensing	78
■ Coronavirus: Screening	65	■ Parkinson's Disease: Respite Care	78
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	66	■ Physiotherapy: Waiting Lists	78
		■ Pregnancy: Ethnic Groups	79

■ Social Services: Conditions of Employment and Pay	79
■ Surgery	79
■ Surgical Mesh Implants: Bristol	80
■ Telemedicine	80
■ Vaccination	81
HOME OFFICE	81
■ Afghanistan: Refugees	81
■ Antisocial Behaviour	81
■ Asylum	82
■ Crime: Rural Areas	83
■ Drugs: Misuse	83
■ Firearms: Licensing	83
■ Hillsborough Families' Experiences Review	84
■ Home Office: Written Questions	84
■ Immigration Controls	84
■ Immigration: EU Nationals	85
■ Immigration: Fees and Charges	86
■ Investigatory Powers Commissioner: Annual Reports	87
■ Knives: Sales	87
■ Migrant Workers	87
■ Offences against Children	88
■ Offences against Children: Internet	88
■ Refugees: Afghanistan	89
■ Visas	91
HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION	91
■ House of Commons: Dismissal	91

INTERNATIONAL TRADE	92
■ Conor Burns: Trade Promotion	92
■ Department for International Trade: Consultants	92
■ Department for International Trade: Temporary Employment	92
■ Trade Agreements: Australia	93
■ Trade Promotion: Food	93
JUSTICE	93
■ Courts: Repairs and Maintenance	93
LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	94
■ Building Safety Fund	94
■ Buildings: Fire Prevention	94
■ Community Ownership Fund	94
■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Working Hours	95
■ Housing Estates: Service Charges	95
■ Levelling Up Fund: Rural Areas	96
■ Transport: North East	96
PRIME MINISTER	97
■ Prime Minister: Staff	97
TRANSPORT	97
■ Railways: Merseyside	97
■ Railways: Tickets	97
■ Roads Policing Review	98
■ Shipping: Exhaust Emissions	98
■ Speed Limits: Cameras	98
TREASURY	98
■ Business: Coronavirus	98
■ Coronavirus: Screening	99

■ Food: Prices	99	WORK AND PENSIONS	106
■ Fuels: Newport West	100	■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme	106
■ National Insurance Contributions	100	■ Employment: Newport West	106
■ National Insurance Contributions: Newport West	101	■ Personal Independence Payment: Epilepsy	107
■ Personal Care Services: Coronavirus	101	■ Sick Pay: Self-employed	107
■ Public Sector: Pensions	102	■ Social Security Benefits: Disability	107
■ Self-employed: Government Assistance	102	■ State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad	108
■ Shared Outcomes Fund	103	MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS	109
■ Tax Avoidance: Prosecutions	103	LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	109
■ Taxation: Advisory Services	104	■ Electoral Register: British Nationals Abroad	109
■ Tonnage Tax: Scotland	104	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	110
■ Trader Support Service	105	TRANSPORT	110
WALES	105	■ Local Transport Update	110
■ Admiral Group: Newport	105		
■ Agriculture: Wales	105		

Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Admiral Group: Newport**

Ruth Jones:

[\[99376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of the Welsh-based financial services company Admiral closing its Newport office on the economy of Newport West constituency.

Paul Scully:

It is disappointing that in streamlining its office presence in South Wales Admiral has announced it will begin a phased exit of its Newport City Centre offices in 2022. However, it is positive that the leader of Newport City Council has committed to working closely with Admiral and its landlord to ensure the building's future use is fully explored and secured.

The UK Government is playing its part in supporting Newport's post-pandemic economy and is investing over £2m through the Community Renewal Fund to level up the city. This includes a project to develop entrepreneurs in the Pillgwenlly area of Newport. Developing entrepreneurs and start-up businesses will be key to the future of Newport's economy and its newly developed workspaces.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Working Hours**

Grahame Morris:

[\[102588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the compliance of his Department's staff working from home with the Working Time Regulations 1998.

George Freeman:

Line managers and individuals have joint responsibility for ensuring that staff work their agreed hours and take breaks in accordance with the Working Time Regulations 1998, and to manage any issues if they arise. This applies to both where the employee is attending the workplace and where they are working from home.

■ **Electricity and Natural Gas: Prices**

Ruth Jones:

[\[99386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what forecast he has made of trends in the cost of gas and electricity in the UK up to the end of 2022.

Greg Hands:

The Government is monitoring the significant increases in wholesale energy prices closely, and meeting regularly with Ofgem, suppliers and consumer groups to understand the future impact on consumers as well as to discuss potential mitigations.

■ Energy

John Redwood:

[\[96751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of (a) the implications for his policies of rising UK import dependence in energy and (b) the potential to expand domestic production.

Greg Hands:

Great Britain benefits from highly diverse sources of energy. The Government plans to increase energy production from a variety of sources, including nuclear and hydrogen will ensure that dependency on foreign fossil fuels is decreased. Around half of Great Britain's annual gas supply is already met by domestic production, and Great Britain's electricity mix includes significant sources of domestic generation.

The Government is taking steps to support investment in new sources of electricity generation, including 40 GW of offshore wind by 2030, a first of a kind power plant enabled with Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage technology, and new nuclear projects. The Net Zero Strategy also sets out the Government's ambition to decrease Great Britain's reliance on natural gas, such as by blending hydrogen into the gas grid.

■ Energy Company Obligation

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[102745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of effectiveness of the Energy Company Obligation in respect of tackling fuel poverty and climate change; and if he will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

The Energy Company Obligation Scheme has been in place since January 2013 and has delivered around 3.3 million improvements in 2.3 million homes up to the end of October 2021.

To date, the Energy Company Obligation Scheme has delivered £6.6 billion in Lifetime Bill Savings up to the end of October 2021 and an estimated lifetime energy saving of 211,300 Gigawatt Hours.

Since the Energy Company Obligation Scheme began in 2013, the average energy efficiency rating in England has increased from 59, to 66 in 2020. During that same period, 2012-2019, the number of fuel poor households in England fell from 4.4million to 3.2million.

In September 2019, the Department appointed Kantar to undertake a scheme evaluation, reporting in late 2022. The initial findings of the evaluation show that overall, more than half of households surveyed (57%) said they had benefitted a fair amount or a great deal from having the energy saving measures installed. Benefits cited by participants included savings on energy bills, a more comfortable temperature in the home and reduced worry about heating their home.

Wera Hobhouse:[\[102746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will commit to taking forward plans to implement the new iteration of the Energy Company Obligation Scheme, ECO4.

Greg Hands:

Last summer, the Government consulted on extending the Energy Company Obligation Scheme from 2022-26 and expanding it to £1billion per year. The Government keeps all costs on bills under review and will issue a response to the consultation in due course.

■ **France: Aquind****Stephen Doughty:**[\[101738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he last discussed national security matters relating to the proposed electricity interconnector and data cabling project proposed by AQUIND with her French counterpart.

Greg Hands:

The UK works closely with international partners to ensure that investment in energy infrastructure meets the needs of all parties.

The protection of infrastructure and critical services is a key priority for the Department, and any new projects are assessed on a case-by-case basis which may involve a range of stakeholders. Foreign investment in critical national infrastructure undergoes the highest level of scrutiny.

■ **Fuel Poverty: Newport West****Ruth Jones:**[\[99381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the proposed increase in the rate of National Insurance on levels of fuel poverty in Newport West constituency.

Greg Hands:

Fuel poverty is a devolved matter. The Department only has responsibility for England. Therefore, no estimate has been made by the Department on the impact of proposed changes to National Insurance on levels of fuel poverty in Newport West constituency, Wales.

■ **Fuels: Prices****Louise Haigh:**[\[99352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what meetings he has held with petrol retailers regarding fuel prices between 25 October 2021 and 6 January 2022.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 12 January 2022]: Officials are in regular contact with the fuel supply industry including those within retail operations, to discuss a range of issues, including the Government's draft Downstream Oil Resilience Bill. The Department also monitors changes in fuel prices and has therefore decided to freeze fuel duty for the twelfth consecutive year.

Ruth Jones:[\[99385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what forecast he has made of trends in the cost of fuel in the UK up to the end of 2022.

Greg Hands:

Retail prices of petroleum products such as petrol and diesel are primarily driven by the underlying price in the global market of crude oil (priced in US\$) and exchange rates. Recognising that fuel is a major cost for households and businesses, the Government has kept fuel duty frozen for 12 successive years.

■ Wood-burning Stoves: Regulation**Geraint Davies:**[\[102528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure consistently high standards in (a) approval processes and (b) testing for individual wood burning appliances or ranges of appliances before they are certified as complying with the requirements of the Ecodesign Regulations.

Geraint Davies:[\[102529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure consistently high standards in (a) approval processes and (b) testing for wood burning appliances or ranges of appliances before they receive an Ecolabel rating.

Greg Hands:

Prior to placing a product on the market, manufacturers must demonstrate conformity with the implementing measures as set out in the product specific regulations. This includes a declaration of conformity and technical documentation, and can include relevant standards used to demonstrate compliance. This technical documentation must be kept by the manufacturer for a period of 10 years after production and made available to the market surveillance authority, who can conduct independent testing after the product has launched on the market.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Cabinet Office: Consultants****Gareth Thomas:**[\[100402\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has had any (a) financial contract and (b) meetings with (i)

Clifford Chance LLP, (ii) FTI Consulting and (iii) Fenchurch Advisory Partners in the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Michael Ellis:

Cabinet Office has not identified records of any live financial contracts with Clifford Chance LLP, FTI Consulting or Fenchurch Advisory Partners within the department in the last five years.

Details of ministerial meetings are published quarterly and can be found on GOV.UK.

■ **Cot Deaths**

Jim Shannon:

[102632]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the number of cot deaths in the UK in each of the last five years.

Michael Ellis:

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

Attachments:

1. [USKA response \[UKSA_Response_to_PQ102632\(1\).pdf\]](#)

■ **Government Departments: Buildings**

Rachel Hopkins:

[98500]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the total floor area of Government bodies' estates was in each year from 2010-11 to 2020-21.

Michael Ellis:

The total floor area for government bodies is published in the State of the Estate report on GOV.UK for 2020-21. The total floor area of the government general purpose estate was published in prior years.

Rachel Hopkins:

[98504]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the total (a) occupied and (b) owned space of Government bodies' estates were in each year from 2010-11 to 2020-21.

Michael Ellis:

Central government space was only separated into owned and occupied space for 2019-20 for the general purpose estate which included offices, warehouses, job centres, courts, laboratories and other such general purpose uses.

In 2019-20, total owned and occupied space was 7,389,377 m² and 6,975,128 m², respectively.

Equivalent figures for other years are not held centrally in the Cabinet Office.

■ Government Departments: Operating Costs

Rachel Hopkins: [\[98501\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the total annual running cost of Government bodies was in each year from 2010-11 to 2020-21.

Michael Ellis:

Departmental annual reports and accounts, including financial statements, are laid before Parliament and published on GOV.UK.

Gross Resource Expenditure by Arms Length Bodies is published on [GOV.UK](#).

The Treasury publishes [Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis \(PESA\)](#) which presents statistics on public expenditure, including government departmental administrative expenditure. Table 1.7 breaks down administration budgets by department and Table 2.1 by economic category (e.g. staff costs).

■ Government: Disclosure of Information

Mrs Maria Miller: [\[102563\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's policy on the use of non-disclosure agreements in employment severance agreements is.

Mrs Maria Miller: [\[102564\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Government departments have policies in place designed to prevent the misuse of non disclosure agreements or confidentiality clauses in employment severance agreements.

Michael Ellis:

The Government has published guidance on the use of confidentiality clauses and is clear that these types of clauses should not be used to stifle or discourage staff from raising concerns, and that they should only be used when necessary and not be included in settlement agreements as a matter of course.

All Government departments are expected to follow this guidance which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-settlement-agreements-special-severance-payments-and-confidentiality-clauses>.

■ Government: Procurement

Ruth Jones: [\[101824\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether it is his policy to promote improved working conditions through Government procurement policy.

Michael Ellis:

Government encourages employers to better support all employees to remain in and thrive through work.

Through our new approach to extend the use of the Social Value Act, effective from 1 January 2021, additional social benefits can be taken into account via the delivery of contracts.

To promote consistency across departments, we developed a tool called the 'Social Value Model' for use by all organisations in scope of the new policy. The tool has provisions to improve health and wellbeing in the contract workforce.

■ Lord Brownlow of Shurlock Row

Angela Rayner: [\[90430\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's response to Freedom of Information request FOI2021/14245 of 5 July 2021, what records his Department holds of the Prime Minister's WhatsApp messages with Lord Brownlow.

Angela Rayner: [\[90880\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Electoral Commission investigation report of 9 December 2021, if he will place in the Library of the House a copy of the WhatsApp messages between the Prime Minister and Lord Brownlow.

Michael Ellis:

I refer the Rt Hon. Member to the published correspondence between the Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests and the Prime Minister.

The previous Freedom of Information request was processed in line with the provisions in the Act. For the reasons set out in that correspondence, no official information was held under the Act in scope of that request at the time.

After the Electoral Commission's investigation concluded, the messages referred to in the Electoral Commission report were subsequently provided to the Independent Adviser.

That exchange is set out in an annex to that published correspondence; the letters are already in the Library of the House, further to the answer to the Rt Hon Member of [PQ 98322](#).

■ Public Appointments: Equality

Kevin Brennan: [\[102558\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will introduce a target for the number of public appointments awarded to individuals with a declared disability.

Kevin Brennan:

[\[102559\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will introduce a target for the number of public appointments awarded to individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Kevin Brennan:

[\[102560\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of monitoring the socio-economic diversity of public appointees.

Michael Ellis:

The government encourages talented people from all backgrounds and from across the UK to apply for public appointments. This is important as part of our levelling-up agenda and to secure the benefits that having a diverse range of experiences and skills brings to boards and will ensure that we get the best services that deliver for everyone.

The Cabinet Office is working on the introduction of a single online application portal for public appointments which will assist in data collection and allow us to expand our understanding of those taking up appointments through analysis across a range of measures, including by socio-economic background.

■ Public Sector: Coronavirus

Ruth Jones:

[\[101823\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether it is his policy to support improved work-life balance as part of public services' recovery from the covid-19 outbreak.

Michael Ellis:

The Government has put the recovery of public services at the heart of its building back better and levelling up agenda. We are investing £3.7 billion to build 40 new hospitals and we're investing a further £4.7 billion in the core school budget by 2024-25. There are almost 10,000 more nurses and over 5,100 doctors now working in the NHS compared to last year, and we have recruited over 11,000 police officers.

The Government's 2019 manifesto committed to encourage flexible working and consult on making it the default unless employers have good reasons not to. Since then, COVID-19 has changed working practices for many and led to the recognition of the need for more flexible working hours to balance work with other personal commitments. The Government intends to build on what we have learnt and ran a consultation proposing to reform the existing Right to Request flexible working from September to December 2021. We are currently analysing responses and will issue a formal Government response in due course.

■ UK Trade with EU: VAT**Daisy Cooper:**[\[100698\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, on how many occasions the (a) Cabinet Officer Border and Protocol Delivery Group and (b) other Departments or agencies have engaged with EU member states on the interpretation by those countries' custom officials of the VAT rules being applied to UK traders and hauliers.

Michael Ellis:

The Border and Protocol Delivery Group, supported by HMRC and others, holds regular discussions with counterparts in EU Member States on all issues relating to the flow of freight and passengers.

It is not possible to provide a precise number for these contacts without incurring disproportionate costs.

The interpretation of each country's VAT rules is ultimately a matter for the authorities of that country.

DEFENCE**■ Afghanistan: Refugees****Dan Jarvis:**[\[102640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) current and (b) former National Directorate of Security personnel have been granted a relocation offer under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme since (a) 1 April 2021, (b) 1 August 2021 and (c) 28 August 2021.

James Heappey:

Our ARAP Scheme is one of the most generous in the world and our commitment to those who are eligible and the process to deliver it, is not time-limited and will endure. Whilst thousands of ARAP eligible personnel have already been safely relocated to the UK, we continue to work at pace to safely evacuate eligible ARAP personnel and their families through a range of third countries.

However, the information requested is not collated in the format required.

■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and War Pensions**Owen Thompson:**[\[102704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that veterans have access to clear information and relevant resources on the War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Tribunal process.

Leo Docherty:

The War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Tribunal is an independent body overseen by the Ministry of Justice. The content of Veterans UK's forms and

letters are under constant review to ensure that the recipient is given as much information as they need to make an informed decision about exercising their rights and, once they have, who to contact for help and advice. This includes useful addresses, weblinks and telephone numbers.

Owen Thompson:

[102710]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the mental health of veterans of (a) putting in a claim for a War Pension payment, (b) requesting a review of evidence under that scheme and (c) engaging with the War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Tribunal.

Leo Docherty:

We are aware that some veterans may find this process challenging and to that end the Veterans Welfare service exists to support veterans as required.

At all stages of the claim and appeal process the Veterans Welfare Service contact details are provided for support and guidance. The Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) provides free and confidential advice on a wide range of issues including mental health support. Welfare Managers work closely with local authorities, voluntary organisations and all areas of the Department for Work and Pensions to assist individuals with the help and advice they need.

In normal circumstances a Welfare Manager would visit at home or another, more convenient location if preferred. However, due to current Government advice on social distancing and to keep both customers and staff safe, home and face to face visits have been restricted to only those with exceptional need of support; telephone consultations, however, are still available. Veterans can contact the Freephone Veterans UK Helpline or email and a reply or call back will be provided as quickly as possible.

■ **Australia and Japan: Military Alliances**

Ruth Jones:

[99389]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on UK national security of the signing of the Reciprocal Access Agreement between Australia and Japan.

Jeremy Quin:

The UK has been tracking the progress on the Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) between Australia and Japan given our own ongoing RAA negotiations with Japan which were formally announced in September 2021.

We share close defence and security relationships with both Australia and Japan. As demonstrated by our recent announcement on the AUKUS alliance, and through the sharing of extensive intelligence through the Five Eyes alliance, the UK shares a unique level of trust and cooperation with Australia.

We are also deepening our defence relationship with Japan. Last year saw the successful visit to Japan of the Carrier Strike Group 21 and the associated bilateral

and multilateral joint exercises, as well as an announcement in December of plans to develop jointly a future fighter aircraft engine demonstrator and explore further combat air technologies.

We trust that this commitment by two of our partners in the region may lead to more opportunities for defence engagement as we continue to work together to address global security challenges in the region.

■ Australia: Nuclear Submarines

Jim Shannon:

[\[102634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has held discussions with its Australian counterparts on a new contract for the construction of submarines.

Jeremy Quin:

As first set out to the House on 16 September 2021 by the Prime Minister, we have now begun the initial 18-month scoping phase for the AUKUS submarine partnership. This is a complex, long term project, and the 18-month programme of work is the first step in the process to identify the optimum way to deliver this new capability to the Royal Australian Navy.

■ Children: Maintenance

Martyn Day:

[\[100622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many deduction of earning requests made by the Child Maintenance Service have been declined by Defence Business Services in the last five years; and what the reasons for those requests being declined were.

Leo Docherty:

Since January 2017 to 12 January 2022 a total of 3,456 deduction of earning requests were received from the Child Maintenance Service for Service personnel; of these, 668 could not be processed. The reasons for the rejections were:

NO. OF REJECTIONS	REASON FOR REJECTION
394	A deduction of earning order was issued, rather than a deduction of earning request
144	Service person had been discharged
88	Service person was a reservist
20	No trace of individual
10	Service Person not in receipt of pay
8	Service person in Operational Zone

NO. OF REJECTIONS	REASON FOR REJECTION
4	Request addressed to a Service person directly and not to Defence Business Services

For MOD civilian staff, the number of deductions of earning orders declined is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost, however, a deduction of earning order would only be rejected if an individual was no longer employed by the MOD or if they were in receipt of insufficient earnings to meet the request.

■ Maritime Patrol Aircraft: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[100453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the whole life cost of the P-8A programme.

Jeremy Quin:

The Whole Life Cost of the Poseidon Delivery Programme is currently expected to be £1.865 billion, a reduction on the last GMPP Major Projects Report of March 2021 which estimated £2.013 billion.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[100454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what CDEL costs have been budgeted; what RDEL costs have been budgeted for the P-8A ; and when he projects FOC will be achieved for the UK's P-8A aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

Full Operating Capability is scheduled for April 2024. The following CDEL and RDEL figures are budgeted:

CDEL £1.625 billion

RDEL £0.240 billion

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[100455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the budget is for the TDEL assigned to the P-8A; and what the current forecast cost is for completion.

Jeremy Quin:

The estimated TDEL for Poseidon is currently set at £5.170 billion. However, the Ministry of Defence does not set budgets beyond year 10 of the planning round and the planned 2045 Out of Service Date is well beyond that budgeting period.

■ Medals: Platinum Jubilee 2022

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[100712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will support the award of the Platinum Jubilee Medal to veterans as well as serving members of the armed forces.

Leo Docherty:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has worked with the Ministry of Defence and other Government Departments to develop the eligibility criteria for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal (QPJM). Serving members of the Armed Forces who have completed five full calendar years of service, and remain in service, on 6 February 2022 will be eligible. Those not serving on the date of the Jubilee will, unfortunately, not be eligible, no matter how long they have served previously. It should be noted that the QPJM is a commemoration of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee and, as such, is why only personnel serving on the date of the Jubilee are eligible. The medal is not intended as a recognition of past Service.

Ministry of Defence: Cost Effectiveness**Navendu Mishra:****[100724]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure (a) value for money from his Department's projects and (b) that those projects are completed (i) on time and (ii) within budget.

Jeremy Quin:

In line with Treasury Green Book guidance the Department considers a range of options for projects to determine which is the most effective at meeting the Armed Forces' needs whilst offering best value for money.

To ensure value for money is delivered through the life of a project, the Department has invested additional resource to monitor and evaluate cost, time and performance through life and embed a culture of evaluation.

As set out in our Annual Report, we continue to transform the way we do business, driving improvements in the processes and skills required to delivery programmes successfully.

We are setting projects up for success through early consideration of strategic factors, focusing expertise on areas of highest risk and complexity to support robust, evidence-based investment decisions and improve overall project outcomes. We are also improving the resourcing of projects with suitably qualified and experienced people through measures set out in the Department's [Project Delivery Functional Strategy](#) on gov.uk.

National Flagship**John Healey:****[101625]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish (a) the criteria of selection for the Committee for the National Flagship and (b) who appoints officials to the committee.

Mr Ben Wallace:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given to Question 101622 answered on 14 January 2022.

Attachments:

1. [National Flagship Question \[Question101622.Healey.docx\]](#)

■ Queen's Guards: Uniforms**Catherine West:****[100634]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will commit to ending the use of fur from North American bears in Queen's Guards' ceremonial caps.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I provided to Question 87697 answered on the 14 December 2021.

The hon. Lady may wish to know that bears are never hunted to order for use by the Ministry of Defence. Our suppliers source pelts made available by the Canadian authorities following a licenced cull as part of a programme to manage the wild bear population; Provincial, territorial, federal and international laws provide strict trade regulations to protect against unlawful trade in black bears both within Canada and internationally.

Attachments:

1. [Armed Forces; Uniforms \[UIN 87697.docx\]](#)

■ RAF Linton-on-Ouse**Mr Kevan Jones:****[101654]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has plans to implement an alternative use for RAF Linton-on-Ouse.

Jeremy Quin:

Following assessment, no long-term military requirement has been identified for RAF Linton-on-Ouse and we expect to release the site for disposal by the end of 2023.

■ Scotland: Armed Forces**Dave Doogan:****[101836]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has met its target of stationing 12,500 personnel in Scotland by 2020; and how many of his Department's personnel are stationed in Scotland as at January 2022.

James Heappey:

As of the last publication of data in October 2021, there were 19,380 Defence people based in Scotland. This is comprised of 10,430 Regular Armed Forces personnel (Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force), 5,320 Reserve personnel and 3,630 civilian personnel (Civil Servants).

The Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper make clear that we must focus on Defence capability rather than personnel numbers in response to changing threats and priorities and maintaining technological advantage is a defining feature of our national strategy and prosperity. However, Armed Forces numbers in Scotland will

remain overall consistent in Scotland at around 13,000. As platforms and equipment increase in sophistication, we will require a different type of suitably qualified military, civilian, and industrial workforce to operate and service them, which presents opportunities for new skills, investment, and training.

■ Veterans: Medical Examinations

Owen Thompson: [\[102705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether veterans have the right to information on the professional qualifications of Veterans UK medical assessors.

Leo Docherty:

The Professional qualifications of Veterans UK Medical Advisors constitutes personal information. As Veterans UK Medical Advisors are not involved in the diagnosis, care, or treatment of veterans they are not entitled to this information.

■ Veterans: Suicide

Owen Thompson: [\[102703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many veterans have committed suicide while waiting on a final decision from a War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Tribunal.

Leo Docherty:

The information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ War Pensions

Owen Thompson: [\[102706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what advice his Department provides to Veterans UK medical assessors on the (a) validity and (b) importance of Personal Independence Payment assessments when determining War Pensions payments.

Leo Docherty:

All Medical Advisors are aware that Personal Independence Payment documentation may contain self-assessment of function, clinical examination findings and observations, functional assessments and sometimes medical reports which can be helpful in decision making in War Pension supplementary allowance claims and therefore these would be regarded as valid evidence. However, it is important to stress that as the entitlement criteria for Personal Independence Payment and the War Pension supplementary allowances are governed by separate legislation the awards are not always directly comparable.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**BetIndex**

Ruth Cadbury: [101755]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when her Department first received correspondence from the Gambling Commission on its investigation into Football Index.

Ruth Cadbury: [101756]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many meetings she has attended on the review of the regulation of BetIndex Limited.

Ruth Cadbury: [101757]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has received correspondence from the Advertising Standards Authority in respect of the activities of BetIndex Limited.

Ruth Cadbury: [101758]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether Ministers in her Department have met officials at the Gambling Commission in respect of the Review of the Regulation of BetIndex Limited.

Chris Philp:

The first piece of correspondence from the Gambling Commission alerting DCMS to the BetIndex Limited case was an email to officials on the 10th of March 2021.

Since then ministers and officials have had a number of meetings with the Gambling Commission on the case, the independent review, and lessons learnt. Records of ministerial meetings are published quarterly and are available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

Officials at the Advertising Standards Authority and DCMS have discussed the Betindex case periodically since the company's collapse in March 2021, but there has been no written correspondence on it.

Broadband: Kensington

Felicity Buchan: [100726]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to improve broadband speeds in specific areas of Kensington where the proportion of households experiencing speeds under 10 Mbps is higher than the (a) national and (b) London average.

Julia Lopez:

According to data from ThinkBroadband, 0.03% of premises in the Kensington constituency are unable to access speeds of 10Mbps through a fixed connection. This compares to a national average of 1.21% of premises that cannot access these speeds through a fixed connection. Whilst coverage is well above the national average, it is important to note that citizens will need to choose higher speed

packages in order to benefit from faster speeds, and in some cases, this will involve changing networks. They can find the best services available to them by using Ofcom's 'Boost your Broadband' website or using a price comparison service.

Where consumers are not able to access high-speed broadband through a fixed connection, their broadband connectivity can be supported by mobile broadband coverage. There is good 4G coverage in the London Borough of Kensington, while a number of mobile network operators are now offering 5G services within the Kensington area, which will deliver faster speeds through a mobile connection.

For those unable to access speeds of 10 Mbps through either a fixed or a mobile connection, in March 2020 the government launched the broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO) which gives every premises the legal right to request a broadband connection with download speeds of at least 10Mbps and upload speeds of 1Mbps. Residents can find out if they are eligible by visiting [BT's USO postcode checker](#).

Further details on the USO can be found [here](#).

■ **Broadcasting: Scots Gaelic Language**

Andrew Bowie:

[100640]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential (a) merits of including in the forthcoming Broadcasting White Paper statutory provisions for the creation of a Gaelic language media service with Public Service Broadcaster status and (b) economic and social benefits of such a service for Gaelic speaking communities.

Julia Lopez:

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

Minority language broadcasting has an important role to play in the UK's broadcasting ecology. It provides an opportunity for audiences - such as the Gaelic speaking community - to access content in a language familiar to them, and is a vital means of cultural expression.

The Government has been undertaking a strategic review of public service broadcasting and will set out conclusions in due course.

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Horseracing Bettors Forum**

Andrew Bridgen:

[100550]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether (a) she, (b) Ministers or (c) officials in her Department have met with representatives of the Horseracing Bettors Forum to discuss the forthcoming Gambling white paper.

Chris Philp:

Ministers and officials have meetings with various stakeholders to support ongoing work and policy development. There has also been a wide-ranging series of meetings to support the ongoing Gambling Act Review which was launched in December 2020 with a Call for Evidence. Records of ministerial meetings are published quarterly and are available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

Ministers have not had meetings with representatives of the Horseracing Bettors Forum. However, officials will be meeting the organisation to discuss the Gambling Act Review in the coming weeks.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Working Hours**Grahame Morris:****[102584]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the compliance of her Department's staff working from home with the Working Time Regulations 1998.

Julia Lopez:

Staff at DCMS work a standard 36 or 37 hour week and paid overtime is allowed on an exceptional basis in priority areas. Staff are encouraged to discuss their working hours with their Line Manager and, where they may be working beyond their standard hours, to record their hours of work with managers keeping oversight. A flexi time sheet template is made available for individuals to use to record their hours; records are not held centrally. Managers are responsible for ensuring employees are working their hours and not working excessive hours in line with Regulation 9 of the Working Time Regulations 1998 and this requirement has not been different where staff have been working from home. There are currently no staff at DCMS who have chosen to opt out of the Working Time Directive.

■ EU Countries: Mobile Phones**Ruth Jones:****[100685]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made representations to the Vice President of the European Commission for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight, Maroš Šefčovič, on the reintroduction of roaming charges for UK travellers in the EU.

Julia Lopez:

Ministers and officials have regular discussions with our European partners. Mobile roaming 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.

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.

■ Football**Ruth Jones:** [\[99390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government plans to bid to host the 2028 UEFA European Football Championships.

Nigel Huddleston:

A partnership of the football associations and the Governments of the UK and Ireland have been undertaking feasibility activity to determine the viability of a bid to host the FIFA World Cup 2030, which is the government's focus. This feasibility assessment includes a number of key work streams to identify the winnability, likely costs, and the benefits of hosting the tournament. To ensure we can make an informed decision we will contrast these findings against other potential hosting opportunities.

■ Medals: Platinum Jubilee 2022**Dan Jarvis:** [\[102636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the qualifying criteria for the Platinum Jubilee medal requires the full five calendar years of service to be continuous service.

Chris Philp:

To qualify for The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal recipients must be in an eligible role in the public sector on 6 February 2022 and have completed five years' service.

Individual Departments, the Devolved Administrations and Crown Dependencies are responsible for applying the criteria and making eligibility decisions regarding the award of the Medal to their staff and other organisations that fall under their sponsorship.

■ Mobile Phones: Surcharges**Chris Elmore:** [\[101804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will publish documentation that sets out how proposals to maintain surcharge free mobile roaming were proposed by the Government and rejected by the EU Commission during the UK's EU-exit negotiations.

Chris Philp:

UK negotiators did raise with EU negotiators the issue of reciprocal arrangements to ensure ongoing surcharge-free roaming post-Transition Period. This was in the early stages of UK-EU negotiations.

EU negotiators stated they had no mandate to discuss roaming with the UK. We listened to this before putting forward our 2020 policy paper 'Our approach to the Future Relationship with the EU'. We instead tabled a review clause as an attempt to compromise. This clause stated that the UK and EU would assess the need for the regulation of roaming charges three years after the agreement was signed. The EU also did not accept this suggestion.

■ National Lottery: Licensing

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[101707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she has taken to ensure that the National Lottery License Competition is conducted in accordance with the National Lottery Act 1993 and without political interference.

Chris Philp:

The Gambling Commission is responsible for running the competition for and awarding the next licence to run the National Lottery. DCMS has worked with the Commission on the design of the licence, but is not involved with the competition process or selection of the winning bidder.

Under the National Lottery etc Act 1993, the government shares three statutory duties with the Gambling Commission, to ensure the National Lottery is run with all due propriety, that the interests of every participant are protected, and - subject to those duties - that returns to good causes are maximised. The competition is being run in accordance with these duties.

■ Streaming: Children

Jim Shannon:

[\[101724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will take steps to ensure that streaming platforms require pin entry where users have elected to use parental controls.

Julia Lopez:

The Government launched a consultation in August 2021 to level the playing field between traditional broadcasters and video-on-demand streaming services; to provide a fair competitive framework; and ensure UK viewers receive equivalent standards.

That consultation, which closed in October, considered audience protection measures such as the role of PIN codes and parental controls. We are now considering the response to the consultation and will publish next steps in due course.

■ Voluntary Organisations: Telecommunications

Hilary Benn:

[\[101634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the impact on the income of (a) sports clubs, (b) community centres and (c) other voluntary organisations of the changes to the Communications Code which enable providers to reduce rental payments to them for equipment on their property.

Julia Lopez:

The 2017 reforms to the Electronic Communications Code were intended to make it cheaper and easier for digital communications operators to deploy and maintain their networks. It was the government's view that the cost of acquiring rights to install

digital infrastructure prior to 2017 was too high and needed to be addressed. The pricing regime now in place is more closely aligned to those for utilities such as water and electricity and reflects the fact that access to good quality digital services is an increasingly critical part of daily life for residents across the UK.

Following the introduction of the 2017 reforms, DCMS engaged closely with stakeholders to understand the impact they were having, and a consultation on potential further reform to the Code was published in January 2021. The valuation regime introduced in 2017 was not included in that consultation. The Government continues to believe that framework strikes a fair balance between ensuring individual landowners are not left out of pocket and encouraging the industry investment needed for consumers across the UK to have access to robust digital services.

The response to the government's consultation was published in November 2021 and the Product Security and Telecoms Infrastructure Bill, bringing forward the measures set out in that response, has been introduced.

We anticipate that the changes being brought forwards through that Bill will lead to better collaboration between site providers and telecoms operators and help mutually acceptable outcomes to be achieved. This will speed up the rollout and upgrading of digital services throughout the UK, providing the public with the digital connectivity they need both now and in the future.

EDUCATION

■ Children: Social Services

Sarah Green:

[\[102807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support early intervention services in children's social care.

Will Quince:

In the autumn budget a combined Department for Education, Department of Health and Social Care, and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities package of £500 million for Early Help was announced. This includes a £300 million package to transform 'Start for Life' services and create a network of family hubs in half of council areas in England and a £200 million uplift to the Supporting Families programme.

The additional funding for Supporting Families takes the total investment to £695 million over the next 3 years, around a 40% real-terms uplift in funding for the programme by 2024-25.

■ Department for Education: Staff

Bridget Phillipson:

[100517]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many staff, by (a) full-time equivalent and (b) headcount, in his Department had a PRINCE2 (i) Foundation and (ii) Practitioner certification at the start of (A) 2018, (B) 2019, (C) 2020, (D) 2021 and (E) 2022.

Michelle Donelan:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ National Tutoring Programme

Bridget Phillipson:

[99327]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the (a) Chancellor of the Exchequer and (b) Comptroller and Auditor General and the National Audit Office on the value for money of spending on the National Tutoring programme.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department has commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research to conduct an independent evaluation of the programme's process and impact.

Findings about last year's programme will be published in summer 2022.

Interim findings about the current year will be shared with the department throughout this academic year to inform policy making, with final reports published in 2023.

■ Ofsted: Directors

Navendu Mishra:

[99408]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether there are measures in place to ensure that the executive board of Ofsted is representative of the demographics of the teaching profession and its pupils in England.

Mr Robin Walker:

Ofsted has a non-executive board, which is separate from Ofsted's executive team. The board is responsible for setting the strategic priorities, targets, and objectives for Ofsted and overseeing its corporate governance.

Appointments to the board are made by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, and are conducted in accordance with the Governance Code for Public Appointments which can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-code-for-public-appointments>.

Ofsted's remit is extensive, covering early years, schools, further education and skills, and social care. When appointing to the Ofsted board, the department ensures that board members have knowledge and understanding of these remits, as well as experience of ensuring good governance.

The department is committed to ensuring diversity and inclusion. When running recruitment campaigns, the department strongly encourages applications from a diverse range of applicants to secure a diverse and representative board.

■ Ofsted: Inspections

Ian Lavery: [\[98947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to suspend Ofsted inspections in schools to minimise disruption during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Robin Walker:

Ofsted inspections continue to play an important role in providing independent assurance as providers respond to COVID-19. It is right though that these arrangements are kept under review, and adjustments made where appropriate.

On 2 January 2022, the government announced that Ofsted will not ask inspectors who are also school leaders to undertake inspections, so they can focus on their leadership responsibilities at this critical time. Ofsted will also encourage schools that are significantly impacted by COVID-19 related staff absence to ask for their inspection to be deferred. Ofsted will look sensitively at each deferral request and judge each case on its merits. It is right that decisions about whether an inspection should go ahead is made by the independent inspectorate.

Taken together, these measures will both reduce the overall number of inspections for a temporary period, and lead to the deferral of inspections planned for institutions managing high levels of staff absence.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes: [\[102734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) nurseries and (b) other early years providers that have (i) closed or (ii) reduced their opening hours as a result of covid-19 cases in December 2021.

Helen Hayes: [\[102735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) nurseries and (b) other early years providers that have (i) closed or (ii) reduced their opening hours as a result of covid-19 cases to date in January 2022.

Helen Hayes: [\[102736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department made of the number of (a) nurseries and (b) other early years providers who have (i) closed or (ii) reduced their opening hours as a result of covid-19 cases in each month of 2021.

Will Quince:

For the period between 6 April 2020 and 9 December 2021, the department published information relative to attendance in education and early years providers during the COVID-19 outbreak. On 9 December 2021 there were a reported 81% of

early years providers open compared to 5% closed. This included 54,000 open early years settings, 3,000 closed early years settings, and 9,000 early years settings whose status was unknown. The data does not distinguish between nurseries versus other types of early years provider. You can access data over previous months here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/2021-week-50>.

The department is also collecting data on the operating status of nurseries and other early years providers (and schools and colleges) as part of a weekly Pulse survey through January 2022 and high-level findings will be published on Tuesday 25 January and fortnightly thereafter. These findings will be reported here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

As set out in the response I gave on 5 January 2022 to PQ [92992](#), all nurseries and other early years providers on the Ofsted register must report to Ofsted any confirmed cases of COVID-19. Reporting is a legal requirement as set out in paragraph 3.52 of the early years foundation stage statutory framework. The notification data is published on a fortnightly basis here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reported-coronavirus-covid-19-cases-by-registered-early-years-and-childcare-settings>. The department will continue to monitor the number of COVID-19 notifications in line with the trajectory of cases in the wider population.

Early years providers, including nurseries, should have contingency plans (sometimes called outbreak management plans) outlining what they would do if children or staff test positive for COVID-19, or how they would operate if advised to take extra measures to help break chains of transmission. Given the detrimental impact that restrictions on education can have on children, any measures providers take should only ever be considered as a last resort, kept to the minimum number of providers or groups possible, and for the shortest amount of time possible. Central government may offer local areas of particular concern an enhanced response package to help limit increases in transmission. For most nurseries and other early years providers, it will make sense to think about taking extra action if the number of positive cases substantially increases. Information on what circumstances might lead providers to consider taking additional action, and the steps they should work through, can be found in the contingency framework for education and childcare settings which is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-restrictions-in-education-and-childcare-settings/contingency-framework-education-and-childcare-settings>. The contingency framework describes the principles of managing local outbreaks of COVID-19 in education and childcare. Local authorities, directors of public health and UK Health Security Agency health protection teams can recommend measures described in the contingency framework in individual

education and childcare providers or a small cluster of providers as part of their outbreak management responsibilities.

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

Helen Hayes: [\[102737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional support is being given to nurseries and other early year providers to manage increased energy costs in response to the need for increased ventilation in winter 2021-22 as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Will Quince:

I refer the hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood to the answer I gave on 17 January 2021 to Questions [99355](#), [99356](#) and [99357](#).

■ Pre-school Education: Ventilation

Helen Hayes: [\[99355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 92990, on Pre-school Education: Coronavirus, what support his Department is providing to nurseries and early years providers in the event that carbon dioxide monitors detect a need for improved ventilation.

Helen Hayes: [\[99356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 92990, on Pre-school Education: Coronavirus, what support his Department is providing to nurseries and early years providers facing increased heating costs as a result of a requirement to keep windows open to improve ventilation.

Helen Hayes: [\[99357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 92990, on Pre-school Education: Coronavirus, of the 7,000 additional air purifiers announced by the Government how many he plans to offer to early years providers.

Will Quince:

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

CO2 monitors are an additional measure which the department has rolled out to education providers to be used as a guide for where ventilation can be improved. This is not intended to create an additional burden on staff but is an extra tool to support education providers to improve ventilation. It is up to leaders to decide how to best use them in their specific setting. Letting fresh air into indoor spaces can help remove air that contains virus particles and is important in preventing the spread of COVID-19. The new monitors enable staff to identify areas where ventilation needs to be improved and provide reassurance that existing ventilation measures are working, helping balance the need for good ventilation with keeping classrooms warm. When CO2 monitors indicate good ventilation, there is no need to keep windows fully open at all times. Opening windows regularly for 10 minutes, or a small amount continuously, can still reduce the airborne risk from COVID-19 substantially compared to spaces with no fresh air. Where this isn't an option, opening higher up windows or vents causes fewer draughts, as does opening other windows by a small amount.

On 2 January 2022 we announced that 7000 air cleaning units are now being made available for mainstream state-funded education providers, including early years providers, in addition to the 1000 units made available for special and alternative provision providers that we announced in November 2021. Education providers were able to apply for funded units via an online form. Applications closed at 9am on 17 January 2022. Applications will be assessed against strict criteria. The department will prioritise spaces with the poorest ventilation to receive units based on criteria such as CO2 readings and occupation density. Deliveries of the initial units for special and alternative provision providers announced in November are now taking place, with the first deliveries made last week. Deliveries of the remaining units to mainstream settings will begin in February.

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

■ Pupils: Absenteeism

Bridget Phillipson:

[102598]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish data on the level of absence by children from schools for (a) any reason, (b) any reason of illness, including reasons related to covid-19 and (c) reasons related to covid-19 by (i) region, (ii) upper tier local authority, (iii) lower tier local authority and (iv) parliamentary constituency in each of the last 100 weeks for which figures are available.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department publishes a fortnightly COVID-19 attendance publication based on the educational settings status form. This data is intended to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on the number of pupils attending school. In this collection we do not collect the total number of students absent from school due to any reason of illness.

Data on pupil absence due to COVID-19 since the start of the 2021/22 academic year can be found on Explore Education Statistics. This data is published at local authority level. We do not publish data at parliamentary constituency level.

The most recent published data at national level is 6 January. For regional and local authority level data, the latest published data is 16 December. The most recent national, regional and local authority data can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-23-march-2020-to-6-january-2022>.

We also publish more detailed termly data on pupil absence as part of the school census (including absence rates where pupils are ill, including COVID-19). The latest publication can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-autumn-2020-and-spring-2021>.

Bridget Phillipson:**[102605]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has issued new guidance to schools on (a) coding and (b) recording a child's absence from school subsequent to a positive test for covid-19 since 1 December 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

'Addendum: recording absence relating to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2021 to 2022 academic year' was last updated on 6 January 2022 to reflect the changes on when a PCR test is needed and how this is recorded. The guidance is available to view here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2021-to-2022-academic-year>.

We have advised schools throughout the COVID-19 outbreak to record pupils as Code I 'illness' where they have tested positive for COVID-19 because they have an infectious illness. This is in line with how schools would usually record absence because of infectious illness.

Schools: Air Conditioning**Bridget Phillipson:****[102599]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to 94337 on Schools: Air Conditioning, whether Ministers made any request to civil servants overseeing procurement for the filtration device marketplace as to (a) companies and (b) devices to be (i) included in and (ii) excluded from that process.

Mr Robin Walker:

There were no requests received from ministers in the procurement process and establishment of the online marketplace. Air cleaning devices that met the approved technical specification were included on the marketplace, and devices were only excluded if they failed to meet the technical specification. All the suppliers' bids were subject to independent expert scrutiny to maintain objectivity and conformance to the specification.

The department's specification was developed through a rigorous consultation with industry-wide experts in both air cleaning and ventilation from academia, professional bodies, and industry, including chartered engineers, scientists, and several government departments. Through this consultation the department has developed a specification specific to education, focusing on key drivers including classroom size, acoustics, clean air delivery and filtration as well as requiring strong evidence to verify manufacturers' claims.

Stephen Morgan:[\[97034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many primary schools in England have applied for an air purifier unit as part of the Government's commitment to provide 7000 of those units to schools.

Stephen Morgan:[\[97035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many secondary schools in England have applied for an air purifier unit as part of the Government's commitment to provide 7000 of those units to schools.

Stephen Morgan:[\[97036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many primary schools in England have reported a sustained high co2 reading of 1500ppm or higher in each of the past 12 months.

Stephen Morgan:[\[97037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many secondary schools in England have reported a sustained high co2 reading of 1500ppm or higher in each of the past 12 months.

Stephen Morgan:[\[97038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) special schools and (b) alternative provision settings have reported a sustained high co2 reading of 1500ppm or above in each of the last 12 months.

Stephen Morgan:[\[97039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) special schools and (b) alternative provision settings in England have applied for an air purifier unit in response to his Department's announcement of 2 January 2022 on the provision of an additional 7,000 units.

Stephen Morgan: [\[97040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many primary schools in England have had their application for an air purifier unit approved following his Department's announcement of 2 January 2022 on the provision of an additional 7,000 units.

Stephen Morgan: [\[97041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many secondary schools in England have had their application for an air purifier unit approved following his Department's announcement of 2 January 2022 on the provision of an additional 7,000 units.

Stephen Morgan: [\[97042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) special schools and (b) alternative provision settings have had their application for an air purifier unit approved following his Department's announcement of 2 January 2022 on the provision of an additional 7,000 units.

Stephen Morgan: [\[97043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools that have purchased air purifier units have applied to have their costs reimbursed.

Stephen Morgan: [\[97044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools that have purchased air purifier units have had their applications for reimbursement granted.

Mr Robin Walker:

During the autumn term, the department provided CO2 monitors to all state-funded education providers, including early years, schools and further education colleges, backed by £25 million in government funding.

We have now delivered on our public commitment with over 353,000 monitors delivered in the autumn term. Feedback suggests that schools are finding the monitors helpful to manage ventilation and, in most schools, colleges and nurseries, existing ventilation measures are sufficient. There is no requirement from the department for providers to record readings or share these with the department.

Where an area of poor ventilation has been identified, settings should first look to implement simple measures like opening windows and doors. When CO2 monitors indicate good ventilation, there is no need to keep windows fully open at all times. Opening windows regularly for 10 minutes, or a small amount continuously, can still reduce the airborne risk from COVID-19 substantially compared to spaces with no fresh air. If the ventilation issue cannot be easily resolved, schools are advised to explore what remedial works are needed. It may be appropriate to consider the use of an air cleaning unit while the underlying issue is addressed. Air cleaning units are suggested as a possible interim measure to help minimise transmission risk but do not improve ventilation levels.

When used properly, air cleaning units can help reduce airborne contaminants in a poorly ventilated space, including viruses like COVID-19; they do not provide

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

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

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

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

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

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 providers with their queries via the Coronavirus Helpline.

■ Teachers: Absenteeism

Bridget Phillipson:

[102596]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the level of teacher absence (a) for any reason and (b) for reasons related to covid-19 by (i) region, (ii) upper tier local authority, (iii) lower tier local authority and (iv) parliamentary constituency in each of the last 100 weeks for which figures are available.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department has published data on teacher absence for any reason and for reasons related to COVID-19 since the start of the academic year. This can be found on Explore Education Statistics. The lowest geographical level the data is split to is local authority level. We do not publish data at parliamentary constituency level.

The most recent published data at national level is 6 January 2022. For regional and local authority level data, the latest published data is 16 December 2021. The most

recent national, regional and local authority data can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-23-march-2020-to-6-january-2022>.

The department also collects data on teacher absences in the annual school workforce census. To reduce burden on schools and local authorities during the COVID-19 outbreak, data on absences was not collected in 2020. Therefore, the latest data collected through the census is from 2019 and can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england/2019>. Absence data was collected in the November 2021 school workforce census and will be published in the next national statistic release later this year.

■ Teachers: Recruitment

Munira Wilson:

[98522]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many retired and ex-teachers were recruited back into teaching in (a) December 2021 and (b) January 2022.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department is extremely grateful to all the teachers who are responding to our call to return temporarily to the classroom to support schools whilst cases of the Omicron variant continue to rise.

On 12 January the department published initial data from a sample of supply agencies gathered between 20 December 2021 and 7 January 2022. This showed that 485 former teachers have signed up with supply agencies, and over 100 Teach First alumni have also expressed interest in returning to the classroom.

Given the size of the sample, the true number of sign-ups since the call was launched will be larger.

Full details of the data release can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/number-of-ex-teachers-joining-the-school-workforce-2021-to-2022>.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Air Pollution

Jo Gideon:

[99086]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the timeline is for the public consultation on the Government's new PM2.5 targets.

Jo Churchill:

We are preparing to launch a public consultation on proposed targets for reduction of PM_{2.5} early this year. Following the consultation, we will publish a Government response and then set the air quality targets in secondary legislation by 31 October 2022.

Jo Gideon:

[99087]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that people (a) living with asthma and lung disease and (b) who are most vulnerable to the impacts of air pollution are prioritised in the forthcoming pollution exposure reduction target.

Jo Churchill:

We recognise the need to take action to reduce the impacts of air pollution on health and to particularly focus action on PM_{2.5} - the pollutant of most significant harm to health.

Alongside setting a new concentration target, a new population exposure reduction will help prioritise action that is most beneficial for public health and drive continuous improvement, even where concentration targets have already been met. We will be launching a consultation on the new targets early this year.

■ **Air Pollution: Greater Manchester**

James Daly:

[100735]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what air quality monitoring data his Department has received from (a) the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and (b) each borough within the Greater Manchester region in 2021.

Jo Churchill:

The UK Air website provides data from monitoring sites within the Greater Manchester region, including locally managed sites and sites managed by DEFRA. This data is accessible through the data selector tool, found through the following URL:

<https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/interactive-map?network=nondefraaqmon>

An interactive map of monitoring sites in the UK provides information on all the monitoring sites in the Greater Manchester region, and can be accessed through the following URL:

<https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/data/datawarehouse>

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) submit to Defra a single Annual Status Report via The Greater Manchester Air Quality Working Group, led by Transport for Greater Manchester, representing the ten authorities that constitute the GMCA – Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, and Wigan. The Annual Status Report submitted in 2021 (covering 2020) can be viewed on the GMCA website via the URL below.

https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/4166/air_quality_reports

This report includes the air quality monitoring data for 2020. Data for 2021 will be submitted as part of this years' Annual Status Report expected later this year.

■ Ammonia: Fertilisers**Geraint Davies:** [\[98197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he will publish the Government's response to the consultation on reducing ammonia emissions from solid urea fertilisers.

Jo Churchill:

Defra will provide an official Government response to the consultation on reducing ammonia emissions from solid urea fertilisers early this year.

■ Avian Influenza**Ruth Jones:** [\[99383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the devolved Administrations on (a) the recent outbreak of bird flu and (b) the welfare and condition of the individual who has tested positive for that virus.

Jo Churchill:

The UK Government works with the devolved administrations to seek a coordinated response wherever possible to control disease. In November, the Chief Veterinary Officers for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland worked together to bring in an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone across Great Britain on 3 November 2021, and in Northern Ireland on 17 November 2021, with additional housing measures coming into force across the UK on 29 November 2021.

All four administrations are an integral part of the UK-wide decision-making processes for animal disease outbreaks. All attend the Defra Group's National Disease Control Centre meetings, are members of the Animal Disease Policy Group and participate in daily stocktakes to review on-going disease control strategy. Decisions on disease control measures, made through these groups, are based on [risk assessments](#) containing the latest scientific and ornithological evidence and veterinary advice.

With regard to the recent case of bird-to-human transmission, it is inappropriate for us to comment on an individual's health. However, the UK Health Security Agency has said that avian influenza is primarily a disease of birds and the risk to the general public's health is very low.

■ Carbon Dioxide**Daniel Zeichner:** [\[102654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on ensuring a resilient CO2 supply.

Victoria Prentis:

A cross-Government ministerial group has been set up to monitor supply chains, identify critical sectors and consider necessary Government action. As part of this

work and over the longer term, the Government is examining the options for the market to improve resilience in the provision of essential supplies such as CO₂.

In the short term, the CO₂ industry has come to an agreement to ensure UK businesses have access to a sustainable supply of CO₂. This deal runs until the end of January. The parties to the agreement must now work together to negotiate a further market solution. This will ensure supplies to UK businesses.

Our overriding priority is to protect consumers and deliver value for money for the taxpayer. The agreement between the CO₂ industry and CF Fertilisers confirms that the company's plant in Teesside will continue to operate. The full press notice on this agreement can be seen here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/agreement-reached-to-ensure-supplies-of-co2-to-businesses>. In September 2021, the Government provided limited financial support for CF Fertilisers' operating costs for three weeks.

■ Chemicals: Regulation

Ruth Jones:

[98425]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will implement the recommendation of the Environmental Audit Committee in its 2019 report, Toxic Chemicals in Everyday Life, and align with the European Chemical Agency's Substances of Very High Concern Candidate List.

Ruth Jones:

[98519]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the change in approach to including Substances of Very High Concern (SVHC) on the UK REACH Candidate List on (a) consumer and environmental protection from SVHCs, (b) consumers' right to know about SVHCs in products, (c) the number of substances added to the UK SVHC candidate list and authorisation list in comparison to the EU's and (d) the capacity of HSE to conduct Regulatory Management Options Analysis on substances identified for prioritisation; and if he will publish any assessments made by his Department on the effect of those proposals.

Ruth Jones:

[98520]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the evidence for the reasons given by his Department for introducing new principles for including Substances of Very High Concern on the UK REACH Candidate List, including the (a) the scale, nature and effect of the issue of a substance on an incorrect or more than one regulatory pathway, (b) whether that issue can be foreseen and mitigated against by monitoring how it is resolved at an EU level and (c) how the potential merits of this approach outweigh the potential costs.

Jo Churchill:

Last year the EU's Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) legislation was brought into UK law, retaining the fundamental

approach and key principles of EU REACH and ensuring a high level of protection of human health and the environment.

Within UK REACH, the Candidate List is a list of substances of very high concern (SVHCs) that can be prioritised for inclusion on the Authorisation List. Once a substance is added to the Authorisation List, it may not be used after the specified 'sunset date' unless the Secretary of State has granted a business-specific authorisation for that use.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Buildings**

Rachel Hopkins: [\[98513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the total floor area of his departmental estate was in each year from 2010-11 to 2020-21.

Victoria Prentis:

The requested data is set out in the attached table.

The department has been unable to provide data for all years requested, due to changes in the management of the Corporate Estate, changes of categorisation of usage and method of storage over the requested period.

The square meter areas provided are Net Internal Areas.

Attachments:

1. [Floor area of estate \[PQ 98513 attachment.xlsx\]](#)

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Working Hours**

Grahame Morris: [\[102586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the compliance of his Department's staff working from home with the Working Time Regulations 1998.

Victoria Prentis:

We have not made a central assessment of the compliance of staff working from home against the Working Time Regulations (WTR) 1998. While we do not centrally monitor or hold records of employees' working time (whether working from home, a Defra workplace or other location), we do ask managers and employees to ensure compliance and keep local records in accordance with WTR 1998.

■ **Environment Agency: Pay**

Jim McMahon: [\[102741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the data his Department holds on how staff pay at the Environment Agency compares to the average public sector pay award.

Rebecca Pow:

Pay awards in the Environment Agency are established within the annually published pay guidance for the Civil Service. Information on staff roles and salaries is published in accordance with requirements for Civil Service departments and non-departmental public bodies: <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/7c590663-2e85-4606-a60b-ab1bd103edcf/organogram-of-staff-roles-salaries>.

■ Environmental Land Management Scheme**Daniel Zeichner:****[101749]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that tenant farmers will be able to access Environmental Land Management Schemes.

Victoria Prentis:

We are designing the schemes to be accessible to as many farmers and land managers as possible, including tenant farmers.

As part of our designing in partnership process, we are engaging with a wide range of farmers and land managers to ensure that the future schemes are designed in a way that works for all, to maximise the delivery of environmental outcomes.

We have designed new flexibilities into the Sustainable Farming Incentive, in close consultation with farming organisations, including the Tenant Farmers Association, to ensure the scheme is accessible to tenant farmers. For instance, tenant farmers will be able to enter the scheme without proving they have landlord permission (although they will be responsible for checking their tenancy agreements to ensure they can participate in the scheme before applying).

For the early rollout of the scheme in 2022, scheme agreements will be three years (compared with a minimum of five years in Countryside Stewardship) and there will be annual flexibility to add standards, land, and levels of ambition into agreements.

In the first year, tenants with only two years left on their tenancy will be able to enter into the scheme. We will continue working with stakeholder groups representing tenants on the design of the three environmental land management schemes.

Daniel Zeichner:**[101750]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department will take to assess whether the Environmental Land Management scheme is contributing towards the Government's environmental goals.

Victoria Prentis:

Environmental Land Management schemes are being designed to contribute to a suite of measurable objectives to support the delivery of government priorities, including the targets which are due to be set under the Environment Act. We will be carrying out a programme of annual monitoring across a sample of agreements to ensure that actions are delivering both value for money and the intended outcomes. This monitoring will begin during the Sustainable Farming Incentive pilot in 2022.

The methods for gathering our evidence base will combine established data collection techniques, including expert led farm/field surveys, with increased use of technology, including earth observation and remote sensing where appropriate. This will enable us to establish baselines and environmental change across a range of indicators in line with scheme objectives. Indicators will encompass a number of different spatial and temporal scales to capture the changes that occur as a result of the schemes. Some indicators will focus on changes at an action level where others will look at impacts across landscapes. Indicators for the Environmental Land Management Programme are aligned with the 25 Year Environment Plan indicators which monitor overall environmental delivery against the government's strategic goals for environmental improvement.

We are also working closely with national monitoring programmes such as Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment to make use of existing and planned widescale environmental data collection. Data collection outside of agreements will provide valuable counterfactual information to enable us to establish changes that have resulted from scheme activities.

Alongside the national scale monitoring of schemes and environmental delivery, we will be continuing a programme of bespoke research and development projects as part of the Agri-environment Scheme Monitoring and Evaluation Programme. This long running programme assesses specific aspects of environmental delivery and will feed into policy design and improvement. As environmental outcomes can take longer to deliver, we will also be utilising modelling approaches to supplement data collection and provide additional insights.

Daniel Zeichner:

[101751]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of Environmental Land Management schemes on (a) land use, (b) food production and (c) food productivity.

Victoria Prentis:

Environmental Land Management scheme impacts on land use is being assessed through our modelling of expected scheme uptake and corresponding environmental actions on specific land types. Through our modelling we are mapping out expected land use changes resulting from scheme actions to estimate the environmental impacts, including on secondary impacts such as expanded access to green spaces / blue spaces for recreation. Impacts on food production and productivity will be modelled in a similar way, using expected uptake and scheme actions, informed by agricultural data, expert judgement, and external research to model changes in agricultural practices and impacts on crops grown and yields, for example.

■ Firewood

Geraint Davies:

[98188]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the timeframe is for the research and measurement study being carried out to improve emission estimates for domestic combustion.

Jo Churchill:

The Emissions Factors for Domestic Solid Fuels research and measurement programme will begin to deliver results by the end of the 2022/23 financial year.

Geraint Davies:

[98191]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his latest estimate is for domestic wood burning as a proportion of primary emissions of fine particulate matter, PM2.5, based on his Department's contributions to the Digest of UK Energy Statistics for the UK in 2020 published in July 2021.

Jo Churchill:

Emissions of key air pollutants are compiled and reported by Defra on an annual basis through the National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory at <https://naei.beis.gov.uk/data>. Emissions data for 2020 will be published on 15 February 2022.

■ Food: Innovation

Chris Stephens:

[101767]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to promote innovation in the food system.

Jo Churchill:

Defra recognises how central innovation and technology are to boosting productivity, enhancing the environment and feeding a growing global population. The Government is making significant investment to unlock innovation and translate our world leading research into practical, farmer-led solutions that improve productivity, environmental sustainability and resilience, and which move towards net zero emission farming systems.

We have several funding programmes open to industry as well as our own farming and food science research. These funding streams address key areas such as soil systems and land management, regenerative agriculture, sustainable feed and pest management, automation, alternative proteins, and precision farming.

The Government's £90 million investment in the 'Transforming Food Production' (TFP) challenge, launched by UK Research and Innovation in 2018, is already supporting ground-breaking research and development to enable farmers and growers to harness the latest technology to produce high quality food, increase their productivity and move towards net zero emission farming systems by 2040.

On the back of this programme's success, Defra launched a £14.5 million collaborative agricultural R&D competition called 'Farming Innovation Pathways' in spring 2021, targeting existing and new farm focused innovation, which will be delivered through the TFP initiative.

In October 2021, Defra launched the first £17.5 million share of funding in its ambitious new Farming Innovation Programme – as part of the proposed measures to stimulate innovation and boost sustainable productivity in England's agricultural and horticultural sectors as we move away from the EU system of farming subsidy payments. This Programme will enable more farmers, growers, and agri-food businesses to become involved in collaborative agricultural and horticultural R&D, and will enhance knowledge exchange and adoption of innovation by farmers and growers to ensure innovation can make a real difference to the sectors. It will comprise three separate funds that will pull through innovation in different areas, from small farmer-led innovative research projects to larger industrial R&D projects that can transform the sector.

On January 19 we will launch the Improving Farm Productivity theme of the Farming Investment Fund, part of the £27 million grant scheme fund launched last November. Farmers and growers in England will be able to apply for grants to invest in cutting edge robotic and automation technology to boost productivity. Farmers will benefit from grants ranging from £35,000 to £500,000 to invest in innovative equipment including state of the art autonomous driverless tractors, and cutting-edge robots that harvest, weed and spray crops and voluntary robotic milking systems.

Defra is also engaged with the £47.5 million UK Research and Innovation led Strategic Priorities Fund in Food Systems, which is addressing planetary and health challenges to transform the food system.

■ Hunting

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[100438]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that illegal fox hunting does not occur on Government-owned land.

Rebecca Pow:

The Hunting Act 2004 makes it an offence to hunt a wild mammal with dogs, except where it is carried out in accordance with the exemptions in the Act. Those found guilty under the Act are subject to the full force of the law and enforcement is an operational matter for the police.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[100439]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of illegal fox hunts that have taken place on Government land in each the last three years.

Rebecca Pow:

The Hunting Act 2004 makes it an offence to hunt a wild mammal with dogs except where it is carried out in accordance with the exemptions in the Act.

Those found guilty under the Act are subject to the full force of the law, and enforcement is an operational matter for the police.

Plants: Imports**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[98342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to reduce red tape for the importing of ornamental plants and trees; and if he will introduce a trusted trader scheme for that sector.

Victoria Prentis:

Great Britain's (GB) plant health regime is risk-based, and the history of compliance of specific trades (where the 'trade' is the combination of a specific commodity from a specific origin), is a significant factor in determining biosecurity risk. Consequently, trades with a proven track record of compliance and meeting prescribed eligibility criteria may be subject to a reduced frequency and/or intensity of checks. While the biosecurity risk of imported goods is largely *trade* based, there are areas where *trader* considerations may also play a role. For example, as the phased introduction of EU-GB plant health import controls is completed in 2022, Defra is enabling the performance of plant health controls away from the border, including through increased uptake in the use of designated plant health Control Points. Eligibility criteria to be designated as a Control Point include elements consistent with a trusted trader model.

Defra officials are actively exploring with stakeholders other options for minimising the regulatory burden on individual traders in a way which maintains the high biosecurity standards the United Kingdom enjoys.

Plastics: Recycling**Ruth Jones:**[\[98427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to improve the separation of recyclable materials at source to minimise the contamination of flexible plastic waste by food waste.

Jo Churchill:

The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) has produced guidance for local authorities to tackle the problems of contamination in recycling, which can be found here:

wrap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-05/WRAP-Tackling-contamination-dry-recycling-May2021.pdf.

WRAP also produces the Recycling Tracker which is the largest and longest running survey on recycling attitudes, values, and behaviours. The surveys can be found at this link:

<https://wrap.org.uk/resources/report/recycling-tracker-report-2020-behaviours-attitudes-and-awareness-around-recycling>.

The Government wants to see the recycling of plastic film increased and plastic films included into the plastic recyclable waste stream for consistent collections. We have worked with stakeholders across the plastic packaging value chain to gather evidence on the issues related to introducing plastic films into kerbside collections, including food contamination.

In our 2021 consultation on 'Consistency in Household and Business Recycling in England,' we sought views on best practice around the separate collection of plastic films, to include guidance on this recognising that ideally plastic films would be segregated from other recyclable materials within the plastics waste stream to facilitate easier sorting and reduce contamination. We are currently analysing responses to the consultation and gathering further evidence around issues relating to material quality, sorting, reprocessing and contamination to include in best practice guidance.

■ Proteins

Kerry McCarthy: [101665]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support the Government is providing to UK producers of plant-based protein to help develop domestic and overseas markets.

Kerry McCarthy: [101666]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential for UK farmers and food producers to develop new markets in plant-based protein produced from UK grown (a) pulses, (b) legumes, (c) cabbage and (d) other crops.

Victoria Prentis:

Protein-based crops, such as pulses and legumes, are important to UK farming. They contribute to farm profitability, the food supply chain, and provide sustainable, low carbon, protein in human diets and animal feed. They contribute positively to crop diversification and insect recovery and pollination.

A focus on R&D and innovation, including Defra's recently launched Farming Innovation Programme will help drive innovation including in pulses, legumes and other crops, to improve productivity and prosperity across sectors - enabling more farmers, growers and agri-food businesses to become involved in and benefit from agricultural research and development. Further R&D funding opportunities in this Programme are due to launch in Spring 2022.

Defra continues to help our food producers and farmers capitalise on the global demand for British food and drink. The Government is expanding our agri-food and drink attaché network to give additional support on the ground, and we are establishing a new Food and Drink Export Council to deliver a dynamic, future-facing strategy for the sector across the whole of the UK. The GREAT campaign has recently undertaken research into the perceptions, awareness and purchase intent of UK food and drink in key international markets - including specific questioning on plant-based foods - to help plan future promotional and export-based activity.

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[101667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has plans to provide increased support to UK producers of plant-based protein to help develop domestic and overseas markets; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the options to support those producers available to his Department.

Victoria Prentis:

Protein-based crops, such as pulses and legumes, are important to UK farming. They contribute to farm profitability, the food supply chain, and provide sustainable, low carbon, protein in human diets and animal feed. They contribute positively to crop diversification and insect recovery and pollination.

A focus on R&D and innovation, including Defra's recently launched Farming Innovation Programme will help drive innovation including in pulses, legumes and other crops, to improve productivity and prosperity across sectors - enabling more farmers, growers and agri-food businesses to become involved in and benefit from agricultural research and development. Further R&D funding opportunities in this Programme are due to launch in spring 2022.

Defra continues to help our food producers and farmers capitalise on the global demand for British food and drink. The Government is expanding our agri-food and drink attaché network to give additional support on the ground, and we are establishing a new Food and Drink Export Council to deliver a dynamic, future-facing strategy for the sector across the whole of the UK. The GREAT campaign has recently undertaken research into the perceptions, awareness and purchase intent of UK food and drink in key international markets - including specific questioning on plant-based foods - to help plan future promotional and export-based activity.

■ Tree Planting: Finance

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[99404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will provide ring-fenced funding to local authorities for the planting of trees.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra supports local authorities' tree planting activity through access to several of the Nature for Climate Fund Grant schemes, such as the Local Authorities Treescape Fund (LATF) and the Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCF).

The £4.4 million LATF is available for local authorities to plant and encourage natural regeneration of trees to restore neglected green spaces in their communities. This fund is aimed at establishing more trees in locations outside of woodlands including riverbanks, hedgerows, parklands, urban areas, beside roads and footpaths, in copses and shelterbelts, including neglected, disused and vacant community spaces.

The UTCF will provide up to £6 million of funding over the next two years for planting around 44,000 large trees in towns and cities. This fund is targeted at the managers of urban land with a broad applicant base, including local authorities.

■ Wood-burning Stoves

Geraint Davies: [\[98199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the (a) effectiveness of the Blue Angel certification standard in Germany, which aims to reduce air pollution from wood burning stoves and (b) impact introducing a similar standard in the UK would have on emissions from wood burning stoves.

Jo Churchill:

We have not made an assessment of this certification standard, which has a much wider remit than air pollution and wood burning stoves.

Geraint Davies: [\[98200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the finding of the Annual Danish Informative Inventory Report to UNECE, number 435, page 114, that new ecodesign-compliant wood burning stoves emit nearly twice as much black carbon as older wood burning stoves.

Jo Churchill:

We have commissioned a £1.6 million research project to systematically estimate the emissions, including black carbon, associated with different solids fuels, and appliances, used in the UK.

Geraint Davies: [\[98201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on (a) testing and (b) certification of wood burning stoves in Smoke Control Areas of the World Health Organisation's new Good practice statements for black carbon and ultrafine particles.

Geraint Davies: [\[98202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on (a) testing and (b) certification of wood burning stoves outside Smoke Control Areas of the World Health Organisation's new Good practice statements for black carbon and ultrafine particles.

Geraint Davies:

[\[98203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on (a) testing and (b) certification of wood burning stoves for ecodesign of the World Health Organisation's new Good practice statements for black carbon and ultrafine particles compliance.

Jo Churchill:

We are already taking steps to reduce emissions from domestic burning. In 2020, we introduced the Domestic Solid Fuels Regulations, which will phase out of the sale of the most polluting domestic solid fuels. As of January 2022, all stoves placed on the market in the UK must be Eco-design compliant.

We have commissioned a £1.6 million research project to systematically estimate the emissions associated with different solids fuels and appliances. We are commissioning an evaluation of the impact of the Domestic Solid Fuels Regulations 2020 and updating our understanding of trends in domestic burning practices, including within smoke control areas.

Additionally, the Government is expanding the PM_{2.5} monitoring network to enhance measurement of this pollutant nationally.

Geraint Davies:

[\[98204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of Denmark's best practices for the controlling of emissions from wood burning stoves as part of developing guidelines for the UK.

Jo Churchill:

At this stage, we have not made such an assessment as part of developing guidelines for the UK.

■ Wood-burning Stoves: Regulation

Geraint Davies:

[\[102525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the regulations on the purchase and use of wood burning appliances in one place on his Department's website to increase accessibility of that information for consumers.

Jo Churchill:

We will consider the accessibility of this information as part of our review of Defra's UK-AIR website.

Geraint Davies:

[\[102526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many journalists or media organisations contacted his Department in December 2021 to enquire about the implementation of the new Ecodesign Regulations relating to wood or solid fuel burning appliances in domestic premises from 1 January 2022.

Jo Churchill:

The Defra press office did not receive any such enquiries from journalists or media organisations in December 2021.

■ **Wood-burning Stoves: Smoke Control Areas****Geraint Davies:**[\[102527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure consistently high standards in (a) approval processes and (b) testing for appliances or ranges of appliances before they can receive an exemption to burn unauthorised fuel in Smoke Control Areas.

Jo Churchill:

The testing of exempt appliances for use in Smoke Control Areas is carried out by an external contractor. Defra requires regular progress reports and reviews the mechanism and monitors the contractor's performance to ensure standards are maintained.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE■ **Foreign Investment in UK: Visas****Stephen Doughty:**[\[101739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when she last discussed reforms to Tier 1 (Investor) Visas with the Home Secretary in the context of the recommendations made in the Russia report of the Intelligence and Security Committee.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is at the forefront of tackling illicit finance, combatting the threat from source to destination. Money obtained through corruption or criminality, including that linked to Russia, is not welcome in the UK. Some of our response will be visible, through law enforcement, policy and international engagement, other options will be less visible, but no less impactful. Our response continuously evolves with the threat.

Our capabilities include the use of immigration powers to protect the UK from a range of national security threats. As part of this we are reviewing all Tier 1 (Investor) visas granted before 5 April 2015.

We have previously made reforms to the visa route in 2015 and 2019 and we continue to keep this visa route under review. Home Office officials work closely across Whitehall, including with the FCDO, on reforms to Tier 1 (Investor) Visas and other issues related to tackling illicit finance.

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

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[100658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to the level of staffing in her Department on the Government's ability to respond to international humanitarian crises.

Amanda Milling:

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

Various workforce models were looked at prior to the current Foreign Secretary joining which we are not proceeding with. At this stage no decisions on changes to staff numbers have been made. The purpose of our planning processes is to take into account exactly the sort of issue you raise - ensuring we have adequate staffing to ensure the UK will continue to be a leading responder to new rapid onset crises, providing lifesaving humanitarian assistance at times of crisis as well as tackling their causes. As the Prime Minister and Minister Cleverly have said in the House on 15 and 16 December, there will not be an across the board 10 per cent reduction in FCDO staff. Indeed, with the addition of new responsibilities on the UK's relationship with the EU, we will need to further expand our capability in some areas to reflect new priorities.

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

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[\[102674\]](#)

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

Amanda Milling:

As referenced in my response to written questions 100589 and 100590, 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.

■ **Iran: Guided Weapons**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[98488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of Iran's ballistic missile programme.

James Cleverly:

Iran is continuing the development of its ballistic missile programme, including conducting missile tests on 24 and 30 December. UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which was unanimously adopted in the Security Council and underpins the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), calls on Iran not to undertake activities related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering a nuclear weapon, including launches using such ballistic missile technology. These UN ballistic missile restrictions remain in place until 2023. Iran's ballistic missile programme is destabilising for the region and poses a threat to European security.

Alongside France and Germany (as E3), we have written regularly to the UN Secretary-General, most recently on 11 August, to draw attention to Iranian missile activity inconsistent with UNSCR 2231. We urge Iran to fully abide by UNSCR 2231 and all other relevant resolutions.

Kazakhstan: Politics and Government**Ruth Jones:**[\[99375\]](#)

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

Chris Heaton-Harris:

I am deeply concerned by, and condemn, the violence and destruction of property in Kazakhstan during the past week, particularly in the city of Almaty. The Government greatly regrets the loss of life and sends its condolences to families of the deceased. The reasons behind the violence in Almaty remain unclear. We are continuing to speak with the Kazakh authorities to gain further insights. President Tokayev stated that peacekeeping forces of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) would remain in Kazakhstan for a short period of time to assist in re-establishing constitutional order, and we understand that CSTO troops have now begun their withdrawal. It is important that any forces deployed have a clear mission, are time-limited and be proportionate in any use of force to defend the legitimate security interests of the state. It is also important that Kazakhstan's sovereignty is respected.

We have been clear in our communications with the Kazakh government that the right to peaceful protest should be protected. The UK's Ambassador to Kazakhstan and her team in Nur-Sultan are in contact with the Kazakh authorities and will continue to engage in the coming days. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon spoke with the Kazakh Ambassador to the UK on 6 January, with Deputy Foreign Minister Alimbayev on 7 January, and with the Kazakh President's Special Representative, H.E. Erzhan Kazykhan, on 14 January. As the situation stabilises, we will continue to engage our Kazakh counterparts to gain insights into the nature of the threat they have faced.

■ Kenya: British Council

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[101640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will ensure that the conclusions of the British Council investigation into alleged racism in Kenya are made publicly available.

James Cleverly:

The FCDO and the British Council take any allegations of racism very seriously. The British Council are conducting an investigation into the claims, which is expected to conclude in January. Issues regarding British Council staff are operational matters for the British Council. It is for the British Council to respond once the investigation has concluded.

■ Mehran Raoof

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[101635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with her Iranian counterpart on the imprisonment of Mehran Raoof.

James Cleverly:

We work closely with the families of those British nationals detained in Iran, where they have asked for consular assistance, lobbying where they request that we do so. We are always happy to discuss the detail of cases with constituency MPs where the individual has given consent for us to do so.

■ Myanmar: Homicide

Carla Lockhart:

[\[99413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of reports of the killing of at least 35 people by Myanmar's military regime on Christmas Eve; and what steps she is taking with international partners in response to those reports.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is deeply concerned by the increasing levels of violence across Myanmar. We are appalled by reports that the military killed at least 35 people, including four children and two staff of Save the Children, in Kayah State on 24 December. In response, the UK and international partners secured a United Nations Security Council press statement on 29 December condemning the killings and stressing the need to ensure accountability for this act, and calling for an immediate cessation of all violence and the protection of civilians. We continue to support the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar which investigates, collects, and preserves evidence of serious human rights violations for future prosecution.

The UK also remains committed to helping those most in need. Since the coup we have provided £18 million in humanitarian assistance in Myanmar. We will continue to

provide humanitarian support to the most vulnerable and conflict-affected populations.

■ **Overseas Aid: Tropical Diseases**

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[99317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate she has made of the number of people with (a) lymphatic filariasis, (b) river blindness, (c) schistosomiasis and (d) childhood intestinal worms who would have received treatment from the UK-funded Sustainable Control and Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases programme in West and Central Africa between October 2021 and April 2022 had that programme continued during that period.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[99318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what Neglected Tropical Disease programmes her Department funded from April to September 2021; what funding each such programme received; and what Neglected Tropical Disease programmes her Department is funding from October 2021 to March 2022.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[99319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to monitor the impact of UK Official Development Assistance on levels of Neglected Tropical Diseases.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[99320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to support the World Health Organisation's new road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030, published on 28 January 2021.

Amanda Milling:

The seismic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the UK economy forced tough but necessary decisions, including exiting from Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) implementation programmes. The UK has made a significant contribution to global efforts to protect hundreds of millions of people from NTDs. Our programmes have delivered NTD treatments and strengthened health systems to deliver these services in future.

The latest target for the total number of treatments to be delivered by the ASCEND (Accelerating the Sustainable Control and Elimination of NTDs) programme between 2019 and 2022 was 600 million. Hundreds of millions of treatments have been distributed to date under the programme. The full results and spend of the programme will be published by March 2022.

FCDO research has helped deliver innovative technologies such as new diagnostics and treatments for NTDs, for example the first rapid diagnostic test as well as the first ever oral only drug to treat all stages of sleeping sickness. We currently fund the Coalition for Operational Research on NTDs and the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative.

Global health remains a priority for UK Official Development Assistance. We will invest in health systems strengthening through our support for the World Health Organisation (WHO), multi-country global funds and bilateral support for health programmes within countries, including those affected by NTDs. The UK fully endorses the WHO's 2030 NTDs Road map and its focus on sustainability and delivery through health systems.

■ **Philippines: Storms**

Stephen Crabb: [\[99315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assistance her Department is providing to the Philippines following Typhoon Rai.

Stephen Crabb: [\[99316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with her counterpart in the Philippines on emergency relief following Typhoon Rai.

Amanda Milling:

The UK was saddened to see the devastation wrought by Typhoon Rai on the Philippines on 16 and 17 December. We offer our deepest sympathies to those who have been affected.

The UK has committed £1 million to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) emergency appeal, launched on 18 December 2021. This will go towards supporting the immediate and early recovery needs of affected people in areas including water, sanitation and hygiene; shelter; and protection of the most vulnerable. The UK is also one of the top contributors to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) which is contributing £9 million to the UN's Humanitarian Response Plan for Typhoon Odette.

I discussed the situation with the Philippines Ambassador to the UK on 20 December 2021.

■ **Sanctions**

Stephen Doughty: [\[102646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many staff in her Department are currently assigned to investigating and, or drafting measures under the Magnitsky sanctions regime.

Amanda Milling:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's Sanctions Unit leads on the development of sanctions under the Global Human Rights and Global Anti-Corruption sanctions regimes, working closely with other departments across the FCDO as well as officials from other Government departments across Whitehall.

Stephen Doughty:

[102649]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many individual designations have been made under the Magnitsky sanctions regime in each of the last 12 months.

Stephen Doughty:

[102650]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many people holding (a) Russian, (b) Kazakhstan, (c) Belarus, (d) Uzbekistan and (e) Turkmenistan citizenship have been sanctioned under the Magnitsky sanctions regime in each of the last 12 months.

Amanda Milling:

Since the UK's Global Human Rights Sanctions regime was established in July 2020, we have designated 75 individuals and 6 entities under the Global Human Rights sanctions regime. We have also designated 27 individuals under the Global Anti-Corruption Sanctions regime since it was established in April 2021. The full UK Sanctions List is available on GOV.UK website (www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-sanctions-list), which provides details of those individuals and entities designated under sanctions regulations made under the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act.

■ **Uganda: Freedom of Expression**

Chi Onwurah:

[100541]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment her Department has made of freedom of expression in Uganda.

Vicky Ford:

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right of a functioning democracy. Ugandan citizens should be able to question, inform and hold to account those in power. The UK is concerned about the downward trajectory of freedom of expression in Uganda. Incidents such as the national internet shutdown during the 2021 Presidential elections, arbitrary detention of opposition figures, attacks on the media, and the detention of Kakwenza Rukirabashija, despite court rulings in favour of his unconditional release, are very worrying.

The UK is a steadfast advocate for Ugandan democracy. We will continue to work to achieve inclusive democratic progress that delivers for future generations. This can only be achieved through a vibrant civic space that offers freedom expression for all Ugandans. The UK regularly raises these issues with the Government of Uganda both in multilateral fora and through our High Commission in Kampala. We urge the Government to uphold its constitutional commitments and those under international law. As a founding member of the Media Freedom Coalition, the UK is also working with the Government of Uganda to push for a free, independent and impartial media to be allowed to flourish.

■ Xinjiang: Uighurs

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[\[102675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the UK Government has made an assessment under the Genocide Convention of (a) whether genocide is taking place and (b) the level of risk of genocide in Xinjiang.

Amanda Milling:

Any judgment as to whether genocide has occurred is a matter for a competent court, rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies. This does not prevent us from taking robust action to address serious violations of human rights, as we are doing in the case of Xinjiang.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[\[102676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department has made an assessment of the level of potential risk of genocide regarding treatment of Uyghurs and other minorities in the Uyghur region of China, in response to the judgment of the International Court of Justice in Bosnia & Herzegovina v Serbia & Montenegro, 2007.

Amanda Milling:

Any judgment as to whether genocide has occurred is a matter for a competent court, rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies. This does not prevent us from taking robust action to address serious violations of human rights, as we are doing in the case of Xinjiang.

■ Yemen: Armed Conflict

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the additional (a) internally displaced population and (b) need for humanitarian assistance that would be generated in the event that Marib city were taken by the Houthi rebels in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

The current Houthi offensive in Marib is worsening the humanitarian crisis and increasing levels of need. Humanitarian agencies have recorded over 60,000 displaced in Marib since September 2021 and a total of more than 200,000 have been displaced around Marib since January 2020. Our partners the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Food Programme (WFP) are currently responding in Marib. We are also working with the UN to ensure adequate presence on the ground and updated contingency planning for all potential scenarios. In 2021, the UK contributed £63.5 million to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), which has provided \$40 million to UN agencies for Marib. This is in addition to £87 million in aid that the UK is spending in Yemen for this financial year.

A negotiated political settlement is the only way to bring long-term stability to Yemen. On 10 January, I [Minister Cleverly] hosted UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, in London and reiterated UK support for UN led peace efforts to drive forward the political process in Yemen. We urge the parties to engage constructively in negotiations to end the conflict and alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion

Carla Lockhart: [101857]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 27 April 2021 to Question 179697, on Abortion, whether his Department has plans to investigate illegal abortions occurring over the ten week limit for medical abortion at home.

Carla Lockhart: [101860]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what measures are in place to ensure that home abortions taking place after the legal limit of ten weeks are reported to the police; and which health bodies are responsible for ensuring that that reporting is undertaken.

Maggie Throup:

The Department continues to work with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to monitor the temporary approval of home use of both early medical abortion pills up to 10 weeks gestation. This includes sharing information between the CQC and Department where serious incidents related to the temporary approval take place. Concerns relating to a potential breach of abortion legislation should be reported to the police. Decisions to bring a prosecution in relation to the law on abortion are for the police and the Crown Prosecution Service.

■ Alzheimer's Disease

Stuart Anderson: [100693]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to support people and families affected by Alzheimer's disease.

Gillian Keegan:

Following diagnosis, those with dementia should receive information on local services and access to relevant advice and support. Carers should be made aware of and offered the opportunity for respite and supported with their caring responsibilities. The Department's guidance 'After diagnosis of dementia: what to expect from health and care services' is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/after-a-diagnosis-of-dementia-what-to-expect-from-health-and-care-services/after-diagnosis-of-dementia-what-to-expect-from-health-and-care-services>

We are working with stakeholders and the health and care system to identify and implement actions to support people with dementia and their carers. We will be setting out our plans on dementia for England for future years in 2022. This new dementia strategy will include a focus on improving the experience of being diagnosed and living with dementia.

■ Bowel Cancer

Tracey Crouch:

[\[100486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people diagnosed with bowel cancer each year are aged (a) 40 to 44, (b) 45 to 49, (c) 50 to 54, (d) 55 to 59 and (e) 60 and over.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 13 January 2022]: The following table show a count of bowel cancers diagnosed in the age groups requested in England in each year from 2015 to 2019.

YEAR	AGE GROUP	COUNT OF DIAGNOSES
2015	40 to 44	439
2016	40 to 44	477
2017	40 to 44	477
2018	40 to 44	513
2019	40 to 44	554
2015	45 to 49	875
2016	45 to 49	865
2017	45 to 49	834
2018	45 to 49	895
2019	45 to 49	902
2015	50 to 54	1,539
2016	50 to 54	1,574
2017	50 to 54	1,533
2018	50 to 54	1,680
2019	50 to 54	1,670

YEAR	AGE GROUP	COUNT OF DIAGNOSES
2015	55 to 59	2,404
2016	55 to 59	2,533
2017	55 to 59	2,430
2018	55 to 59	2,685
2019	55 to 59	2,733
2015	60 and over	29,170
2016	60 and over	29,051
2017	60 and over	29,180
2018	60 and over	29,643
2019	60 and over	30,966

Source: NHS Digital

■ Bowel Cancer: Screening

Tracey Crouch:

[\[100487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the bowel screening faecal immunochemical test (FIT) to people (a) over the age of 50 and (b) over the age of 45.

Maria Caulfield:

In 2018, Ministers accepted the UK National Screening Committee's recommendation to offer bowel screening from the age of 50 to 74 years old using the faecal immunochemical home test kit. This is gradually being implemented by the National Health Service with invitations now issued to those aged 56 years old and over. Any proposal to offer bowel screening below the recommended age of 50 years old would require a submission to the UK National Screening Committee via its major modification process for consideration.

■ Brain: Tumours

Tony Lloyd:

[\[87592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding the Government is making available for the treatment of brain tumours.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 13 December 2021]: The information is not available in the format requested. Expenditure on the treatment of brain tumours forms part of system

budgets for the National Health Service. Funding is made available to Cancer Alliances to deliver the NHS Long Term Plan's ambitions for all cancers, including brain tumours.

■ **Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust: Surgery**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[100434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for surgery in the Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation.

Edward Argar:

Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust has reopened elective services and is working towards safely reducing their waiting lists. The Trust has an elective recovery programme in place, supported by the local clinical commissioning groups. This includes the use of independent sector to treat patients in community settings and use theatres and outpatient facilities at the weekend. The Trust has also optimised its use of technology, to deliver timely and convenient care for patients and health inequalities data is complementing its clinical prioritisation to minimise the risk of treatment delays.

We have made £2 billion available in 2021/22 and a further £8 billion in the next three years to increase activity and tackle backlogs in elective care in England.

■ **Care Homes: Coronavirus**

Matt Western:

[\[100646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of care homes were yet to be visited to deliver booster doses of covid-19 vaccinations as of (a) 25 December 2021 and (b) 7 January 2022.

Matt Western:

[\[100647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of care homes have been visited to deliver booster doses of covid-19 vaccinations on more than one occasion.

Maggie Throup:

As of 30 December 2021, 5,893 or 39% of care homes, including both older adult and non-older adult care homes, had been visited on more than one occasion. As of 25 December 2021, 25 care homes or 0.16% care homes were yet to be visited. As of 7 January 2022, seven or 0.05% of care homes were yet to be visited. Delays in visiting the remaining care homes were due to outbreaks, therefore visits could not take place until the 28-day isolation period was over.

Care Workers and Health Services: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell: [\[102686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review the Government's plan for mandatory vaccinations of NHS and care staff in light of evidence that transmission of covid-19 can still occur 10 weeks post-vaccination.

Edward Argar:

We continue to consider the latest evidence and clinical advice to inform policy. We remain committed to the vaccination requirements coming into force on 1 April 2022.

Rachael Maskell: [\[102687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people who stop working in (a) the NHS and (b) social care following the implementation of mandatory covid-19 vaccinations for those staff.

Edward Argar:

The Department's impact assessment estimated the number of workers who may remain unvaccinated against COVID-19 at the end of the 12-week grace period and are not medically exempt. For National Health Service staff, this is estimated to be 4.9% or 73,000 and 7.6% or 38,000 for social care staff. We continue to encourage unvaccinated staff to make the positive choice to be vaccinated.

The latest data as of 13 January 2022 shows that since the Government's consultation on the policy in September 2021, there has been a net increase of NHS trust healthcare workers vaccinated with a first dose of over 81,000. For social care, the data shows there has been a net increase of over 20,000 social care workers vaccinated with a first dose.

Care Workers: Coronavirus

Hilary Benn: [\[102554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether social care staff providing support to individuals in their own homes are required to be vaccinated against covid-19.

Gillian Keegan:

Regulations to extend vaccination as a condition of deployment beyond residential care settings to any other Care Quality Commission (CQC) regulated activity in health and social care, subject to certain exemptions and conditions will come into force on 1 April 2022. The regulations require CQC-registered providers to ensure that anyone they deploy in the provision of this activity, who will have face to face contact with service users, has provided evidence of vaccination or exemption. This applies to home or domiciliary care services, supported living and extra care housing as well as other regulated activities. It does not apply where care is provided under a Shared Lives agreement. Activities which are not CQC-regulated, such as care provided by personal assistants, are not within the scope of the regulations.

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Exercise

Jim Shannon:

[\[98286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to NICE's updated guidance on exercise for sufferers of ME, whether his Department has plans to promote that information to health and social care staff.

Gillian Keegan:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is working with the National Health Service to support the implementation of its guidance. While the guidance describes best practice and should be taken into account in the treatment of patients, it is not mandatory and does not override a medical practitioner's clinical judgement.

■ Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[\[101772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will publish a long-term strategy on living with covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 14 January 2022]: The Government has set out the plan for managing COVID-19 in autumn and winter 2021/22. In spring 2022, we will review the Coronavirus Act 2020 and its remaining regulations to determine whether they should remain in place.

The COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme ensures the best long term protection available. The Vaccines Task Force has already procured vaccines to deploy booster programmes in autumn 2022 if necessary and will review future vaccination needs

We will set out a plan for the future management of COVID-19 in due course.

■ Coronavirus: Drugs

Stella Creasy:

[\[100533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 patients have been treated with (a) ronapreve, (b) sotrovimab and (c) molnupiravir each week since 1 December 2021.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 13 January 2022]: The information is not currently available in the format requested. However, 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).

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

CMDUs. To 11 January 2022, 3,012 people have enrolled on the PANORAMIC national study which has a molnupiravir treatment ratio of 1:1.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[98344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people at high risk from covid-19 who are eligible to receive antiviral treatment following a positive PCR test result.

Maggie Throup:

Since December 2021, National Health Service patients can access new COVID-19 therapies, including antivirals and monoclonal antibodies which can reduce the risk of becoming hospitalised. 1.3 million of the highest risk patients in the United Kingdom are eligible for antivirals directly. This cohort include patients at highest risk of hospitalisation and deterioration following a COVID-19 infection. Should they receive a positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, they will be assessed by clinicians and offered antiviral or antibody treatments from a COVID Medicines Delivery Unit, if eligible.

Over 20 million people are eligible for antivirals through the new PANORAMIC national study run by the University of Oxford. The study is open to individuals living anywhere in the UK who received a positive PCR test, are aged 50 years old and over or are aged 18 to 49 years old with an underlying medical condition that can increase the risk of developing severe COVID-19.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[98345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the average time taken for people at high risk from covid-19 to receive antiviral treatment following a positive PCR test result.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[98348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the success rate of people at high risk from covid-19 being able to access antiviral treatment within five days of a positive PCR test result.

Maggie Throup:

Sufficient data is not yet available on the average treatment time from the point of a positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test. However, the United Kingdom-wide clinical access policy for monoclonal antibody and antiviral treatments for patients at highest risk confirms that treatment should be provided within five days of a positive PCR test and within five days of symptom onset. This is in line with the medicines' market authorisations. The PANORAMIC national study protocol also specifies that antivirals must be administered within five days of a positive PCR result for patients randomised for treatment within the study.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[98346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of letters sent by NHS England to people at high risk from covid-19 to inform them of the process for receiving antiviral treatment following a positive PCR test result.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[98347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Government's commitment to expedite access to antiviral treatment for people at high risk from covid-19, what estimate he has made of the number of PCR tests sent to people in that category.

Maggie Throup:

In England, approximately 1.3 million individuals have been pre-identified as potentially eligible under the clinical access policy for new treatments to reduce the risk of deterioration or hospitalisation from COVID-19 infection. These patients have been notified by email or by letter, depending on the patient's contact preferences. Newly eligible patients can be referred by their general practitioner, NHS 111 or their hospital doctor, should they test positive for COVID-19. As of 7 January 2022, an estimated 1.26 million priority polymerase chain reaction test kits had been sent to patients in England who are in the highest risk group.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[101673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 10 January 2022 to Question 94304, on Coronavirus: Screening, what options her Department is actively considering.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 14 January 2022]: The availability of polymerase chain reaction tests, whether through the home channel or in-person appointments at test sites, is continually monitored to ensure a manageable flow of tests to the laboratory network. We have also expanded our laboratory processing capacity and implemented temporary surge testing capacity when required.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[80374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the scientific basis is for phasing out symptom free covid-19 testing; and what assessment he has made of the impact of the phasing out of that testing on covid-19 infections.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: Rapid asymptomatic testing is an important tool to help reduce the spread of the virus, while supporting people to manage their own risk and the risks to others. The Government will therefore continue to provide the public with access to free lateral flow tests in the coming months, in particular as we respond to the Omicron variant. People are encouraged to use regular rapid testing to help manage periods of risk, such as after close contact with others in a

higher risk environment, or before spending prolonged time with a more vulnerable person. We will continue to use testing as an important line of defence. With the emergence of Omicron, it is not the correct time to make such a change.

We announced in our Autumn and Winter plan 2021 in September that, at a later stage, universal provision of lateral flow devices will end. When it is appropriate to make that change, we will publish more about our reasoning and how the public can continue to access the tests they need.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Daisy Cooper:

[\[102781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 93068 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, if he will (a) urgently publish guidance and (b) introduce retraining for 119 call handlers to enable them to effectively refer patients who have received a covid-19 vaccination overseas to update their NIMS record.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 17 January 2022]: All 119 call handlers have received substantive and thorough training to effectively guide individuals who have been vaccinated abroad to an appropriate resolution. Call handlers are now able to make referrals to the national booking service.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[84471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking in Weaver Vale constituency to meet the Government's target of offering all adults over the age of 18 a covid-19 booster vaccination by the end of January 2022.

Maggie Throup:

The Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership's vaccination programme has delivered more than 4.3 million doses to date. The programme is currently ensuring there are sufficient appointments to offer all adults over 18 years old a booster dose by the end of January 2022.

General practitioners (GPs) in Weaver Vale are visiting care homes to ensure that care home residents and staff who are eligible have been offered a booster vaccine, with follow up appointments for residents who become eligible in the future. GP partners in Weaver Vale are reviewing ways to increase capacity to focus on vaccinating the most vulnerable. Several pharmacy sites are increasing their capacity to offer vaccinations over the Christmas and New Year period. Cheshire system partners are operating a roving vaccination model to meet the needs of those most at risk, underserved and vaccine hesitant citizens, offering a walk-in service. Plans to increase capacity are being finalised and will be aligned to national operational guidance.

Stella Creasy:

[\[91953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of immunocompromised or immunosuppressed people have received their (a) second and (b) third primary dose of the covid-19 vaccine in each (a) region of England and (b) local authority as of 13 December 2021.

Stella Creasy:

[\[91954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of the proportion of third primary covid-19 vaccine doses administered to immunocompromised and immunosuppressed people in (a) Waltham Forest and (b) England.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 16 December 2021]: The information is not held centrally in the format requested. However, the latest available data as of 20 December 2021 shows that 87.7% of individuals in England identified as severely immunosuppressed have received a third primary dose.

No specific comparative assessment been made .

Rachael Maskell:

[\[98991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his latest assessment of the (a) durability and (b) average duration of the booster covid-19 vaccine in holding immunity is.

Maggie Throup:

Recent data on the Omicron variant shows that two to four weeks after a 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. Vaccine effectiveness against hospitalisation is higher at approximately 95% at two to nine weeks and remaining at 90% at 10 weeks and over in those aged 65 years old and over who have received a booster dose.

Ruth Jones:

[\[99063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to improve covid-19 vaccine uptake among at-risk groups of people.

Maggie Throup:

The COVID-19 vaccination programme has prioritised patients based on increased age and clinical risk factors such as underlying health conditions and pregnancy. To increase uptake among pregnant women, on 16 December 2021 the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised that pregnant women of any age should be prioritised for vaccination and included in priority group six. We have provided vaccine toolkits to address concerns on pregnancy, breastfeeding and fertility and increased awareness through sharing stories of women of childbearing age who have already received the COVID-19 vaccine. NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with regional teams and providers to ensure that advice on

vaccination in pregnancy, including the risks and benefits to pregnant women, is offered in antenatal services and primary care settings. A new campaign was launched on 10 January 2022 urging pregnant women who have not yet had their first, second, third or booster dose to receive their vaccination as soon as possible.

For those with underlying health conditions, resources are being provided to charities and patient organisations representing those living with clinical risk factors. NHS England and NHS Improvement are developing tailored communications for specialists caring for each group of eligible patients within the immunosuppressed cohort. This includes template referral letters for clinicians to signpost patients for vaccination. Patients with a weakened immune system can receive a third dose from a walk-in site if they have received a referral letter from their general practitioner or hospital doctor, they are aged 12 years old or over and eight weeks has elapsed since their second dose.

We are also ensuring that people with learning disabilities and autism have reasonable adjustments made within the vaccination programme. This includes training resources for vaccination teams, accessible information such as an easy read vaccination invitation letter and consent form and a film on the COVID-19 vaccine.

■ Coronavirus: Drugs

Daisy Cooper:

[\[99393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in what way (a) clinicians, (b) patient groups, (c) hon. Members and (d) others can make representations to the relevant NHS unit about including additional individual patients or groups of patients who might be considered to be eligible to receive covid-19 antiviral treatments, who are currently not considered eligible.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 12 January 2022]: The cohorts eligible for treatment with antivirals and monoclonal antibodies have been determined by an independent expert group commissioned by the Department and included in a clinical policy agreed by the United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers. This was created based on evidence that certain health conditions can make a patient much more likely to progress to severe disease. As a result, these patients could benefit the most from novel medications.

We are currently reviewing a process for considering changes to this cohort and an update will be available shortly. In the meantime, if a patient believes they may be eligible to access these treatments, they are advised to contact their general practitioner or consultant or NHS 111.

■ Dental Services and Pharmacy: Isle of Wight

Bob Seely:

[\[98419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to increase support for the provision of independent pharmacies and dentists on the Isle of Wight.

Maria Caulfield:

The need for pharmaceutical services is assessed on a three-yearly basis by local authority Health and Wellbeing Boards. The current assessment for the Isle of Wight concluded that the number and distribution of services is adequate to provide pharmaceutical services to the population. NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group and the local authority to consider how the provision of dentistry in the Isle of Wight can be supported.

Dental Services: Rural Areas**Bob Seely:**[\[98414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department will take to increase the supply of NHS dental places and appointments in (a) the Isle of Wight and (b) other rural and isolated communities.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 11 January 2022]: NHS England and NHS Improvement are developing proposals for dental system reform, with the Department and key stakeholders. This aims to improve patient access and oral health, offer value for money for the National Health Service and be designed with the profession. Any reforms will seek to improve provision in such areas by making the NHS dental offer more attractive for dentists.

Health Education England's Advancing Dental Care Education and Training Review programme is addressing oral health needs through changes to the workforce. This includes opportunities for flexible core and specialty training pathways to improve career progression and retention, including in rural and isolated communities. The programme will also look at the placement of postgraduate dental training places into areas of greatest need, such as rural communities. NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group and the local authority to consider how to improve dentistry provision in the Isle of Wight.

Dentistry: Qualifications**Chris Stephens:**[\[102677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to amend the five-year time limit in the General Dental Council's Overseas Registration Exam to take account of the impact of the covid-19 pandemic and to support candidates who have reached or are approaching that five year limit.

Edward Argar:

The Dentists Act 1984 requires overseas applicants to the General Dental Council's (GDC) register to undertake its Overseas Registration Exam (ORE) to confirm they have the requisite skills and knowledge to practise dentistry in the United Kingdom.

In April 2020, the GDC suspended Parts 1 and 2 of the ORE due to the restrictions in place to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. On 2 December 2021, the GDC announced a planned sitting of the Part 2 exam in January 2022.

The legislation restricts the GDC from offering Part 2 ORE places to candidates where five or more years have passed since they first attempted Part 1 of the exam. Therefore, the GDC has not been able to offer places on the January 2022 exam sitting to any candidates whose five-year period has expired. Officials have worked with the GDC to develop proposals which will provide these candidates with additional time to take the Part 2 assessment in the future. We plan to consult on this proposed legislative change in early 2022.

■ Eating Disorders: Mental Health Services

Jim Shannon:

[98298]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing dedicated facilities to treat children and young people with eating disorders at specialised hubs placed throughout the UK.

Gillian Keegan:

We have made no such assessment. We have provided additional funding for children and young people's community eating disorder services, with £53 million per year from 2021/22.

This will enhance the capacity of the 70 new or improved community eating disorder teams in England.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have also announced a further £40 million in 2021/22 to address the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health, including eating disorders. Of this, £10 million of capital funding is providing additional beds at units for young people with the most complex needs, including eating disorders, £1.5 million to ensure there are additional facilities for children under 13 years old.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[98370]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the NHS's ability to effectively offer care to children with an eating disorder in the context of increases in the number of hospital admissions for eating disorders.

Gillian Keegan:

While data has shown a significant increase in demand for the treatment of eating disorders, the number of children and young people beginning treatment has also increased.

We are investing an additional £79 million in 2021/22 to expand children's mental health services, enabling 2,000 more children and young people to access eating disorder services. NHS England and NHS Improvement have announced a further £40 million in 2021/22 to address the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health, including for eating disorders. NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to work with system leaders and regions and ask that areas prioritise service delivery and investment to meet the needs of vulnerable young people.

Navendu Mishra:

[\[99085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to make additional funding available for the treatment of eating disorders in young people in response to the data published by NHS Digital, Hospital admissions with a primary or secondary diagnosis of eating disorders, published on 4 January 2022.

Gillian Keegan:

We have no such plans at present. However, we are investing an additional £79 million in 2021/22 to expand children's mental health services to allow 2,000 more children and young people to access eating disorder services. NHS England and NHS Improvement have also announced a further £40 million in 2021/22 to address the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health, including eating disorders. This is in addition to at least £53 million a year being invested in children and young people's community eating disorder services to 2023/24 under the NHS Long Term Plan.

■ **Eyesight: Health Services**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[101693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will introduce a national eye care strategy.

Maria Caulfield:

There are currently no plans to introduce a national eye health strategy. However, NHS England and NHS Improvement are recruiting a National Clinical Director for Eye Care to lead improvements in eye care services.

■ **General Practitioners**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[101683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to give a legal right to patients to request a face-to-face appointment with their GP.

Maria Caulfield:

We have no current plans to do so. NHS England and NHS Improvement's guidance states that patients' input into choices on appointment mode should be sought. Practices should respect preferences for face-to-face care unless there are good clinical reasons to the contrary.

■ **General Practitioners: Liverpool City Region**

Dan Carden:

[\[97030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential effect of pressures resulting from the covid-19 outbreak on GP staff retention in (a) Liverpool, Walton constituency and (b) the Liverpool City Region.

Maria Caulfield:

We have no plans to make a specific assessment. However, we have established a £250 million Winter Access Fund to support general practitioner practices and increase capacity. We are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement and the profession to understand how we can improve staff retention and the working environment due to the impact of the pandemic.

General Practitioners: Liverpool West Derby**Ian Byrne:**[\[87889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of (a) GP appointments and (b) face to face GP appointments in Liverpool, West Derby constituency.

Maria Caulfield:

General practitioners (GPs) have been asked to prioritise vaccinations and emergency care for the duration of the COVID-19 booster campaign. While some non-urgent appointments may need to be postponed, general practice, NHS 111 and community pharmacy teams are available for everyone with concerns about their health.

Liverpool Clinical Commissioning Group has advised that commissioners are strongly encouraged to make local arrangements for extended access provision, where agreed with Primary Care Networks (PCNs). Central Liverpool PCN is currently operating a pilot scheme for enhanced access. All PCNs in Liverpool will be providing enhanced access for patients in their area by October 2022, taking into account any findings from the pilot.

Health: Females**Navendu Mishra:**[\[99407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish its response to the Women's Health Strategy consultation, which closed on 13 June 2021.

Maria Caulfield:

On 23 December 2021, we published 'Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England' and the results of the call for evidence survey. We will publish the analysis of written submissions in due course and the Women's Health Strategy in the spring.

Hospitals: Discharges**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[100436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact that current delays to hospital discharge are having on waiting times for NHS services.

Edward Argar:

No formal assessment has been made. Guidance on hospital discharge was issued in November 2021 and details of additional measures to reduce the number of people delayed from leaving acute hospitals has been communicated to National Health Service organisations and local authorities. Since March 2020, we established a national discharge taskforce and allocated £3.3 billion available to support safe and timely hospital discharge.

■ **Hospitals: Shropshire****Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[100471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when a decision will be made on the submitted business case for the Shropshire hospitals transformation programme.

Edward Argar:

As of 11 January 2022, the Department had not received the strategic outline business case (SOC), as it did not pass NHS England and NHS Improvement's fundamental criteria review. On 28 October 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement received the SOC from the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust and determined that it required further work and provide an option compliant with the £312 million allocation. Written feedback on the SOC was issued to the Trust on 17 November 2021. The SOC is currently being amended by the Trust and NHS England and NHS Improvement are expecting it to be resubmitted in the first quarter of 2022.

■ **In-FACT****Peter Dowd:**[\[100573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason his Department has not met with representatives of INFACT to discuss proposals to support children and adults harmed by sodium valproate.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 13 January 2022]: INFACT was a key stakeholder whilst the Government considered the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety (IMMDS) Review. This process concluded with the publication of the Government's response on 21 July 2021. The former Minister of State for Patient Safety, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (Ms Nadine Dorries MP) met with INFACT on 14 July 2021, prior to the publication of the Government's response.

The Government is now focusing on implementing the accepted recommendations from the IMMDS Review, including those related to sodium valproate. We aim to publish an update on progress in summer 2022.

■ Long Covid

Rachael Maskell: [\[100598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason he is not requiring the clinical coding of long covid.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS Digital has established clinical codes for post-COVID-19 syndrome. Codes have been incorporated into primary care electronic record systems since January 2021. NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to promote and facilitate the uptake of appropriate clinical coding for care in primary care and post-COVID assessment services. The diagnostic coding is aligned to the clinical case definition published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. The SNOMED-CT codes are as follows:

- Acute COVID-19 infection 1325171000000109;
- Ongoing symptomatic COVID-19 1325181000000106; and
- Post-COVID-19 syndrome 1325161000000102.

Rachael Maskell: [\[100600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how long, on average, someone has symptoms of long covid.

Maria Caulfield:

The information is not available in the format requested. The majority of people who experience on-going symptoms following COVID-19 infection will recover in time, although the duration of symptoms will vary from person to person.

■ Long Covid: Health Services

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[100441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what types of support are being provided to people with long covid; and what assessment he has made of the impact of that support on recipients.

Maria Caulfield:

COVID-19 is a new disease and it is not yet clear what the physical, psychological and rehabilitation needs will be for those experiencing long-term effects. As our understanding develops, we will ensure the correct support is in place.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have established specialist services in England to assess adults, children and young people experiencing long-term effects of COVID-19 infection and direct them to appropriate care pathways. The 'Your COVID Recovery' online service also provides an interactive and personalised recovery programme.

Rachael Maskell:

[100599]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the average cost to the NHS of treating a person suffering from long covid.

Maria Caulfield:

The information is not available in the format requested, as symptoms can vary in range, duration or severity and individuals may require different levels of support.

■ Long Covid: Research

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[100440]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the UK is participating in research into long covid and possible treatments.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government has invested £50 million in a research programme to address the long term physical and mental health effects of COVID-19. These studies will use the available evidence to identify the causes and the best treatments to help those affected to recover. We will continue to take into account the full range of research being undertaken internationally.

■ Long Covid: Young People

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[102523]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure the availability of multi-disciplinary medical treatment for 16 and 17 year old patients with long covid who cannot access paediatric services and have been refused access to long covid clinics.

Maria Caulfield:

National commissioning guidance published by NHS England and NHS Improvement details services which should be available to support people of all ages with a likely diagnosis of post-COVID syndrome. This is regardless of whether they received a positive COVID-19 test or were managed in hospital or the community. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/national-guidance-for-post-covid-syndrome-assessment-clinics/>

In general, young people aged 16 and 17 years old should access adult post-COVID specialist services. There are a small number of localities where access for this group is through the specialist paediatric hubs, which will accept direct referrals.

■ Members: Correspondence

John Penrose:

[100475]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letters dated 1 October and 9 November 2021 from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare, regarding a constituent.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 14 January 2022.

■ **Mental Health Services**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[99032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the NHS is on track to reach the target of 1.9 million adults accessing IAPT treatment each year by 2023-24 as set out in the NHS Mental Health Implementation Plan 2019-20 to 2023-24; and what steps his Department is taking to support the NHS in reaching that target.

Gillian Keegan:

The latest data for September 2021 shows that 102,252 referrals accessed Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services. This is an increase from 95,793 referrals in August 2021. We are allocating an additional £500 million in 2021/22 to address waiting times for mental health services, provide greater access to mental health support and invest in the National Health Service workforce. Of this funding, £38 million will be used to increase capacity in IAPT services to improve access and maintain waiting times and recovery rates, through measures such as training and development of the workforce.

■ **Mental Health Services: Coronavirus**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[98369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the ability of mental health services to function effectively in the context of the additional pressure on health services as a result of high levels of covid-19 cases.

Gillian Keegan:

Mental health services have remained open throughout the pandemic. Local health systems are asked to ensure that access to community-based mental health services is retained to ensure that those at risk and are most vulnerable can access treatment and care, with face-to-face care provided as far as possible.

On 24 December, NHS England and NHS Improvement published '2022-23 priorities and operational planning guidance', setting out the services that systems have been asked to deliver during the current high levels of COVID-19 cases.

■ **Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[98368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on the implementation of NHS England's proposed new waiting time standards for mental health care, first published on and opened for public consultation on 22 July 2021; and what additional resources his Department is planning to provide to help support the NHS to achieve those standards.

Gillian Keegan:

NHS England and NHS Improvement will publish the response to the consultation on the proposals for new waiting time standards in due course. The Department will work with NHS England and NHS Improvement on an implementation plan to consider the operational and financial implications of delivering the standards.

■ NHS Trusts: Health Services**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[100444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS Trusts have not restarted elective services since March 2020.

Edward Argar:

All National Health Service trusts have restarted elective services. The NHS aims to maintain levels of care through the separation of elective and non-elective capacity to maximise elective activity, while managing pressures in urgent and emergency care.

■ NHS: Negligence**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[99365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications of the judgment in *Evie Toombes v Dr Philip Mitchell* [2021] EWHC 3234 (QB) for the medical profession and the NHS.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS Resolution advise that there are no wider implications for the National Health Service other than the need for good records management by general practitioners (GPs) and other healthcare professionals.

NHS-commissioned general practices are required to keep adequate records of attendance and treatment of patients. The 'Records Management Code of Practice 2021', published by NHSX, provides a legal framework for consistent and effective records management based on established standards. The General Medical Council and the British Medical Association also provide guidance on good practice in relation to record keeping by clinicians.

■ NHS: Vacancies**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[100445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of staff vacancies in the NHS on patient mortality rates.

Edward Argar:

We have not made a formal assessment. Safe staffing levels remain the responsibility of local clinical and other leaders, supported by national guidance and regulated by the Care Quality Commission.

Monthly workforce statistics for October 2021 show over 1.2 million full time equivalent staff. Since October 2020, there are 4,800 more doctors, over 10,900

more nurses and over 44,700 more National Health Service Health and Community Hospital Services staff in total. We are on schedule to deliver 50,000 more nurses by the end of this Parliament and we have also funded an additional 1,500 undergraduate medical school places each year for domestic students in England.

■ **Novavax: Licensing**

Martyn Day:

[\[100623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress is being made on the approval of Novavax for use in the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is unable to comment on products not approved for use in the United Kingdom due to commercial and market sensitivities. We are therefore unable to provide a timetable for the approval of the Novavax vaccine. Any route to approval of new vaccine treatments will be subject to the developer seeking regulatory approval from the MHRA. As with all other COVID-19 vaccines, the MHRA will ensure a thorough and expedited assessment of its safety and efficacy before any authorisation.

■ **Parkinson's Disease: Respite Care**

Sarah Green:

[\[102806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking alongside local authorities to ensure that there is adequate funding to provide carers of people with Parkinson's-related dementia with respite and breaks.

Gillian Keegan:

Local authorities are required to undertake an assessment of any carer who requires support. This assessment records the impact on the carer and review their needs, including whether they are willing or able to continue caring.

The 'People at the Heart of Care' white paper states that we will invest up to £25 million to work with the sector to improve the services provided to support unpaid carers. This will identify and test a range of new and existing interventions to support unpaid carers, including respite care and breaks. Additionally, as part of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, local authorities will have access to over £1 billion for social care in 2022/23.

■ **Physiotherapy: Waiting Lists**

Catherine West:

[\[99358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he taking to improve waiting times for patient access to NHS physiotherapy.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England and NHS Improvement's Best Musculoskeletal Health national improvement programme is working with community services to address any unwanted variations in waiting times for National Health Service physiotherapy.

■ Pregnancy: Ethnic Groups**Navendu Mishra:**[\[99406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the forthcoming Women's Health Strategy will tackle health inequalities, including in maternal health for Black, Asian and ethnic minority women.

Maria Caulfield:

Work is ongoing to develop the Women's Health Strategy, which will tackle health inequalities and address improving outcomes for mothers and babies, including a focus on reducing maternal and neonatal disparities. The Women's Health Strategy will be published in spring 2022.

■ Social Services: Conditions of Employment and Pay**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[100432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of the current rate of pay and working conditions on the number of vacancies in the social care sector.

Gillian Keegan:

No formal assessment has been made.

Mr Barry Sheerman:[\[100433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve pay and conditions in the social care sector.

Gillian Keegan:

The vast majority of care workers are employed by private sector providers who set their pay and conditions, independent of central Government. Local authorities work with care providers to determine a fair rate of pay based on local market conditions.

We have announced over £460 million in Workforce Recruitment and Retention Funds. Round two of the Fund can be used to enable local authorities and providers to bring forward planned rises in pay for the adult social care workforce in advance of the new financial year.

■ Surgery**Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[100472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to avoid the cancellation of planned surgery.

Edward Argar:

In light of the spread of the Omicron variant, we are prioritising vaccinations and urgent appointments. Any decisions to temporarily pause elective activity will be taken to prevent the spread of the virus and to protect the National Health Service. The NHS will maintain services wherever possible, particularly for urgent and cancer care. We have provided £2 billion in 2021/22 and a further £8 billion in the next three years to increase activity and tackle backlogs in elective care services.

■ **Surgical Mesh Implants: Bristol****Emma Hardy:**[\[89649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on access to treatment of the decision by the specialist centre for mesh removal in Bristol to take only local referrals through the NHS and those from outside their area privately.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 13 December 2021]: No assessment has been made. NHS England is not aware of any such decision and we expect all mesh removal centres to operate according to the service specification.

North Bristol NHS Trust and the South West Regional Commissioning Team are planning for the Trust to provide all aspects of the service specification and to be fully functional by the end of March 2022.

■ **Telemedicine****Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[101681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) clinical effect and (b) safety of the increased use of telephone consultations in primary care.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has yet been made. The Department is working with NHS England and NHS Improvement and NHSX and local commissioners to monitor and assess the extent to which general practice teams have the equipment and skills to provide remote consultations.

Daniel Kawczynski:[\[101682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential link between the increased use of telephone consultations in primary care and attendances at A&E.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ Vaccination

Dr Matthew Offord:

[100507]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government plans to publish its vaccine strategy.

Maria Caulfield:

England's vaccine strategy has been delayed due to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategy is kept under review as our understanding of COVID-19, its vaccines, vaccination programmes and its impacts develop.

HOME OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Sarah Green:

[102809]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to contact vulnerable Afghans to inform them that they are eligible for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

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

The first to be resettled under the new ACRS will be some of those already evacuated and in the UK. They include women's rights activists, journalists, and prosecutors, as well as the Afghan families of British Nationals.

From Spring, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will refer refugees to the scheme, based on assessments of protection need.

In Year One we will also resettle individuals who supported the UK and international community effort in Afghanistan, including those British Council and GardaWorld contractors and Chevening alumni who are most at risk. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will be in touch with those eligible to support them through the next steps.

There will not be an application process for the ACRS. More detail on the three referral pathways can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>.

■ Antisocial Behaviour

Emma Hardy:

[905053]

What recent assessment she has made of trends in the level of antisocial behaviour.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is committed to tackling and preventing ASB. We know it can have a serious impact on both individuals and the wider community.

Police recorded incidents show a fall in ASB since 2013/2014 from around 2.1m to 1.8m incidents in the year to June 2020/2021.

We have ensured that local agencies have flexible tools and powers to tackle ASB through the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

■ Asylum

Chi Onwurah: [100544]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce waiting times for asylum claims.

Chi Onwurah: [100545]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what resources have been allocated to processing asylum claims in each year from 2018 to 2021.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office are pursuing a programme of transformation and business improvement initiatives which will speed up decision making, reduce the time people spend in the system and reduce the numbers who are awaiting an interview or decision. This includes almost doubling the number of decision makers and providing improved training and career progression opportunities to aid retention of staff. This investment in our people will speed up processing times and increase the throughput of asylum decisions.

There are many factors that can delay and contribute to the length of time to process asylum claims. Some applications have complex needs, safeguarding issues, are extremely vulnerable or have a modern slavery claim attached to their claim. We therefore take full consideration of these facts when prioritising and progressing outstanding asylum claims and this can lead to longer waiting times for some. We are prioritising cases with high harm, acute vulnerability, and those in receipt of the greatest level of support, including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. Additionally, we are prioritising older cases and cases where an individual has already received a decision, but a reconsideration is required.

The number of resources allocated to processing asylum claims in each year from 2018 to 2021 is not in a reportable format as resources cross several different departments. Therefore, to obtain this information could only be obtained at disproportionate costs.

However, the Home Office can provide the number of asylum decision makers from 2018 to 2021. This data can be found in ASY_04 of the published Transparency data:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-and-protection-data-q2-2021>

■ Crime: Rural Areas

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[102555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help reduce rural crime.

Kit Malthouse:

We are committed to driving down rural crime, which is why the Government is providing funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit. We have also tabled amendments to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to introduce tougher sentencing and improved police powers for hare coursing.

Furthermore, to help ensure that the public are protected against crime, including rural crime, this government has recruited 9,814 additional police officers with 176 of these being recruited by Humberside Police, as of 30 June this year.

■ Drugs: Misuse

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[102557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what provisions are in place to ensure that drug policy and its enforcement are consistent and uniform across the country; and if she will make a statement.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government's recently published Drug Strategy and the significant funding made available to implement the Strategy provide a strong foundation for consistent policy and enforcement across the country. The Strategy emphasises a partnership approach to tackling illicit drugs. We work closely with the National Crime Agency, the National Police Chiefs Council and with police forces across the country, as well as with the devolved administrations, on tackling illicit drugs and to share best practice.

In relation to the enforcement of drug-related offences, the police have a range of powers at their disposal to deal with these. How police forces choose to pursue investigations is an operational decision for chief constables, but we are clear that we expect them to enforce the law.

■ Firearms: Licensing

Luke Pollard:

[\[905047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many licences for pump-action shotguns have been issued in England over the last 12 months.

Kit Malthouse:

5,579 certificates authorising the possession of pump action shotguns were issued in England between 1 January and 31 December 2021. This information, which is not routinely collated, is drawn from management information and is not quality assured to the standards of the annual statistical publication.

The HG will know that the Home Secretary asked for a review of gun licensing arrangements by police forces following the tragic incident in his constituency, and we will do everything in our power to reduce the risk of such incidences in the future.

■ Hillsborough Families' Experiences Review

Gill Furniss: [\[101803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to implement the recommendations made in Bishop James Jones' review of the Hillsborough families' experiences.

Kit Malthouse:

The points of learning made by Bishop James Jones in his report on the experiences of the Hillsborough families span a number of departments and organisations.

The Home Office is coordinating the Government's response to the report and is working closely with its partners in the relevant government departments and organisations to carefully consider the points of learning. The Government will first engage with the Hillsborough families and will publish the Government's overarching response to the Bishop's report in due course.

■ Home Office: Written Questions

Emily Thornberry: [\[101679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to answer Questions 98228, 98229, 98230, 98231 and 98232 tabled by the hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury on 5 January 2022.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 14 January 2022]: The responses for 98228, 98229, 98230, 98231 and 98232 tabled by the hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury were given on 12 th January 2022.

■ Immigration Controls

Alan Brown: [\[905044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the impact of the Government's immigration policies on acute labour shortages.

Kevin Foster:

My Officials and I work closely with colleagues across Government to coordinate the Government's response to labour market issues, including potential skills and labour shortages.

The UK Government's focus is on ensuring immigration policies are considered alongside and as part of our strategy for the UK Labour market, not as an alternative to investing in training for our domestic workforce or to offering our key workers the rewarding packages they deserve.

Carol Monaghan:

[\[905048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the impact of the Government's immigration policies on acute labour shortages.

Kevin Foster:

My Officials and I work closely with colleagues across Government to coordinate the Government's response to labour market issues, including potential skills and labour shortages.

The UK Government's focus is on ensuring immigration policies are considered alongside and as part of our strategy for the UK Labour market, not as an alternative to investing in training for our domestic workforce or to offering our key workers the rewarding packages they deserve.

Ms Anum Qaisar:

[\[905052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the impact of the Government's immigration policies on acute labour shortages.

Kevin Foster:

My Officials and I work closely with colleagues across Government to coordinate the Government's response to labour market issues, including potential skills and labour shortages.

The UK Government's focus is on ensuring immigration policies are considered alongside and as part of our strategy for the UK Labour market, not as an alternative to investing in training for our domestic workforce or to offering our key workers the rewarding packages they deserve.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Stephen Farry:

[\[100739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have applied to the EU Settlement Scheme via the Relevant Person of Northern Ireland route.

Kevin Foster:

Information on EUSS applications which relate specifically to family members of 'relevant persons of Northern Ireland' is not recorded in a reportable form on our case management system and is therefore not available.

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[100742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support applicants to the EU Settlement Scheme.

Kevin Foster:

The EU Settlement Scheme opened to the public on 30 March 2019 and the deadline for the scheme for those resident in the UK by the end of the transition period was 30 June 2021. However, there is scope to make a late application based on reasonable

grounds for missing the deadline. The scheme also remains open to applications for those wishing to apply as Joining Family Members or who want to apply for settled status after having been granted pre-settled status.

The Home Office remains committed to ensuring those who are eligible for the EU Settlement Scheme can apply, including those who are vulnerable or need extra support. £25 million of funding has been awarded to a network of now 72 charities and local authorities across the UK, to ensure important information and assistance gets through to those who are hardest to reach, and no one is left behind. These organisations have helped more than 405k vulnerable people to apply to the EUSS already.

The Home Office has delivered a comprehensive range of communications activity, at a cost of £8m, to increase awareness of the EUSS, engaging extensively with a wide range of stakeholder organisations and other government departments, to provide the materials they need to communicate about the Settlement Scheme.

This includes toolkits, assets and information translated into 26 EEA languages, and Welsh, for local authorities, community groups, employers, and the Grant Funded Network, who work closely with vulnerable, hard to reach audiences to provide application support.

Guidance on how to apply and details of the support available to applicants (as it has been throughout the pandemic), is available through the EU Settlement Resolution Centre (SRC), which is open seven days a week to provide assistance over the telephone and by email. The SRC also provides a direct line for organisations working with vulnerable groups. In specific cases the SRC has the capacity to transfer customers to Assisted Digital for more bespoke support.

Further information can also be found at www.gov.uk/help-eu-settlement-scheme.

■ Immigration: Fees and Charges

Stephen Farry:

[100738]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to Answer 57193 of 25 October 2021, when her Department's revised policy on entry clearance 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.

■ Investigatory Powers Commissioner: Annual Reports

Stephen Timms:

[\[101599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the length of time between the submission of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's annual report to Government and its publication; and if she will make a statement.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 14 January 2022]: The Home Office received the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's latest annual report in November 2021 and it was published in January 2022. This is in line with previous years.

This time is required for agencies and other bodies overseen by the Commissioner to check the text for factual errors and ensure the report's contents is not prejudicial to national security, to the prevention or detection of serious crime, to the economic wellbeing of the United Kingdom, or to the discharge of the functions of those authorities.

■ Knives: Sales

Hilary Benn:

[\[102553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 23 June 2021 to Question 18468 on Knives: Sales, if she will introduce a licensing scheme for the possession of machetes.

Kit Malthouse:

The majority of machete owners use them for legitimate reasons such as gardening, camping or agricultural use. It is an offence to sell any machete to a person who is under the age of 18. In addition, possessing a machete in a public place without lawful authority or good reason is also an offence with a maximum penalty of 4 years imprisonment.

Where a machete is misused as a weapon, there are a range of offences that the offender may be charged with, such as causing grievous bodily harm. These can result in lengthy sentences, including life imprisonment in instances of murder.

We continue to keep the legislation in this area under review.

In 2021 we banned a whole range of knives weapons and firearms and existing legislation prohibits possession of any machete or large knife in a public place without good reason. We are always working with police to see what further action is needed to take deadly weapons off the street.

■ Migrant Workers

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[100747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to attract international workers with science, technology, maths, and engineering qualifications to the UK.

Kevin Foster:

Attracting international talent is a key component of our global points-based immigration system. We have a very generous immigration offer, which enables talented scientists, academics and creatives to come to the UK through several different routes, including Global Talent, Skilled Worker, Creative and Temporary Worker Government Authorised Exchange (GAE) routes.

The new Points-Based System is working well, attracting skills the UK needs, as demonstrated by the latest Immigration Statistics for yearend September 2021 with issuance of work visas across all routes is up on both 2020 and 2019 (pre-pandemic).

Since its launch in 2020 the Global Talent route has seen a significant increase in applicants compared to the predecessor route, despite the impact on international travel caused by the pandemic. The number of visas granted on this route has continued to grow from 422 between its launch in February 2020 to year end September 2020, to 1,709 applicants for the year ending September 2021.

A new High Potential route will launch later this year, to further enhance our excellent offer to talented individuals with qualifications in sectors such as science, technology, maths and engineering.

■ Offences against Children**Sarah Champion:**[\[905045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to improve police responses to child sexual exploitation by organised networks.

Rachel Maclean:

Home Office investment is supporting the police to relentlessly pursue offenders and protect victims of these horrific crimes. We fund the Tackling Organised Exploitation programme and regional analysts to help uncover more offending.

The Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme and senior leaders training drives improvement in the response to victims. And we will act on any recommendations in the forthcoming IICSA report on organised networks.

■ Offences against Children: Internet**James Daly:**[\[100734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to tackle online child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is firmly committed to tackling this horrific crime and keeping our children safe online here in the UK and working with partners around the world to address this complex and evolving threat.

The UK's Online Safety Bill will, for the first time, place a duty on tech companies to keep their users safe, with a greater responsibility to remove and limit the spread of illegal content. We are also engaging with tech companies through our international

partners to keep children safe from online sexual abuse, securing agreement to a G7 action plan which includes driving greater endorsement of the Voluntary Principles to Counter Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and to take meaningful action to report against progress.

We are also continuing to work with law enforcement partners to improve technologies and capabilities to identify offending and bringing offenders to justice. This includes significant investment into the transformation of the Child Abuse Image Database programme, and the National Crime Agency resulting in an estimated 800 arrests or voluntary attendances, and an estimated 1,000 children safeguarded or protected every month.

We are determined to deliver on the commitments to tackling this horrific complex crime and we will continue to work with partners to achieve our goals as set out in the Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy published in January 2021.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Dan Jarvis:

[\[102638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 16 November 2021 to Question 72441 on Afghanistan: Refugees, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that no one is disadvantaged while their case is reviewed.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office has established a dedicated caseworking team, which is working jointly with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Ministry of Defence. This team will contact all those who arrived to discuss their leave arrangements and ensure they get the right form of leave.

Communications have been issued advising individuals of next steps to progress permanent residence in the UK. The Home Office is contacting those here in the UK under the Afghan Relocation Assistance Policy, and also those moving onto the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, to assist them in obtaining indefinite leave to remain. Amongst the information provided, those communications confirm individuals' rights to employment and to access services (e.g. medical treatment, school places). They also provide links to guidance and information on how prospective employers and landlords can contact the Home Office to confirm individuals' right to take employment and rented accommodation, through the Employer Checking Service.

No one will be required to leave the United Kingdom, or be disadvantaged in any way, while we work through their cases.

Darren Jones:

[\[102748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support is available to families in the UK with relatives in Afghanistan; and what steps Afghan nationals in Afghanistan, and under threat from the Taliban, can take to come to the UK.

Victoria Atkins:

Families in the UK with relatives in Afghanistan can access information to assess their relative's eligibility for the following resettlement schemes on gov.uk:

- [Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme](#)
- [Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy](#)
- [Refugee Family Reunion](#)

From Spring, the UNHCR will refer refugees to the ACRS, based on assessments of protection of need. The Government will also offer ACRS places to the most at risk British Council and Gardaworld contractors and Chevening alumni. We are committed to working in step with the international community and continue to do all we can to enable those who are eligible to relocate to the UK.

The Minister for the Armed Forces recently visited the region, to identify what more we can do for applicants both in Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries. We are working with a wide range of allies and partners and are exploring every avenue to help them reach safety.

The UK Government will work with international partners to put pressure on the Taliban to allow those with a right to leave Afghanistan to do so safely.

Darren Jones:[\[102749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether UNHCR referrals to the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme will be available to Afghans currently within Afghanistan or whether they will take place through third party countries.

Victoria Atkins:

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme commenced on 6th January and will provide up to 20,000 women, children and others at risk with a safe and legal route to resettle in the UK.

From Spring, we are working with the UNHCR to receive referrals of vulnerable refugees in need of protection through the ACRS.

UNHCR refer refugees who, by definition, are outside their country of origin.

Fleur Anderson:[\[99402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether direct relatives of (a) current Chevening scholars and (b) Chevening alumni will be fully eligible for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

The Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will prioritise those who have assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for UK values such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech and rule of law; and vulnerable people such as women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups (including ethnic / religious minorities and LGBT+).

As set out in the oral statement made on 6th January, Chevening alumni who are at risk will be eligible to be considered for resettlement under the ACRS in year 1.

Spouses, partners and dependent children under the age of 18 of identified eligible individuals will be eligible for the scheme.

■ Visas

Alison Thewliss:

[\[905050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will review the financial thresholds for family visas.

Kevin Foster:

The minimum income requirement was implemented in July 2012, following advice from the Migration Advisory Committee.

It is intended to ensure financial independence and encourage integration, although several concessions were introduced in response to the impacts of Covid-19.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ House of Commons: Dismissal

Mrs Maria Miller:

[\[101661\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, how many House of Commons employment severance agreements included the use of a non-disclosure agreement in each of the last five years.

Sir Charles Walker:

[Holding answer 14 January 2022]: The House's approach to the use of NDA clauses follows the 2015 Cabinet Office Guidance on Settlement Agreements, Special Severance Payments and Confidentiality Clauses on Termination of Employment. Since January 2015, it was decided that NDA clauses should no longer be included as a matter of course. Each case is considered on its merits.

The figures for each of the last five years are:

2021 – nil

2020 – nil

2019 – nil

2018 – 2 agreements with NDAs

2017 – 6 agreements with NDAs

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Conor Burns: Trade Promotion**

Gareth Thomas: [100398]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish (a) details of visits to Canada and (b) other activities conducted by the hon. Member for Bournemouth West whilst he was Trade Envoy to Canada; and if she will make a statement.

Mike Freer:

My Hon. Friend for Bournemouth West was appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Canada on 23rd August 2021. His term ended on 16th September 2021, when he was appointed as Minister of State to Northern Ireland. Due to only having spent a short time as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy for Canada, there was insufficient time for a visit to Canada or external meetings.

■ Department for International Trade: Consultants

Gareth Thomas: [100395]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish (a) a list of the contracts for consultancy services her Department has issued in each of the last three years, (b) how much each contract cost and (c) the services that were provided.

Penny Mordaunt:

Details of Government contracts above £10,000 are published on Contracts Finder: <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Search>. DIT's consultancy contracts can be found on here which include the maximum value of the contract and the services provided.

■ Department for International Trade: Temporary Employment

Gareth Thomas: [100394]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many staff are temporarily employed in her Department (a) in total and (b) in positions within the senior civil service; and if she will make a statement.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) interprets 'Temporarily employed' staff for the purposes of this response to be those working on DIT objectives under Contingent Labour arrangements. This response does not cover staff on loan from Other Government Departments working on DIT objectives, secondees, Fast Stream employees, Interns, or Fixed Term Appointees.

A total of 217 staff were employed under Contingent Labour arrangements, of which 19 worked within U.K. Export Finance and 198 within the DIT Ministerial department as of June 2021.

Of the above, there are 0 Senior Civil Servants currently employed under Contingent Labour arrangements across both U.K. Export Finance and DIT.

■ Trade Agreements: Australia

Sarah Olney:

[\[101805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, which clauses of the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement require parliamentary approval.

Penny Mordaunt:

Parliament has a statutory scrutiny role for treaties (including Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)), under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act (CRaG) 2010.

Parliament will also be required to approve any primary and secondary legislation needed to implement the UK-Australia FTA. As per the draft explanatory memorandum for the agreement the need for primary legislation has been identified in order to implement the Procurement Chapter of the Treaty. Secondary legislation will be required for provisions of the Intellectual Property chapter. The Government will also implement changes to tariffs under the Taxation (Cross-border Trade) Act 2018.

■ Trade Promotion: Food

Gareth Thomas:

[\[100400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many staff in her Department are assigned specifically to promote and support exports of UK food and drink manufacturers; and if she will make a statement.

Mike Freer:

Food and drink manufacturers are supported through the breadth of the Department for International Trade's (DIT) services, including the Export Support Service, the digital GREAT.gov.uk platform, the Export Academy and UK Export Finance. DIT has a team in the UK dedicated to supporting the food and drink sector. Resource levels are kept under regular review to ensure we can meet demand as interest and opportunities grow in new markets.

DIT also has more than 100 staff overseas, either on a full or part time basis, who are specifically supporting businesses in the agriculture, food, and drink sector. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and DIT recently announced that eight new specialist agricultural attachés would be placed in priority markets to tackle trade barriers, building on existing roles in China and the United Arab Emirates.

JUSTICE

■ Courts: Repairs and Maintenance

Steve Reed:

[\[102651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2022 to Question 98968 on Courts: Repairs and Maintenance, what data HMCTS holds on the

effect of (a) planned and (b) unplanned maintenance of the courts estate on the loss of sitting days prior to 4 October 2021.

James Cartlidge:

HMCTS does not hold data on lost sitting days as a result of planned or unplanned maintenance, prior to 4 October 2021.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Building Safety Fund

Stephen Morgan:

[\[99371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of refunding the cost of waking watches to residents prior to the introduction of the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

We have announced an additional £27 million, on top of the existing £35 million already being provided, to pay for the installation of fire alarm systems in all buildings with a waking watch regardless of height or the reason for the waking watch being in place. Waking watch measures should only be used in the most exceptional circumstances and for the shortest period possible. The installation of common alarms systems is an approach supported by current industry led guidance that will keep residents safe and end the misuse of costly waking watch measures, which are usually paid for by leaseholders. Funding is available for the installation of alarms where waking watches are in place at the time of the fund launch.

■ Buildings: Fire Prevention

Stephen Doughty:

[\[101736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions he had with the Welsh Government in the last month prior to his statement on Building Safety on 10 January 2022.

Christopher Pincher:

The Secretary of State has fortnightly calls with the First Ministers of the devolved governments, including the First Minister of the Welsh Government to discuss a wide range of issues. The Department also has a close-working relationship with the devolved administrations on building safety. Officials meet with representatives of all three devolved administrations to discuss building safety fortnightly.

■ Community Ownership Fund

Karin Smyth:

[\[99347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to publish an updated timetable for applications to the Community Ownership Fund.

Neil O'Brien:

In order to fully examine, learn and implement the lessons of the first pilot bidding round of the Community Ownership Fund, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has pushed back the start date for the second round to spring 2022. This will enable us to ensure that the Community Ownership Fund is able to effectively invest in communities across the United Kingdom and that communities have more time to submit successful applications to the Fund.

We are currently working on our plans for round two and will be making an announcement in advance of the opening of the second round in the spring.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Working Hours**Grahame Morris:**[\[102587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the compliance of his Department's staff working from home with the Working Time Regulations 1998.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department has policies and processes in place that allow staff to work within the requirements of the Working Time Regulations. These apply to all staff irrespective of working location.

■ Housing Estates: Service Charges**Mr Laurence Robertson:**[\[102544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans he has to allow owners of freehold properties who pay estate rent charges to be able to challenge these costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Laurence Robertson:[\[102545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans he has to allow a right to manage for residential freeholders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Laurence Robertson:[\[102546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans he has to remove the statutory right for owners of rentcharges to take possession or grant a lease of the property in the event of non-payment by the homeowner; and if he will make a statement.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service. Where people pay estate rent charges it is not appropriate that these homeowners have limited rights to challenge these costs.

That is why the Government intends to legislate to ensure that the charges that resident freeholders may pay towards the maintenance of communal area are fairer and more transparent.

To this effect, we will legislate to give freeholders on private and mixed tenure estates equivalent rights to leaseholders to challenge the reasonableness of estate rentcharges, as well as a right to apply to the First-tier Tribunal to appoint a new manager to manage the provision of services.

In addition, we will ensure that where a freeholder pays a rentcharge, the rentcharge owner is not able to take possession or grant a lease on the property where the rentcharge remains unpaid for a short period of time. We will translate these measures into law when parliamentary time allows.

■ Levelling Up Fund: Rural Areas

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[102645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department applied the Government's rural proofing process when determining recipients of Levelling Up Fund grants.

Neil O'Brien:

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK. As set out in the Prospectus and Technical Note published on GOV.UK, all applications to the Levelling Up Fund were fairly and robustly assessed against the published criteria. Through the strategic fit criteria, applicants were invited to set out how their plans aligned to local challenges, strategic plans and wider local and national policy priorities.

Round one of the Levelling Up Fund invested £1.7 billion in 105 projects that will benefit a broad range of rural and urban communities, such as Carmarthenshire County Council's 'Tywi Valley Path' project, which will create economic opportunity and improve accessible transport links in rural Carmarthenshire. The second round of the Levelling Up Fund will open in spring 2022, and further details will be shared in due course

■ Transport: North East

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[102597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2022 to Question 96862, when his Department plans to put in place the appropriate governance to allow the North East to access funding through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements programme.

Neil O'Brien:

It is for the relevant local authorities to propose new governance structures in order to access the funds available in the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements. The Department is continuing its engagement with local authorities, and the North of Tyne Mayoral Combined Authority, on these plans.

PRIME MINISTER■ **Prime Minister: Staff**

Justin Madders: [\[101766\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, how many allegations of breaches of coronavirus regulations have been made by staff employed in Downing Street.

Boris Johnson:

I refer the Hon Member to the Terms of Reference to the Cabinet Office investigation, which have been deposited in the Library of the House.

TRANSPORT■ **Railways: Merseyside**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[102756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps he has taken to consult the (a) the residents and (b) local leaders in Merseyside on the impact the Integrated Rail Plan will have on Merseyside following its publication.

Andrew Stephenson:

Following publication of the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands (IRP), Ministers from the Department met the Liverpool Metro Mayor to discuss the decisions taken in the IRP, and to explain the benefits it provides for Merseyside.

The Department will continue to engage with local leaders and councils as work on the proposals in the IRP is taken forward.

■ **Railways: Tickets**

Sir John Hayes: [\[101619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress he has made on the (a) tender and (b) delivery of pay as you go rail ticketing across the North and Midlands; and if he will publish a timeline for that rollout.

Wendy Morton:

Last year's spending review set aside £360 million investment to modernise industry ticketing and retailing systems. Accordingly, we announced alongside the Integrated Rail Plan, an expansion of pay-as-you-go travel on rail to more than 700 stations in urban areas across the country including more than 400 in the north, exceeding our manifesto commitment.

We are working with the newly formed Great British Railways Transition Team to develop proposals to deliver this modernisation programme and PAYG and will announce further details in due course.

■ Roads Policing Review

Sarah Olney: [\[100638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Government plans to publish the (a) responses to the call for evidence for the Roads policing review and (b) final report for that review.

Trudy Harrison:

The call for evidence saw 149 responses submitted, many of which were incredibly detailed. We will publish once we have given the responses our full consideration.

■ Shipping: Exhaust Emissions

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[102561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 12 July 2021 to Question 28972, on Shipping: Exhaust Emissions, when he plans to publish the review of the Clean Maritime Plan.

Robert Courts:

Launched in 2019, the Clean Maritime Plan is the environmental route map of the Maritime 2050 Strategy. We intend to publish a refresh of the Clean Maritime Plan in 2023. This will identify clear milestones and actions to spark the transition to net zero shipping technologies, as we place the UK at the forefront of the industries of the future.

■ Speed Limits: Cameras

Sarah Olney: [\[100639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to amend the criteria for fixed speed cameras in the forthcoming Roads policing review.

Trudy Harrison:

Following a thematic inspection of roads policing, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services recommended that the Department review DfT Circular 1/2007 on the use of speed cameras, which includes guidance and best practice on the deployment of fixed speed cameras. The Department has taken this recommendation forward by convening a working group of key stakeholders, who are currently working collaboratively to redraft the Circular.

TREASURY**■ Business: Coronavirus**

Daisy Cooper: [\[99394\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish further guidance for local authorities on distributing the £1 billion of support to help businesses that have been most impacted by the omicron variant, as announced by the Government on 21 December 2021.

Lucy Frazer:

Guidance for the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grants and revised guidance for the Additional Restrictions Grant scheme were published on 30 December 2021, and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-restrictions-support-grants-lrsg-and-additional-restrictions-grant-arg-guidance-for-local-authorities>

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Sarah Green:****[102805]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with representatives of the travel industry on the potential impact of removing VAT from the price of covid-19 PCR tests.

Lucy Frazer:

VAT is a broad-based tax on consumption. The standard rate of 20 per cent applies to most goods and services, including PCR tests. Medical testing, where it is administered by a registered health professional or where it is supervised by a relevant health professional and supplied as part of a single testing service, is exempt from VAT. The Government also continues to offer free Covid-19 testing for those with Covid-19 symptoms.

The Government recognises that the cost of PCR tests can be high, which is why we are working with the travel industry and private testing providers to see how we can further reduce the costs for the British public, whilst ensuring that travel remains as safe as possible. From 7 January 2022, eligible fully vaccinated passengers will no longer need to take a pre-departure test or self-isolate on arrival in England.

■ Food: Prices**Ruth Jones:****[99384]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what forecast he has made of trends in food prices in the UK for 2022.

Ruth Jones:**[99388]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he plans to take to reduce the cost of food.

Helen Whately:

The government is taking targeted action worth more than £4.2 billion a year over the next 5 years to help families with the cost of living. This includes the £500 million Household Support Fund (October 2021 to March 2022) to help vulnerable households with costs for essentials over the winter. The fund is ringfenced so that at least 50 per cent of it will be spent on households with children and should primarily be used to support households in the most need with food, energy, and water bills.

The government continues to maintain a zero-rate of VAT on many food and drink products, including fresh fruit, vegetables, cereals, meat, bread, milk, tea and coffee.

The government monitors consumer food prices using the ONS Consumer Price Index published statistics.

■ **Fuels: Newport West**

Ruth Jones: [\[99387\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he plans to take to reduce the cost of fuel in Newport West constituency.

Helen Whately:

Recognising that fuel is a major cost for households and businesses, the government announced at the Autumn Budget 2021 that fuel duty rates would remain frozen on a UK-wide basis in 2022-23. Twelve consecutive years of the fuel duty freeze will save the average UK car driver around £15 in fuel duty per tank of fuel, compared to what would have been paid under the pre-2010 escalator.

The Government does not set pump prices or wider oil prices.

■ **National Insurance Contributions**

Ruth Jones: [\[99379\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether it remains his policy to increase the rate of National Insurance in April 2022.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government announced the Health and Social Care Levy on 7 September 2021 and passed the legislation on 20 October 2021.

The Levy will allow the Government to implement necessary adult social care reform, tackle the elective backlog in the NHS as it recovers from Coronavirus, develop our pandemic response and preparedness, and ensure the NHS has the resources it needs throughout this Parliament.

The Government is committed to responsible management of the public finances and it is important that this spending is fully funded, particularly in the context of record borrowing and debt to fund the economic response to COVID-19.

A levy charged on the National Insurance Contributions base is the fairest way to raise the funds needed to support health and social care. It ensures the lowest earners are protected from increases as National Insurance has a threshold to protect the lowest paid. The highest earning 15 per cent will pay over half the revenue raised from the Levy and 6.1 million people earning less than the Primary Threshold (£9,880 in the year 2022-23), will not pay the Levy. In addition, using National Insurance as the basis ensures businesses will also pay the Levy. Businesses benefit from having a healthy workforce, so it is only fair that they contribute.

■ National Insurance Contributions: Newport West

Ruth Jones: [99380]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the proposed increase in the rate of National Insurance on living standards in Newport West constituency.

Ruth Jones: [99382]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the proposed increase in the rate of National Insurance on the level of unemployment in Newport West constituency.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government has made several assessments of the overall impact of the introduction of the Health and Social Care Levy, which were published alongside the announcement. These include the distributional analysis of the impact of the combined tax and spending announcements, a technical annex in the Government's plan for health and social care, and a Tax Information and Impact Note.

The Office for Budget Responsibility set out their assessment of the economic effects of the Levy, including the impact on labour supply and wages, in their latest Economic and Fiscal Outlook. This can be found here: <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-october-2021/>

■ Personal Care Services: Coronavirus

Mike Amesbury: [99374]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason businesses in the personal care industry are not included as recipients of financial support grants for businesses affected by the omicron variant; and what steps his Department is taking to support that industry.

Lucy Frazer:

As a result of the Omicron variant, hospitality and leisure businesses saw significant numbers of cancellations and reduced footfall throughout their peak trading period around Christmas. The aim of the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant is to support businesses offering in-person services, where social mixing is the primary motivation for their customers.

However, the Government also recognises that other businesses, including in the personal care industry, may also have been impacted by the Omicron variant. That is why we have provided an extra £102 million of discretionary funding through the Additional Restrictions Grant, on top of the £250 million that local authorities have left from previous allocations.

■ Public Sector: Pensions

Pat McFadden:

[\[102580\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of over how many years the £17 billion cost to the public purse will be realised as a result of the remedy contained in the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The remedy proposed in the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill is designed to address the discrimination identified by the McCloud and Sargeant judgments. For the main unfunded public service pension schemes, in effect, remedy offers members in scope a choice between legacy or reformed scheme benefits for the remedy period, which runs from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2022. Members in scope of remedy are those with service on or before 31 March 2012 and on or after 1 April 2015.

The cost of remedy is the cost of additional pension benefits accrued due to remedy. Those benefits will typically be paid out across the retirement of eligible members. The estimated £17 billion cost of remedy will, therefore, be paid out over many decades as the pensions of those in scope come into payment.

■ Self-employed: Government Assistance

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[101799\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of delivering targeted support for creative freelancers, via grant funding, to include (a) newly self-employed people, (b) people with less than 50 per cent of their income from self-employment, (c) PAYE freelancers and (d) limited company directors.

Helen Whately:

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

The government recognises the impact Omicron is having on businesses and individuals, which is why we announced £1 billion of targeted financial grant support for the hospitality, leisure and cultural sectors to protect jobs and businesses.

The package includes £30 million which will be made available through the Culture Recovery Fund (CRF), to support theatres, museums and other vital cultural institutions through the temporary disruption this winter, helping in turn to support the livelihoods of those working in this sector.

In addition to the CRF, government funding via Arts Council England will also provide an immediate £1.5 million to support freelancers affected by the pandemic, alongside a further £1.35 million contribution from the theatre sector. This will provide grants of £650,000 each directly to the Theatre Artists Fund, Help Musicians, and £200,000 to a-n the Artists Information Company, a charity for visual artists which will distribute cash to freelancers over the coming weeks.

The government is also waiving late filing and late payment penalties for Income Tax Self-Assessment (ITSA) taxpayers to support cashflow and ease administrative burdens. Self-Assessment taxpayers with up to £30,000 of tax debt can spread their tax payments online, through HMRC's "time to pay" service, and all others can call HMRC to arrange a repayment plan. For those on low income whose earnings continue to be affected by Covid-19 restrictions, work coaches will continue to be able to suspend the Universal Credit Minimum Income Floor on an individual basis for up to six months.

■ Shared Outcomes Fund

Alun Cairns:

[100532]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the status is of the Shared Outcomes Fund; whether that fund is (a) reserved or (b) devolved; and how much the Welsh Government has received for that fund as a result of the Barnett consequential.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Shared Outcomes Fund is a UK government fund testing innovative ways of working across the public sector with an emphasis on thorough evaluation. Where funding is given for a Shared Outcomes Fund project in a devolved area, the Barnett formula will apply in the normal way.

HM Treasury's Block Grant Transparency publication sets out the breakdown of changes in the devolved administrations' block grants, including all Barnett consequentials related to the Shared Outcomes Fund, since the 2015 Spending Review. This is available on the gov.uk website here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/block-grant-transparency-december-2021>

■ Tax Avoidance: Prosecutions

Sarah Olney:

[101806]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many prosecutions of umbrella companies found to have committed tax avoidance there have been in each of the last five years.

Lucy Frazer:

The vast majority of marketed tax avoidance schemes, including those involving umbrella company arrangements, do not work and can lead to large tax bills building up for those that use them. The promotion or use of these tax avoidance schemes is not in and of itself a criminal offence. However, there may be a range of fraud offences which might be committed by those who use or promote specific schemes or advise on their use.

Whilst HMRC does not routinely record whether criminal investigations into tax fraud feature the use of umbrella companies, and therefore are currently unable to provide a precise number, HMRC has confirmed that it has criminally investigated umbrella businesses in the past and has a number of current active criminal investigations involving umbrella arrangements.

The Government and HMRC are committed to tackling those who market and sell tax avoidance schemes. HMRC will continue to use its anti-avoidance regimes to challenge the entities and individuals who promote these schemes.

Prosecutions are only one type of intervention available where HMRC identify concerns.

■ Taxation: Advisory Services

Sarah Olney:

[101807]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many prosecutions of people providing tax advisory services without being a legal financial advisor were made in the last five years.

Lucy Frazer:

There is currently no overarching definition of 'tax advice' or 'tax adviser' in legislation and it is legal for tax advice to be provided by a wide range of professionals and individuals, including accountants, legal professionals, payroll companies, bookkeepers, and software developers. Therefore, HMRC is unable to provide any data in response to this request. The Government intends to hold a consultation in 2022 to explore options to improve the wider regulatory framework that supports standards in tax advice. This consultation will also test a potential legislative definition of tax advice.

HMRC remains committed to maintaining agent standards and tackling those who enable and facilitate tax evasion. They currently have nearly 150 enablers, including those who have provided tax advice as part of their involvement in the fraud, under criminal investigation. Over 60 enablers have been prosecuted in the past 4 financial years.

■ Tonnage Tax: Scotland

Kenny MacAskill:

[102786]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether any revenue raised by the Tonnage Tax is allocated to Scotland.

Helen Whately:

Tonnage tax is an alternative method of calculating Corporation Tax profits by reference to the net tonnage of the ship operated. It is a reserved tax and applies UK wide.

The Consolidated Fund receives the proceeds of tonnage tax and other tax revenues, such as those collected by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. Tonnage tax is not a hypothecated tax.

When funding is allocated to UK Government departments from the Consolidated Fund the Barnett formula is applied. The Barnett formula provides the devolved administrations with a population share of changes in the UK's available resources consistent with the principles set out in the Statement of Funding Policy.

■ Trader Support Service

Carla Lockhart:

[\[99412\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total cost has been of the Trader Support Service to date.

Lucy Frazer:

The total spend on the Trader Support Service since its commencement to December 2021 is £213 million.

WALES

■ Admiral Group: Newport

Ruth Jones:

[\[99377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the impact of the Welsh-based financial services company Admiral closing its Newport office on the economy of Newport West constituency.

Simon Hart:

My ministerial colleagues and I regularly meet to discuss a range of topics, including the Welsh insuretech sector. Admiral is a household name that is founded in Wales and is very much rooted in Wales.

Like many other businesses, Admiral have made a business decision to close some of their offices to facilitate a hybrid-working model, in response to Covid-19. The UK Government will continue to support businesses, employees and families affected by Covid-19.

We have supported Welsh businesses and people throughout the pandemic, this includes the provision of £1.1 billion through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, £2.4 billion in business support loans and 474,000 employees supported through the furlough scheme.

Furthermore, the UK Government has reintroduced the Statutory Sick Pay Rebate Scheme to help small and medium-sized employers cover the cost of Covid-related sick absences, covering up to two weeks per employee.

■ Agriculture: Wales

Ruth Jones:

[\[99059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Welsh farming industry on the effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on their ability to operate.

Simon Hart:

I regularly meet with various representatives from across the farming sector in Wales. I met with the President of NFU England and Wales in December 2021 and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State attended the Royal Welsh Winter Fair in

November 2021, where he met with various representatives from the farming unions in Wales.

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement maintains zero tariffs and zero quotas on trade in goods between the UK and EU. It provides for ongoing cooperation regarding public, animal and plant health, whilst limiting technical barriers to trade and maintaining full control over our domestic regimes.

With EU Exit, new trading opportunities have opened up, and the UK Government continues to support businesses – including those in the Welsh farming sector – to achieve their trading potential. The UK Government is supporting farming businesses to seize new global export opportunities and is working in lockstep with partners like the NFU and the Food and Drink Federation to deliver tailored support on the ground for Welsh farmers in the wake of EU Exit.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Karin Smyth:

[\[99348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the number of people placed on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme whose income fell below the Lower Earnings Limit and as a result have gaps in their National Insurance contributions that will affect their state pension entitlement.

Guy Opperman:

Where the furlough scheme operated, individuals may have also been entitled to claim Universal Credit. Those eligible for Universal Credit will have had a National Insurance credit applied to their record for this period, protecting their future State Pension entitlement. There may also be people whose total income across a tax year meant that they received a National Insurance qualifying year, even if there were periods where their earnings were below the Lower Earnings Limit.

There are a wide range of National Insurance credits available, ensuring people can achieve the best possible State Pension outcome when they reach State Pension age.

■ Employment: Newport West

Ruth Jones:

[\[99056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure equal employment opportunities for disabled people in Newport West constituency.

Chloe Smith:

This Government is committed to improving the lives of disabled people and delivering the most ambitious disability reform agenda in a generation. DWP delivers a range of national programmes, as well as initiatives in partnership with the health

system, to support disabled people to stay in or move into work. These include the Work and Health Programme and Intensive Personalised Employment Support.

In Jobcentre Plus throughout the Newport West constituency, Work Coaches, aided by Disability Employment Advisers, tailor support to claimant's individual needs, taking account of local provision, training, and employment opportunities.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Epilepsy**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[99409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what procedures are in place to ensure people with uncontrolled epilepsy are assessed accurately when making a personal independence payment claim.

Chloe Smith:

All Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Health Professionals (HPs) complete training on neurological conditions, including epilepsy. HPs maintain knowledge through Continuing Professional Development Activity.

All claimants, including claimants with epilepsy are assessed in accordance with the DWP PIP Assessment Guide.

■ **Sick Pay: Self-employed**

Neale Hanvey:

[\[99076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will extend full statutory sick pay to self-employed people who are required to self-isolate as a result of covid-19.

Neale Hanvey:

[\[99077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the public health benefits of extending full statutory sick pay to self-employed people who have to self-isolate as a result of covid-19.

Chloe Smith:

No. Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is paid for by employers and there is no mechanism to include the self-employed in SSP.

The Government does have a wider safety net to ensure self-employed people are supported through the welfare system.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Disability**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[99410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what procedures are in place to ensure people with hidden disabilities are assessed accurately in telephone assessments when making (a) a personal independence payment and (b) universal credit claim.

Chloe Smith:

All Healthcare Professionals (HPs) have extensive and rigorous training in undertaking assessments.

Each referral is initially reviewed by a HP, if there is sufficient supporting evidence to provide paper based advice to the department, the HP will assess the claimant on this evidence alone. If they cannot, the claimant will be invited to attend a telephone, video or face to face assessment.

All claimants, including those with hidden disabilities, are assessed in accordance with the PIP Assessment Guide for Providers or Work Capability Assessment Handbook.

We have continuously improved our processes and guidance to minimise the number of customers for whom a telephone or video assessment is not suitable. In such instances, these claimants will be prioritised for a face to face assessment.

■ State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad**Allan Dorans:****[100692]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to introduce a secure electronic system that will enable British citizens living overseas to submit documentary evidence as proof of entitlement particularly in relation to pensions.

Guy Opperman:

DWP already uses a secure electronic system to allow customers to upload certain categories of evidence to the department.

We have been carrying out extensive research to expand this capability to cover other services such as pensions. Our expectation is that this capability will possibly be available towards the end of the next financial year 2022/3.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Electoral Register: British Nationals Abroad

Cat Smith:

[81041]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many overseas electors will be eligible to register to vote in the event that the 15 year rule is removed under the proposals set out in the Elections Bill.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 2 December 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Kemi Badenoch:

The Elections Bill Impact Assessment estimates the removal of the 15 year rule will increase the number of British citizens abroad who are eligible to register to vote from 0.9 million - 1.1 million people to 3.2 million - 3.4 million people in 2023/24. It is not possible to accurately estimate the future numbers of overseas electors, due to the uncertainty over what proportion of the newly enfranchised will choose to register. The central estimate in the Impact Assessment for the Elections Bill considers the scenario in which 550,000 overseas electors are registered to vote in 2024 - **an increase of 320,000 compared to the numbers of overseas electors registered at the time of the 2019 general election** (by way of context, there were 47.6 million UK Parliamentary electors registered at the 2019 general election).

This suggests a potential uplift in the **number of persons on the** Parliamentary electoral register in the region of **4.07%**, and such numbers would be distributed across the country ~~according to their last constituency in which they resided.~~

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

TRANSPORT

■ Local Transport Update

Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):

[\[HCWS539\]](#)

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games will take place from 28 July to 8 August 2022 and will be the biggest sporting event ever held in the city featuring thousands of world-class athletes and over a million spectators. With an estimated global television audience of 1.5 billion people, the Games will showcase Birmingham, the West Midlands and the entire country as an amazing place to live, work, study, visit and do business.

We know that putting in place effective transport provision is a crucial part of any major sporting event and requires detailed planning and coordination. A well understood and supported Transport Plan is therefore essential.

On 23 October 2020, in line with s25(1) of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games Act 2020, I directed the West Midlands Combined Authority to prepare a Transport Plan for the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Today I am pleased to inform the House that the West Midlands Combined Authority Board has approved the final Games Transport Plan.

The Transport Plan has been produced in close collaboration with Birmingham City Council and the Birmingham 2022 Organising Committee. It sets out a strategic approach to planning and coordination of transport to support the Games; covering the transportation of spectators, athletes and the Games Family, whilst at the same time ensuring that any disruption to transport users and residents is kept to a minimum.

The Transport Plan is also the result of consultation with key stakeholders, including local authorities, Police forces, transport operators, and the Department for Transport, as well as wider public engagement.

The Transport Plan presents five principles that have guided decision-making throughout the stages of strategic planning, and which underpin the objectives for transport during the Games. These principles are:

- Clean and Green; a public transport Games
- Safe, secure, reliable and efficient transport
- Minimising disruption
- Long-term benefits
- Access for all

I am placing a copy of the Games Transport Plan in the libraries of both Houses.