



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 18 January 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:32 P.M., 18 January 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

### ATTORNEY GENERAL

#### ■ Serious Fraud Office

**Andy Slaughter:** [\[103528\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, pursuant to the oral Answer of 6 January 2022, Official Report, column 146, on the Criminal Justice System: Disclosure between Parties, when the independent review on the disclosure failings at the Serious Fraud Office will commence; who will be conducting that review; and what the (a) timescale and (b) terms of reference for that review are.

**Alex Chalk:**

The details of the review, including the intended timescales and the terms of reference, will be published once they have been agreed. I am committed to ensuring that this review is conducted as quickly as possible.

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ Carillion

**Paul Howell:** [\[100728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress has been made in the investigation into Carillion; and when that investigation is planned to conclude.

**Paul Scully:**

The Official Receiver investigated the failure of Carillion plc (“the **Company**”) and reported to the Secretary of State in relation to the conduct of the Company’s directors. Consequently, director disqualification proceedings were issued on 12 January 2021 against 8 directors and former directors of the Company. The proceedings are ongoing.

#### ■ Coal: Mining

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[100478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Minister for Energy’s statement that coal has no part to play in future power generation in the Answer of 15 November 2021 to Question 69602, what discussions he has had with Welsh Ministers regarding plans to extend the Aberpergwm drift coalmine site; and if he will place a copy of that correspondence in the Library.

**Greg Hands:**

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State met with the Welsh Government Minister for Climate Change in November 2021 and subsequently officials from the

Department and the Welsh Government have met to discuss the licence for coal extraction held by Energybuild Limited in relation to Aberpergwm; an operational coal mine in Wales that produces high grade anthracite for industrial use.

I am happy to place in the Libraries of the House a copy of my letter of 7 January 2022 to the Welsh Government Minister setting out the UK Government's position.

#### ■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Consultants

**Gareth Thomas:**

**[100403]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 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 she will make a statement.

**George Freeman:**

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

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

#### ■ Electrical Safety

**Wera Hobhouse:**

**[100641]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to introduce mandatory energy performance labelling for electric heaters.

**Greg Hands:**

The Department, as it laid out in the recently published Energy-Related Products Policy Framework, will be looking at whether changes to minimum energy performance standards and labelling could encourage uptake of more efficient and cost-effective heating solutions, which would help protect consumers' energy bills and reduce energy demand. This includes direct electric heaters such as panel heaters, electric radiators and electric storage heaters, which are currently expensive to run.

#### ■ Energy Supply: Fife

**Peter Grant:**

**[103579]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2022 to Question 96947, on Energy Supply: Fife, what discussions he has had with energy companies on (a) the levels of debt accrued by customers in Glenrothes and Central Fife during the first and second covid-19 lockdowns and (b) the plans those companies have to collect that debt.

**Greg Hands:**

Ministers and officials regularly met energy companies during the first and second covid-19 lockdowns to discuss a range of issues relating to the energy retail market. The Government's Voluntary Agreement with energy suppliers prioritises customers at risk and supports those impacted by covid-19. Based on circumstances, this could

include reassessing, reducing or pausing debt repayments for households in financial distress and support for prepayment meter customers to stay on supply. The Agreement was introduced in March 2020 and is still in place today.

### ■ Energy Supply: Wales

**Ruth Jones:** [\[97070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has discussed the rise in energy costs with the Welsh Government.

**Greg Hands:**

Yes, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has met with Devolved Administrations, including the Welsh Government at a ministerial level to discuss rising energy prices. Engagement at an official level is ongoing.

### ■ Energy: Prices

**Dr Luke Evans:** [\[100714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the criteria which determine the level of the energy price cap set by Ofgem.

**Dr Luke Evans:** [\[100715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had discussions with Ofgem to review the energy price cap and its components to reflect increases in domestic energy prices.

**Greg Hands:**

Decisions on the level of the price cap are for Ofgem. Ofgem's consultation on proposed changes to the price cap closed on 17 December 2021. Ofgem intends to have a decision published by the beginning of February 2022.

The Government is in regular contact with Ofgem and industry to discuss the impact of unprecedented global gas prices and will continue to monitor the situation closely to ensure consumers are protected.

**Apsana Begum:** [\[101847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of energy price increases on the bills of people living in properties with district or communal heating systems.

**Apsana Begum:** [\[101848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to include people living in properties with district or communal heating systems in Ofgem's review of the energy price cap.

**Greg Hands:**

The Default Tariff Act requires Ofgem, as the gas and electricity markets regulator, to put licence conditions in place for a cap on domestic default gas and electricity tariffs.



District or communal heating systems typically buy their energy through commercial contracts which are not covered by the Act.

## ■ Environment Protection: Vans

**Jim McMahon:**

[\[103633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the correlation between supply and demand in the (a) secondhand van and (b) greener vehicles market.

**Lee Rowley:**

The latest industry statistics show that demand for electric vehicles is stronger than ever, with about as many fully electric car registrations in 2021 as in the five years of 2016 to 2020 combined. In 2021 as a whole, 11.6% of all new cars registered were fully electric, trending upwards throughout the year, with over 1 in 4 new cars sold being fully electric in the month of December.

## ■ Heat Pumps

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[103587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent progress his Department has made on supporting the development of effective, low-cost heat pumps.

**Greg Hands:**

The Government is supporting the deployment of heat pumps through a package of policies, which will stimulate demand and help deliver the economies of scale that will reduce costs of heat pumps. In addition, the Government has launched a £60 million Heat Pump Ready Programme, part of the £1 billion Net Zero Innovation Portfolio, which will support the development of innovative solutions across the heat pump sector. Collectively, this support will help deliver the Government's ambition to work with industry to reduce the upfront costs of installing a heat pump by 25-50% by 2025.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[103588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his timescale is for the full delivery of heat pumps; and what estimate he has made of how many homes will receive a heat pump each year.

**Greg Hands:**

In order to meet Net Zero by 2050, virtually all heating will need to be decarbonised. Given the diversity of heat demand, a mix of technologies and customer options will be needed to decarbonise heat at scale.

As part of my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan, the Government is aiming to reach 600,000 heat pump installations per year by 2028. This ambition is in line with the minimum market capacity that the Government anticipated needing for

all eventual pathways to decarbonise heating in buildings by 2050. The Government is drafting a range of policy measures to best support the market with this trajectory.

A transition to predominantly electric heating would require deployment to increase beyond 600,000 heat pumps per year by the early 2030s. In the Net Zero Strategy, the Government stated that, in this scenario, deployment would need to increase up to 1.9 million per year from 2035.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[103590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he will take to increase manufacturing capacity for the creation of heat pumps.

**Greg Hands:**

The Government is supporting the development of a thriving heat pump supply chain in the United Kingdom through a package of measures to create demand, supporting innovation and providing fiscal support to onshore manufacturing. Recent investment in British manufacturing of heat pumps by companies like Mitsubishi, Vaillant and Ideal Boilers demonstrates that manufacturers are responding to policy signals and the United Kingdom continues to be a great place to invest.

#### ■ Home Energy and Lifestyle Management: Green Deal Scheme

**Anne McLaughlin:**

[\[103578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to Answer of 16 March 2021 to Question 167254 on Home Energy and Lifestyle Management: Green Deal Scheme, what the updated cost to the public purse is of expenditure by his Department on the Government's legal department on First Tier Tribunal litigation related to the sale of Green Deal plans by Home Energy & Lifestyle Management Ltd.

**Greg Hands:**

For Home Energy & Lifestyle Management Ltd appeals at the First Tier Tribunal, the Department has incurred estimated total costs of £142,300 from the Government Legal Department.

#### ■ Housing: Heat Pumps

**Matt Western:**

[\[103639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the average cost to install a heat source pump to replace an existing gas boiler in a standard three bedroom semi-detached home.

**Greg Hands:**

Based on the best available evidence, the Government estimates the current total cost of installing an air source heat pump to replace a gas boiler in an average three-bedroom semi-detached house to be around £10,500. However, as the market develops, heat pump installation costs are expected to fall. In the Heat and Buildings

Strategy, the Government set an ambition to reduce the upfront costs of installing a heat pump by 25-50% by 2025.

## ■ Housing: Solar Power

**Matt Western:**

**[103640]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what comparative estimate his Department has made of the typical cost of (a) retrofitting eight solar panels to a home and (b) installing eight solar panels at the time of building a new home.

**Greg Hands:**

The cost of installing a domestic solar PV system varies with the type of solar panels, space for installation and roof design. In December 2021, the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities published indicative data on costs for fitting solar panel systems on new homes. The fixed cost to install a solar PV system of under 4kW capacity system is £1,100, with a variable cost of £600 for each kW installed[1]. Data published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in May 2021 indicate the mean cost per kW for installations smaller than 4kW, whether new build or retrofit, has reduced from £2,080 in 2013/14 to £ 1,628 per kW installed in 2020/21[2].

Research by consumers' association Which?[3] and the Energy Savings Trust estimates that the cost of a typical domestic solar installation of 3.5kW capacity and comprising 10 to 15 panels, is around £4,800 [4].

[1]

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1040631/Domestic\\_Part\\_L.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1040631/Domestic_Part_L.pdf)

[2] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/solar-pv-cost-data>

[3] <https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/solar-panels/article/solar-panels/solar-panel-costs-aDxBY2v7kr60>

[4] <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/solar-panels/#jumpto-17> and <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/solar-panels/>

## ■ Industry: Employment

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[97157]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to (a) support and (b) increase the number of high wage jobs in British industry.

**Lee Rowley:**

The Government aims to support a high-skilled, high productivity, high wage economy that delivers on our ambition to make the UK the best place in the world to work and grow a business.

There are high paying jobs across all sectors and regions of the UK economy, including 600,000 high wage manufacturing jobs. Whilst businesses ultimately drive job growth, it is for the Government to create the right environment for job creation, and since 2010 there are an additional 3.6 million more people in work with the majority in high-skilled occupations.

The Government remains committed to the target of UK economy-wide R&D investment reaching 2.4% of GDP by 2027. This investment will continue to support a high innovation economy and deliver high wage jobs over the long term.

## ■ Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[100689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of rising electricity prices on the sustainability of UK steelmakers.

**Lee Rowley:**

We recognise the effect rising energy prices are having on businesses of all sizes and we are regularly engaging with them to discuss impacts and mitigations.

Since 2013, we have provided more than £2 billion in relief to help energy intensive industries with the costs of electricity, with over £600 million for steel. In addition, we have various funds in place to support businesses with high energy use to cut their bills, including the £315 million Industrial Energy Transformation Fund.

## ■ Nuclear Reactors: North West

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[100683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding is being provided to train and re-train the workforce in the North West needed for the Rolls Royce Small Nuclear Reactor programme.

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[100684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the full-life costs of the Rolls Royce Small Nuclear Reactor programme, including the disposal of nuclear waste during and after decommissioning.

**Greg Hands:**

The Government has made a grant of £210 million to Rolls Royce SMR Ltd to undertake phase two of the Low Cost Nuclear programme. This has been match funded by industry and investors, and will support the further development and assessment of the Rolls Royce SMR design up to 2025.

Whilst initial costing estimates have been made by Rolls Royce SMR Ltd, a key output of the programme is data that will enable more detailed whole life cost analysis, which could be used to inform any potential deployment decisions in the next parliament.

## ■ Telephones

**Paul Girvan:**

**[100657]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government has plans to strengthen the security of the electricity supply in the context of the move from the public switched telephone network (PSTN) to Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) for landline telephones.

**Greg Hands:**

Maintaining a resilient and secure energy supply for the UK is a key priority for this Government. The Government continues to work with both the energy and telecommunication industries to understand the implications of the move from the public switched telephone network (PSTN) to Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP).

## ■ Weather: Deaths

**Matt Western:**

**[103637]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to reduce excess winter deaths in Warwickshire.

**Greg Hands:**

The Government is committed to helping low income and vulnerable households to sufficiently heat their homes, recognising the impact cold homes can have on people's health.

Energy efficiency is the best long-term solution to tackling fuel poverty. The Government is driving energy efficiency improvements through a number of schemes, including the Energy Company Obligation and the Home Upgrade Grant. Since the Energy Company Obligation Scheme began in 2013, Warwickshire has received 21,746 energy efficiency measures (Headline Energy Efficiency Statistics, Table 3.4).[1]

Additional support is available to eligible households through the Warm Home Discount, the Cold Weather Payment and the Winter Fuel Payment. The Household Support Fund is also providing £421 million to help vulnerable people in England with the cost of food, utilities and wider essentials this winter.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/household-energy-efficiency-statistics-headline-release-december-2021>

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ 10 Downing Street and Department for Education: Inquiries

**Angela Rayner:**

**[92952]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many officials are working on the Cabinet Secretary's investigation into social events in

10 Downing Street and the Department for Education in November and December 2020, by civil service grade.

**Michael Ellis:**

The Terms of Reference for the Cabinet Office's investigation have been published on GOV.UK and deposited in the libraries of both Houses. The work will be concluded by the Second Permanent Secretary.

The Government does not comment on the specifics or resourcing of an ongoing process.

■ **Coronavirus: Death Certificates**

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[103635\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has taken steps to ensure that underlying industrial disease is recorded on the death certificates of former miners with respiratory conditions who die with covid-19.

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[103636\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many death certificates have recorded both covid-19 and underlying industrial disease since March 2020.

**Michael Ellis:**

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

**Attachments:**

1. [UKSA response \[UKSA Response to PQ103635 103636.pdf\]](#)

■ **Government Departments: Freedom of Information**

**Chris Evans:** [\[101700\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many and what proportion of Freedom of Information Act requests were (a) referred to and (b) decided by a Minister in the 2021 calendar year.

**Chris Evans:** [\[101701\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many and what proportion of requests for Internal Review of refused FOI requests were (a) referred to and (b) decided by a Minister during the 2021 calendar year.

**Michael Ellis:**

In line with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, officials will refer to Ministers any requests which require the opinion of a qualified person as to whether or not the exemption at section 36 is engaged.

The Cabinet Office does not gather statistics on the number of referrals made to Ministers.

## ■ Prime Minister: Coronavirus

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[102581\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the investigation led by Sue Gray into allegations of breaches of covid-19 regulations by the Prime Minister will include interviewing former Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the Rt hon. Member for Hertsmere, on whether he gained any knowledge of gatherings on 20 May 2020 at the Downing Street while visiting Downing Street on that date to deliver the covid-19 press conference.

**Michael Ellis:**

The Terms of Reference for the Cabinet Office's investigation have been published on GOV.UK and deposited in the libraries of both Houses. The work will be concluded by the Second Permanent Secretary.

The Government does not comment on the specifics of an ongoing process.

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[103560\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance his Department issued to Prime Minister's Office staff on physical meetings during each covid-19 lockdown in 2020 and 2021.

**Michael Ellis:**

Throughout the pandemic, BEIS has published the prevailing government guidance for all employers in relation to managing the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace, which has been available on GOV.UK.

## ■ Senior Civil Servants: Equality

**Rachel Hopkins:**

[\[103710\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has identified any barriers to employment in senior civil servant roles for applicants from low socio-economic backgrounds.

**Michael Ellis:**

The Cabinet Office participated in the 2021 Social Mobility Employment Index. The organisation was ranked 23rd in the most recent index - this is the highest ranking in the Cabinet Office's history. The organisation works on the feedback from the Social Mobility employment index to help it become a more socio diverse organisation.

## DEFENCE

## ■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[103524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January to Question 100451 on Ajax Vehicles: Procurement, what the timeframe is for completing inspection of the remaining vehicles.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The inspection process will recommence when a solution to the noise and vibration issues has been validated; all 589 vehicles will be inspected prior to delivery to the Army.

**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[103525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January to Question 100451 on Ajax Vehicles: Procurement, which office within DE&S is responsible for ensuring quality assurance of the vehicles referred to.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Ajax Delivery Team in Defence Equipment & Support supported by the Defence Quality Assurance Field Force is responsible for the quality assurance of the vehicles.

**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[103526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January to Question 100451 on Ajax Vehicles: Procurement, what the reasons were for the two vehicles referred to failed the inspections.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The main reasons why the two vehicles were initially rejected during General Acceptance Testing were due to vibration (vehicle 1) and a failed brake test (vehicle 2).

Both vehicles are due to be re-presented and re-tested.

**■ Antiship Missiles: Procurement****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[103523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department still plans to bring into service an interim replacement for Harpoon.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave on 23 September 2021 to Question 51889 to my hon. Friend for Wrexham (Sarah Atherton).

**Attachments:**

1. [Type 45 Destroyers: Guided Weapons \[UIN 51889.docx\]](#)

**■ Guided Weapons****Paul Girvan:**[\[100649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the use of the US C-Ram defence system in response to a recent drone attack on US troops at the Iraqi airport, what anti-missile defence capability the Government has against (a) drones and (b) longer range missiles.



**Jeremy Quin:**

The UK has several Counter-Uncrewed Aerial Systems and counter-missile capabilities for the Force Protection of UK personnel across the different domains of air, maritime and land. Whilst we are unable to comment specifically on the number and nature of the capabilities deployed for reasons of sensitivity and Force Protection, we can confirm they are all built around an ability to Detect, Track, Identify and Defeat drones operating with hostile intent in the vicinity of UK personnel and critical assets. Additionally, the Sky Sabre missile provides enduring, all weather, ground-based air defence; this will form the baseline for the future medium-range air defence capability and is being developed by the Army. In the maritime domain existing capabilities fitted to ships, such as short-range gun systems, as well as the Phalanx Close-In Weapons System and the Sea Ceptor and Sea Viper missiles, offer effective defence against medium and large drones and long-range missiles.

**Merlin Helicopters: Spare Parts****Dave Doogan:**[\[103686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the replacement value is of EH101 transmission spares stored at RNAS Yeovilton and held on Mod Form 731 as unserviceable not for disposal.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The replacement value of Merlin (EH101) transmission spares at RNAS Yeovilton and held on MOD Form 731 as unserviceable not for disposal is £4.59 million. These spares will be held with a view to repair and reuse.

**Military Aid: NHS Wales****Rob Roberts:**[\[103691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2022 to Question 100722, on Military Aid: Health Services, what the cost of the support provided to the Welsh NHS was.

**James Heappey:**

Within the last five years, the cost charged to the Welsh NHS for Defence support is £4,200,000. This figure includes the cost of ongoing Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) tasks.

**Ministry of Defence: Written Questions****Tim Loughton:**[\[103509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 22 November to Question 76548, he plans to respond to Question 76548 on Ministry of Defence: Stonewall, tabled by the hon. Member for East Worthing and Shoreham.

**Leo Docherty:**

You will recall that I responded to your Question 76548 of 17 November 2021 on 22 November 2021 to advise that it would take time to collate the information required

for a detailed breakdown and, in response to your further Question 84298 of 30 November, I reiterated that position. I am now able to respond substantively to your Question.

As you will know from my answer of 1 November 2021 to Question 61052, no donations are made to Stonewall. However, the Ministry of Defence (MOD), the three Services, and the MOD Police, are all members of Stonewall's 'Diversity Champions programme' for which membership costs an annual fee. In addition, a number of courses and professional development sessions are purchased on an ad-hoc basis, primarily by the LGBT+ networks.

I can confirm that all MOD Memberships are reviewed regularly, to ensure that they deliver value for money and continue to meet our Diversity and Inclusion ambitions and strategic direction, as set out in the Defence Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, A Force for Inclusion.

Information held by the MOD is provided in the table below. You will wish to note that further investigation of expenditure means that in many cases the estimated figures provided in answer to Question 61052 have now been revised upwards.

FINANCIAL YEAR	ROYAL NAVY	BRITISH ARMY	ROYAL AIR FORCE	MOD CENTRE D&I	MOD POLICE
2016-17	-	£1,050	£3,000	-	£3,696
2017-18	£9,045	£17,181	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000
2018-19	£8,084	£9,150	£3,000	£11,226	£3,000
2019-20	£6,155	£5,104	£6,708	£4,854	£9,326
2020-21	£2,500	£6,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,209

Notes:

1. The Royal Navy has no payments recorded to Stonewall prior to financial year 2017-18
2. MOD Centre Diversity and Inclusion has no payments recorded to Stonewall prior to financial year 2017-18

## ■ Northern Ireland: Armed Forces Day

**Paul Girvan:**

[\[100656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when Northern Ireland will host the main national event for Armed Forces Day in the UK.

**Leo Docherty:**

I am delighted that there is a consistent demand to pay tribute to and recognise our excellent Armed Forces. It is also gratifying to see the continuing extent of Armed

Forces Week activity across the country, and indeed in Northern Ireland itself, that sets out to celebrate our Armed Forces. Any town or city in the United Kingdom is welcome to apply to the Ministry of Defence to host the Armed Forces Day National Event; full details of how to do so are available on our Armed Forces Day website.

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ Broadcasting Programmes: Television

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[102630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to help encourage broadcasters to run more UK-originated content and programmes on television.

**Julia Lopez:**

All of the UK's public service broadcasters are subject to original production quotas, specified in legislation and enforced by Ofcom, which require them to allocate a minimum proportion of their broadcast schedules to original productions each year. To qualify as an 'original production' a programme must be commissioned by one of the public service broadcasters themselves. The Government also has a stable and generous tax relief system, where productions must qualify as 'British' under the cultural test. This drove a record-breaking £5.1 billion in UK screen production in 2019, much of it shown by UK broadcasters.

We want this to continue. Indeed, the government is supportive of a modern system of public service broadcasting (PSB) that remains relevant and can continue to meet the needs of UK audiences in the future. This includes making sure that viewers can continue to see themselves and their way of life reflected on screen by ensuring broadcasters show a wide range of high-quality UK-originated content. It is exactly for these reasons that the government is conducting its own strategic review of PSB, including appointing an expert PSB Advisory Panel. We will set out the conclusions from that review in due course.

### ■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Consultants

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[100404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether her 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 she will make a statement.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Department has awarded a contract to FTI Consulting in November 2017 for a period of 4 months to a maximum value of £29,250 (excluding VAT).

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

## ■ EU Countries: Mobile Phones

**Ruth Jones:** [\[100686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans she has to mitigate the financial impact of the reintroduction of roaming charges for UK travellers in the EU.

**Chris Philp:**

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

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

## ■ Gambling: Regulation

**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[101759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions her officials have had with their counterparts at the Treasury on the actions of the Financial Conduct Authority with regards to its regulation of BetIndex Limited.

**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[101760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits for gambling regulation of requiring the Gambling Commission to assess the novelty of an (a) operator or (b) product when conducting scrutiny.

**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[101761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many companies does the Gambling Commission dual regulate with the Financial Conduct Authority.

**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[101762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she has taken to improve co-operation between the Financial Conduct Authority and the Gambling Commission.

**Chris Philp:**

Officials from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport worked closely with their counterparts at the Treasury to discuss the collapse of BetIndex, the role of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) in this case, the independent review

conducted by Malcolm Sheehan QC and the lessons learnt that were identified by the review.

Following the publication of the review, the Gambling Commission updated its framework for risk based regulation so that product novelty is properly considered alongside other factors in determining the level of scrutiny an operator is placed under.

The review also clearly states that the FCA's concluded position was that no part of Football Index fell within the FCA's remit on legal grounds. Only one company is currently regulated by both the Gambling Commission and the FCA. The Commission continues to be vigilant about emerging products and operators and, under the terms of the new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the FCA, identify and highlight the potential need for its involvement wherever necessary.

The FCA and the Gambling Commission strengthened their Memorandum of Understanding in response to Mr Sheehan's recommendations in the independent review, including establishing new escalation routes and commitments on timeliness of responses to ensure regulatory impasses are identified and overcome quickly. The FCA has additionally nominated an Executive Director to oversee its relationship with the Commission.

#### ■ **Holiday Accommodation: Registration**

**Selaine Saxby:**

[\[100749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when the Government plans to begin the planned consultation on the introduction of a Tourist Accommodation Registration scheme.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Government intends to launch a consultation later in 2022, but will begin the process by launching a call for evidence in the coming weeks.

The call for evidence will seek views on a range of issues that arise from the increase in short-term holiday letting, not just on housing supply but also on matters such as compliance with health and safety regulations and the impact on anti-social behaviour.

I have already begun the process of informally consulting with stakeholders across the sector on this issue. For example, in late December I held several roundtables with attendees from the private sector, Local Authorities, tourism representative groups and others.

#### ■ **Lord Brownlow of Shurlock Row**

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[103558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 98971, if he will place a copy of his Department's

minute of the meeting between the Secretary of State and Lord Brownlow regarding the Great Exhibition 2.0 in the Library.

**Julia Lopez:**

DCMS does not routinely publish minutes of meetings and therefore does not plan to place the minutes from the meeting between the former Secretary of State and Lord Brownlow in the Library.

■ **O2: Fees and Charges**

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[100687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with representatives of O2 on their proposal to not reintroduce roaming charges for UK residents travelling in the EU.

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[100688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with representatives of Virgin Mobile on their proposal to not reintroduce roaming charges for UK residents travelling in the EU.

**Chris Philp:**

Ministers and officials have regular discussions with senior representatives of mobile operators on a range of issues, including on the issue of mobile roaming, and the government will continue to promote a competitive marketplace that serves the interests of consumers.

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.

■ **Social Media: Harassment**

**Carla Lockhart:**

[\[99411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions officials in her Department have had with representatives of social media platforms on tackling the use of anonymous accounts to abuse people.

**Chris Philp:**

Officials have regular meetings and discussions with social media platforms on a range of issues, including the use of anonymous accounts.

The Online Safety Bill will require companies in scope to manage the risk of online anonymous abuse. Companies will need to remove and limit the spread of illegal content and prevent children from harmful abuse. Major platforms will also need to set out clearly what legal content is acceptable for adult users on their services and enforce their terms and conditions consistently and transparently. This applies whether a user is anonymous or not.

If platforms fail in their duties under the Bill, they will face tough enforcement action including fines of up to 10% of global annual qualifying turnover.

The draft Bill has been subject to pre-legislative scrutiny by a Joint Committee which reported its recommendations on 14 December. We are considering the Committee's report and will introduce the Bill as soon as possible.

## ■ Social Media: Hate Crime

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[101725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will include provisions in forthcoming online harms bill to prevent anonymity in social media to help tackle the prevalence of online hate.

**Chris Philp:**

The Online Safety Bill places new requirements in relation to anonymity online. It requires companies in scope to effectively manage the risk of online anonymous abuse on user-to-user services.

Services within scope of the Bill will need to remove and limit the spread of illegal content and prevent children from harmful content. Major platforms will also need to set out clearly what legal content is acceptable for adult users on their services and enforce their terms and conditions consistently and transparently. This applies whether a user is anonymous or not. If platforms fail in their duties under the Bill, they will face tough enforcement action including fines of up to 10% of global annual qualifying turnover.

The draft Bill has been subject to pre-legislative scrutiny by a Joint Committee which reported its recommendations on 14 December. We are considering the Committee's report and will introduce the Bill as soon as possible.

## EDUCATION

## ■ Day Care and Educational Institutions: Air Conditioning

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[97139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what criteria were used in the selection of the Dyson Pure Cool Formaldehyde – TP09 and Camfil City M as air cleaning units for education and childcare settings.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

All air cleaning units provided by the department have met an approved technical specification. The department's technical specification used to assess the units 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 we have 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.

The specification included a wide range of factors appropriate to an education environment to determine overall suitability. This included clean air delivery rates, noise levels, filtration capability, technical certification, ease of use and maintenance, warranty, and strength of evidence for manufacturer claims. The primary considerations were around the standard of filtration which is high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtration technology; the minimum standard was specified to HEPA H13/ISO35H which is a medical grade of filter which helps to remove airborne contaminants including from the air including viruses such as SARS-CoV-2. HEPA technology is a mature technology and removes the risk of any less well tested technology being implemented into classrooms. Acoustic performance was also a major consideration due to the units needing to go into a classroom environment. All of these criteria formed part of our technical specification used to assess and select units that meet our high specification and are suitable for teaching environments.

Any procurement that we undertake must comply with the Public Contract Regulations (2015). The procurement of the air cleaning devices was undertaken using the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) Framework (RM6157) which can be accessed by central government departments including the Department for Education and the wider public sector. We have selected a range of products which meet this high specification criteria to provide education and childcare settings with high quality air cleaning units of a suitable specification.

For education providers which are not eligible for funded units, the department has launched an online marketplace which 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>. In future, the department may review this list and as more products which meet our specification become available, these will be added.

The department will publish details of the contracts for air cleaning units which will include the technical specification criteria on contracts finder in line with the government's transparency agenda.

#### ■ Department for Education: Consultants

**Gareth Thomas:**

**[100405]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, 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.

**Michelle Donelan:**

Officials searched the Department for Education commercial record system and I can confirm that no contracts have been recorded with suppliers (i) Clifford Chance LLP, (ii) FTI Consulting and (iii) Fenchurch Advisory Partners.



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

Officials are unable to check all electronic diaries across the department for meeting with (i) Clifford Chance LLP, (ii) FTI Consulting and (iii) Fenchurch Advisory Partner.

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

## ■ Department for Education: Telephone Services

**Bridget Phillipson:**

**[100511]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 92912 on Department for Education: Telephone Services, for what reason there was a more than sevenfold increase in waiting time before calls were answered between (a) October 2021 and (b) November 2021.

**Bridget Phillipson:**

**[100512]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 92912 on Department for Education: Telephone Services, for what reasons there was a more than 20-fold increase in the number of calls to that line which were abandoned by callers between (a) October 2021 and (b) November 2021.

**Michelle Donelan:**

There was a sevenfold increase in the waiting time, and more than a 20-fold increase in the abandonment rate to the COVID-19 helpline from October 2021 to November 2021 due to the emergence of the Omicron variant and my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister's announcement on 28 November 2021 of new restrictions due to the variant's transmissibility and prevalence.

Call levels during October were low, and for the majority of November a similar level of low call volumes was recorded, meaning that waiting time and abandonment rates were very low and sufficient resource was available to ensure this continued.

However, once restrictions were introduced at the end of November, call levels significantly increased.

The previous data shared in relation to Question [92912](#) on 5 January 2022 gave a monthly average of call volumes, rather than a breakdown by date. The monthly average for November 2021 was impacted by a significant increase in calls at the end of the month over a short period of time, rather than a general increase in demand spread throughout the month. The attached table shows the daily call volumes during October, November and the first few days in December 2021 as context for this response.

The COVID-19 helpline is part of a wider outsourced customer engagement contract which provides other helplines for the department. Given that lower call volumes were maintained through the autumn, some of the COVID-19 helpline resource was released to support another of the department's helplines during October and November which was experiencing high demand, as part of a flexible resourcing model. Following my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister's announcement on 28

November and the increase in call volumes to the COVID-19 helpline, we recalled the agents to ensure that there was sufficient capacity on the COVID-19 helpline to minimise call wait times for our customers.

The data shows that the average call duration (call handling time) during this period also increased, which impacts the number of calls each agent can handle per hour. We assume that the higher abandonment rate was a result of the increases in the call wait time, as callers are informed of the likely call wait time when they join the queue. Callers may also have found the information they require on the department's website or blog whilst waiting for their call to be answered.

**Attachments:**

1. [100511\\_100512\\_table \[100511\\_100512\\_department\\_telephone\\_service\\_wait\\_time.pdf\]](#)

■ **Department for Education: Training**

**Lilian Greenwood:**

**[101698]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what training is provided to staff in his Department on avoiding implicit bias in the workplace.

**Michelle Donelan:**

The Written Ministerial Statement on Unconscious Bias (December 2020) set out the findings of the 'Unconscious bias and diversity training - what the evidence says' report. The findings concluded that there was no evidence that the training changed behaviour in the long term or improved workplace equality. It also found there is emerging evidence of unintended negative consequences. The department has therefore ceased offering Unconscious Bias training.

The government requested other parts of the public sector, including local government, the police and the NHS, to review their approaches in light of the evidence.

Since October 2020, the department has provided separate workshops aimed at supporting staff to have informed and productive conversations on the subject of race.

■ **Department for Education: Visits**

**Bridget Phillipson:**

**[100516]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 22 December 2021 to Question 92908 on Department for Education: Visits, on what dates any changes to the departmental guidance on in-person visitors were made, between 1 May 2021 and 31 December 2021; and if he will place copies of each iteration of that guidance in the Library.

**Michelle Donelan:**

Following Step 4 of the government's roadmap, the department updated its guidance on in-person visitors from 'No visitors to site are allowed.' to 'External visitors can visit

the office and must sign in and out of reception.’ on all 11 of our “DfE Buildings” intranet pages. This was published on the department’s intranet on 15 July 2021, in preparation for Step 4 on 19 July 2021.

A copy of the guidance, both pre and post update to reflect Step 4 will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. Please note that the guidance on visitors is the same across all of the department’s sites.

## ■ Department for Education: Working Hours

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[102585\]](#)

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

**Michelle Donelan:**

The department does not centrally monitor working hours for any employee but requires all employees, regardless of work location, to keep an accurate record of the hours they work.

All employees are able to work flexibly under the department’s Flexible Working and Flexitime Policies; these policies discourage long hours working. Under these policies, managers are responsible for organising workloads, and must avoid imposing workloads or deadlines that oblige their employees to work excessive hours. Managers are also encouraged to check their employees’ flexitime sheets on a monthly basis to ensure they are not working excessive hours.

## ■ Education: Mental Health Services

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[100705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many grants for Senior Mental Health Lead Training have been made since April 2021.

**Will Quince:**

Since April 2021 the government has allocated over £9.5 million to fund senior mental health lead training grants for over 8,000 eligible schools and colleges. Over 3,500 senior leads are estimated to have begun their training. This training will provide knowledge and skills to enable senior mental health leads to implement effective holistic approaches to promoting and supporting children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing in their school or college.

## ■ Further Education and Schools: Mental Health Services

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[103557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools are on the waiting list after applying to receive a grant for senior mental health lead training as of 13 January 2022; and what steps he is taking to reduce that waiting list to help ensure that training is offered to all eligible schools and colleges by 2025.

**Will Quince:**

The government is making good progress on its commitment to offer senior mental health lead training to all state-funded schools and colleges in England by 2025. Since applications opened in October 2021, over 8,000 eligible schools and colleges have applied for a senior mental health training grant. As at 12 January 2022, over 6,500 of these have booked onto a Department for Education quality-assured training course, and their grant payments are being processed. Furthermore, over 3,500 senior leads are estimated to have begun their training, providing knowledge and skills to enable them to implement effective holistic approaches to promoting and supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing in their school or college.

As at 14 January 2022, around 270 schools and colleges are on a waiting list for a senior mental health lead training grant. All currently available grants are reserved, pending schools and colleges that have submitted their initial application confirming they have booked a training course. The waiting list enables the department to quickly allocate any grants that become available, and our position on issuing grants for the 2022-23 financial year will be confirmed later in the spring.

**■ National School Breakfast Programme****Siobhain McDonagh:**[\[100414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on the level of pupil uptake of free school breakfasts in schools receiving support from the National School Breakfast Programme from September to December 2021.

**Siobhain McDonagh:**[\[100415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has plans to (a) measure pupil uptake of free school breakfasts in each school as part of the National School Breakfast Programme and (b) publish the average pupil uptake across all schools involved in that programme.

**Will Quince:**

The government is committed to continuing support for school breakfast clubs and the department is investing up to £24 million to continue our national programme until the end of the summer term in 2023. This funding will support around 2,500 schools in disadvantaged areas meaning that thousands of children from low-income families will be offered free nutritious breakfasts to better support their attainment, wellbeing, and readiness to learn. The focus of the programme is to target the most disadvantaged areas of the country, including the department's opportunity areas.

The enrolment process for schools joining the programme is currently ongoing, and the department has seen a strong interest so far from eligible schools since we invited the expressions of interest.

Throughout the current contract the department will be working with our provider, Family Action, to monitor different aspects of the current programme, including data

on pupil uptake. The department will consider the best opportunities to share information on the programme as it progresses.

## ■ National Tutoring Programme

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[103665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of tutors engaged through the National Tutoring Programme are not fully qualified teachers.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

This data is not held by the department.

We will consider whether to collect this data going forward.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[99322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when in 2022 he expects to reach the target of 252,000 children receiving academic mentoring through the National Tutoring programme.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[99323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils have (a) been enrolled on the tuition pillar and (b) started to receive tutoring as part of the National Tutoring programme in the academic year 2021-22.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[99324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he expects to meet the target for 524,000 children to be receiving tutoring via National Tutoring Programme tuition partners in the 2021-22 academic year; and how many tutoring sessions each of those children is expected to receive.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[99326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils have been enrolled on the National Tutoring Programme academic mentor pillar in the 2021-22 school year; and how many of those pupils have started to receive mentoring as at 7 January 2022.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The National Tutoring Programme aims to deliver up to 2 million tuition courses this year, and to deliver up to 90 million tuition hours by the 2024/25 academic year across the programme's 3 pillars.

The programme is currently on course to deliver its objectives. Schools know their pupils best and have the freedom to enrol those who will benefit most. So far, an estimated 230,000 courses have been started by pupils through the School-Led tutoring pillar, an estimated 20,000 with Academic Mentors and an estimated 52,000 with Tuition Partners. As a course consists of 15 tuition hours this means pupils who need it most will be receiving millions of hours of high-quality support.

The department will continue to work closely with its delivery partner to ensure the Tuition Partner and Academic Mentor pillars fulfil their objectives by the end of the academic year.

We will publish further data for the spring and summer terms later this year.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[99325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish a table showing how many children are receiving tutoring via the National Tutoring Programme tuition partners in each (a) local authority, (b) region, and (c) parliamentary constituency.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[99328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools are using the school-led tutoring grant to provide tuition in (a) England, (b) each local authority and (c) each parliamentary constituency.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[99329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils have received tuition under the school-led tutoring grant in (a) England, (b) each local authority, (c) each parliamentary constituency during the 2021-22 academic year.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[99330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many hours of tutoring have been provided to pupils under the school-led tutoring grant in (a) England, (b) each local authority, (c) each parliamentary constituency during the 2021-22 academic year.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

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

Building on the success of last year, we are confident of reaching our ambitious target to provide up to 6 million tutoring packages over the next 3 years.

The department continues to collect data from schools for all 3 strands of the NTP (school-led tutoring, tuition partners and academic mentors). As at 1 December 2021, an estimated 230,000 tutoring courses had been started by pupils through school-led tutoring since September; by 12 December an estimated 52,000 tutoring courses had been started by pupils with tuition partners and an estimated 20,000 tutoring courses had been started by pupils with academic mentors in the same period. The department does not collect data on pupils as the programme is focused on tutoring packages and has not committed to publish local level data. Accordingly, it has not published pupil participation by constituency. We will review the collection of data after the end of the current year to determine whether any changes are required.

## ■ Pupil Referral Units

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[103620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January to Question 98353 on Pupil Referral Units, what estimate he has made of the proportion of children and young people with special education needs or disabilities referred to pupil referral units or alternative provision who (a) were assessed for an EHC plan, (b) were provided with additional support prior to being referred and (c) had their needs identified after their referral.

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[103621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January to Question 98353 on Pupil Referral Units, what recent assessment has he made of the (a) effectiveness and (b) outcomes of pupil referral units in reintegrating pupils into mainstream education.

**Will Quince:**

In January 2021, there were 12,785 pupils whose main registration was at a state place-funded alternative provision (AP) setting (including pupil referral units, AP academies and free schools). Of those pupils, 10,575 (82.7%) were identified with special educational needs (SEN); 3,064 (24.0%) with an education, health and care plan and 7,511 (58.7%) with SEN support. The department does not publish statistics on the number of pupils who had their needs identified after referral into AP.

The department does not collect or publish information concerning the reintegration of pupils from state-place funded AP (including pupil referral units, AP academies and free schools) into mainstream education.

## ■ Schools: Air Conditioning

**Bridget Phillipson:**

[\[100515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 94337 on Schools: Air Conditioning, what steps he took to engage with existing British manufacturers of potentially suitable devices to (a) benefit from their operational experience of fitting and deploying similar technologies and (b) encourage them to produce suitable devices in the UK.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The department's technical specification was created following significant participation and input from leading (UK) cross-industry and cross-governmental experts, including the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, in addition to engagement from manufacturers in this process.

As part of the procurement and selection process, suppliers on the Crown Commercial Services Framework RM6157 Lot 3 were assessed on multiple criteria which included their conformance to the technical specification, as well as their ability to satisfy the delivery timescales at the volumes required by the department. The



volume required was significantly higher than stock available in the UK so not all manufacturers could meet either the technical threshold of the specification, the volumes, or the delivery timescales, or all 3.

To increase the selection of products available on the marketplace for schools, colleges and universities, we are continuing to work with suppliers and manufacturers within their supply chain both in the UK and wider to ensure that their products conform with the department's technical specification.

**Mike Amesbury:**

**[100680]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of supplying air purifiers to primary schools for use in classrooms; and what steps his Department is taking to protect primary school pupils, their families and school staff from covid-19.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, we have emphasised the importance of ventilation and provided guidance to providers on ventilation requirements. We have always said that where a provider is in operation, it is important to ensure that it is well ventilated and that a comfortable teaching environment is maintained.

During the autumn term, we provided CO2 monitors to all state-funded providers, 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. The programme provided schools and other settings with sufficient monitors to take representative readings from across their estate. Feedback suggests that schools are finding the monitors helpful to manage ventilation and, in most providers, existing ventilation measures are sufficient.

For the very few cases where maintaining good ventilation is not possible, we are supplying up to a total of 7000 air cleaning units in response to this feedback to settings. This is in addition to the 1000 department funded air cleaning units that we announced on 18 November 2021 for special educational needs and disabilities and alternative provision providers. State funded schools, including primary schools, further education colleges and early years providers can apply for a funded air cleaning unit if they meet strict eligibility criteria. 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 for their provider type. We will prioritise spaces with the poorest ventilation to receive units based on criteria such as CO2 levels and occupation density.

The department has also launched an online marketplace which provides settings with a route to purchasing air cleaning units directly from suppliers at a suitable specification and competitive price. Further information is available here:

<https://s107t01-webapp-v2-01.azurewebsites.net/list/air-cleaning>. In future, we may review this list and as more products which meet our specification become available, these will be added.



The department is also protecting primary school pupils, their families and school staff from COVID-19 through a range of other measures including staff testing, staff face coverings in communal areas, and daily testing for close contacts.

All eligible staff from education and childcare providers, and all students and pupils aged 5 and above identified as close contacts, are strongly advised to participate in daily testing of contacts of COVID-19. Individuals are asked to take 7 daily lateral flow device (LFD) tests if they are identified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact of a confirmed positive case. It is strongly advised that the daily LFD test is taken before leaving the house for the first time each day. Children under 5 years are exempt from self-isolation if they are identified by NHS Test and Trace as contacts of a positive case, and are not being asked to take part in daily LFD testing.

Overall, scientific studies and expert opinions indicate that face coverings can reduce transmission of COVID-19 by restricting the release of droplets and aerosols containing the virus. Any benefits in managing transmission are always balanced with any educational and wellbeing drawbacks in the recommended use of face coverings. For this reason, in primary schools and early years providers we recommend that face coverings are worn by staff and visitors in communal areas.

The steps we are taking will protect the education of children and young people and keep them in school or college, and ensure parents are reassured that it is as safe as possible.

#### ■ **Schools: Construction**

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

[\[100497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the outcomes of the Developer Loans for Schools pilot between 2019-2021; and whether that programme will remain open in 2022.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The Developer Loans for Schools pilot was launched in October 2019. Expressions of interest were received and assessed against the initial eligibility criteria. No loans were agreed, and no monies were committed. In July 2020, an internal review of all aspects of the pilot concluded that the need had changed, and it would not continue. There is no intention to revisit the initiative in 2022.

#### ■ **Schools: Coronavirus**

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[100679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of covid-19 on schools in Weaver Vale constituency; and what steps his Department is taking to limit the spread of the virus.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The government continues to manage the risk of serious illness from the spread of COVID-19 through the steps described below.

The department has reintroduced face coverings for all adults in schools, including primary, and for pupils and students in year 7 and above in communal areas, and now also in classrooms. This is a temporary measure and will be reviewed on 26 January. Health advice continues to be that children in primary schools should not be asked to wear face coverings.

Testing remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 within schools and colleges. We asked secondary schools to provide one on-site test for all pupils upon return.

Staff and secondary school pupils should continue to test twice weekly at home. Schools are strongly encouraged to ask parents and other visitors to take a lateral flow device (LFD) test before entering the school.

Young people aged 5 to 18 and fully vaccinated adults who are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 can take an NHS rapid LFD test every day for 7 days and continue to attend their school or college as normal unless they have a positive test result.

Every child aged 12 and over is eligible to receive the vaccine. Healthy 12 to 15-year-olds can have a second dose 12 weeks after their first dose. The booster programme was accelerated to offer every adult in England a booster jab by the end of 2021.

Children aged 5 to 11 who are in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of someone (of any age) who is immunosuppressed, will be offered a primary course of vaccination.

To improve ventilation, we have provided CO2 monitors backed by £25 million in government funding. Over 99% of eligible maintained schools, further education colleges, and the majority of early years education providers have now received a carbon dioxide monitor with over 350,000 now delivered. The government is also now making available at least 8,000 funded air cleaning units for poorly ventilated teaching spaces where quick fixes to improve ventilation are not possible.

The contingency framework gives directors of public health a range of flexible options for advising temporary measures in certain situations. This framework is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-restrictions-in-education-and-childcare-settings>.

Schools should follow the control measures set out in the guidance, continuing to comply with health and safety law. Schools must regularly review and update their risk assessments.

The measures outlined above apply nationally. Regarding Weaver Vale, the regional team in the West Midlands has offered regular calls with Cheshire West and Chester local authority in which we provide advice and guidance on how to limit the spread of COVID-19 and support schools in managing it. These calls have more recently involved public health colleagues.

## ■ Schools: Ventilation

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[100524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in which countries the carbon dioxide monitors issued to schools in the autumn term of 2021 were manufactured.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[100525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in what way schools were encouraged to report any technical difficulties they encountered with the carbon dioxide monitors issued to schools in the autumn term of 2021.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[100526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has received feedback from schools on the (a) installation, (b) operation and (c) interpretation of the carbon dioxide monitors issued in the autumn term of 2021.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[100527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether standards on (a) cable length and (b) minimum battery life were specified for the procurement of the carbon dioxide monitors issued to schools in the autumn term of 2021.

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[100528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department made of the number of classrooms in use in each school before sending that school its allocation of carbon dioxide monitors in the autumn term of 2021.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

During the autumn term, the department provided CO<sub>2</sub> 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. The programme provided schools and other providers with sufficient monitors to take representative readings from across their estate, assessing all spaces in a relatively short space of time. Providers received roughly one monitor for every two teaching rooms, precise numbers vary according to different provider types. The department knows from feedback following the rollout of CO<sub>2</sub> monitors that for most providers, existing ventilation measures are sufficient.

Alongside the rollout, the department has also provided new information on how to use CO<sub>2</sub> monitors to better manage ventilation. Our operational guidance includes details for the COVID-19 helpline, and providers are encouraged to contact us if they have any queries regarding their CO<sub>2</sub> monitors. For any technical queries, providers should contact the supplier of their monitors directly.

All department-funded CO<sub>2</sub> monitors are supplied with a one metre USB cable that can be plugged into a standard USB power source, such as mains adaptors or laptop. Providers can use any standard USB plug adaptor for the CO<sub>2</sub> monitors, such as ones used to charge mobile phones or other electrical devices. This is the primary

means of powering the devices; batteries are a back-up. The life of the back-up battery is variable based on the refresh rate of the device and if providers wish to use the CO2 monitor battery powered. In most cases, they can extend battery life by changing the refresh rate on their CO2 monitors. We have provided schools, colleges, and nurseries with guidance on how to use their monitors effectively. Providers can also contact the supplier of their device if they have any technical queries.

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

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12cU\\_I5q0v1\\_my97yPMpb87RsSL5d5lpj](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12cU_I5q0v1_my97yPMpb87RsSL5d5lpj).

## ■ Sixth Form Education: Coronavirus

**Sir Desmond Swayne:**

**[102524]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to extend sixth-form education for pupils who have suffered from long covid.

**Alex Burghart:**

Whilst all students in sixth form education have seen disruption and changes in the way they have received their education during the COVID-19 outbreak, we expect all institutions providing education for students aged 16 to 19 to support their student cohort to progress to a suitable destination in education, training or the workplace.

As part of the government's commitment to long-term education recovery we have made available £102 million to extend the 16 to 19 tuition fund in this academic year. This fund allows students in 16 to 19 education to access one-to-one and small group catch up tuition to help them catch up in subjects that will benefit them the most, including maths, English, and vocational courses. We are extending the fund further by £222 million for an additional two academic years from 2022/23.

The department is also investing £828 million across the Spending Review period to fund an average of 40 additional learning hours for students in 16 to 19 education. This funding will start from the 2022/23 academic year and provide students aged 16 to 19 with further opportunities to catch up on the vital teaching and learning they need to progress.

For students who were in the final year of their 16 to 19 study programme in academic year 2020/21 and whose education was impacted significantly more than their peers by COVID-19, we are funding institutions to enable these students to repeat up to a year of their studies within academic year 2021/22. This repeat year offer supports students whose chances of progression had been limited during

academic year 2020/21, for example students whose practical skills development, work experience or assessments had been adversely impacted and with the least time left in their education.

We will continue to assess the need to develop existing or further interventions in response to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

## ■ Social Workers: Children

**Sarah Green:**

[\[103712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for the training and development of the children's social work workforce.

**Will Quince:**

Local authorities are responsible for the training and development of their children's social care workforce, including ensuring that their social workers meet the standards set out in the 'Post qualifying standards: knowledge and skills statement for child and family practitioners'.

The government is providing local authorities with £4.8 billion of new grant funding over the Spending Review period to 2025. This will enable the sector to maintain vital frontline services including children's social care. Moreover, the government has given over £6 billion in un-ringfenced funding directly to councils to support them with the immediate and longer-term impacts of COVID-19 spending pressures. Local authorities are best placed to decide how much to invest in the training and development of their children's social care workforce.

The government supports local authorities by funding the initial training of social workers. The Department of Health and Social Care provides funding of approximately £77 million per annum for social worker initial training (both child and family and adult social). In addition, the department provides approximately £50 million per annum on fast-track initial training programmes.

The government works closely with local authorities to ensure that child and family social worker have the right skills and capability to meet the needs of children and families.

## ■ Special Schools: Coronavirus

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[102738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number special schools that have been forced to (a) close or (b) reduce their opening hours due to covid-19 cases in December 2021.

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[102739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of special schools that have been forced to (a) close or (b) reduce their opening hours due to covid-19 cases to date in January 2022.

**Helen Hayes:**

**[102740]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of special schools that have (a) closed or (b) reduced their opening hours as a result of covid-19 cases in each of the last 12 months.

**Will Quince:**

The department publishes data on state-funded special schools that have closed for 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.

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 through this link:

<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 published data on state-funded special schools that have closed for COVID-19 within the last 12 months can be found in Table 1B: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-catalogue/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/2022-week-2>.

## ■ Teachers: Recruitment

**Bridget Phillipson:**

**[103539]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in the context of former teachers who have returned to support schools put since 16 December 2021, if he will publish a list of the schools in which such former teachers were working on (a) 6 January 2022 and (b) 13 January 2022; if he will set out for each of those schools in which one or more such returned former teachers were working; and how many returned teachers were working in each of those schools.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

On 12 January 2022, 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>.

The department remains in close contact with supply agencies to monitor the interest they receive to help schools during this time. We will keep the need for further data collections under review.

The department needs to balance the need for data with the burden we place on those collating it, our focus has been on the numbers signing up to agencies. Every

single teacher that responds to our call can make a vital difference to children and young people by keeping them in face-to-face education.

Even if the teachers who have already come forward between 20 December and 7 January only taught one lesson each, that could support more than 12,000 pupils[1], and if they signed up for one full week, that could equate to more than 13,000 teaching hours[2].

[1] based on an average secondary class size estimate taken from the latest School Workforce Census Survey: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2020>.

[2] Teaching hours is based on average teaching time for full time teachers and middle leaders from the 2019 Teacher Workload Survey: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-workload-survey-2019>.

## ■ Vocational Education: Swindon

**Justin Tomlinson:**

**[102619]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of vocational educational opportunities in Swindon.

**Alex Burghart:**

We are investing £3.8 billion in further education and skills, to ensure people can access high-quality training and education that leads to good jobs, addresses skills gaps, boosts productivity and supports levelling up.

We are introducing T Levels, boosting access to high quality technical education for thousands of 16-19 year olds. Young people in Swindon are now benefitting from these new qualifications, as New College Swindon began teaching T Levels in Digital, Education & Childcare, Health and Science from September last year.

The department is also committed to supporting more people to benefit from the high-quality training that apprenticeships offer, including those at the start of their career or those looking to retrain. Funding for apprenticeships will grow to £2.7 billion by financial year 2024-25, delivering the first increase to employer-led apprenticeships funding since financial year 2019-20. We are also investing over £550 million by financial year 2024-25 to make sure adults can upskill to reach their potential, delivering on the National Skills Fund commitment.

The Free Courses for Jobs offer, launched in April 2021, gives adults the chance to access their first level 3 qualification for free. We have also recently announced that from April, any adult in England earning under the National Living Wage annually (£18,525) or unemployed, will also be able to access these qualifications for free, regardless of their prior qualification level. New Swindon College is amongst many training providers who have been allocated funding to deliver this offer.

Complementing this, Skills Bootcamps offer free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with an employer. Skills Bootcamps are now available in areas across the



country as well as online, covering digital, technical, construction, logistics (HGV driving), and green skills. In Swindon, Skills Bootcamps in HGV driving are currently available. We continue to expand Skills Bootcamps further, and more courses will become available across England over the next few months.

We are also launching Multiply, a new £560 million programme to help people improve their basic numeracy skills through free digital training, flexible courses and tutoring. Launching in Spring 2022, the Multiply programme is in addition to the England-wide statutory entitlement for numeracy and will give people who don't have at least a GCSE Grade C/4 or equivalent in maths, access to free new flexible courses to improve their maths skills. This will include a new website with bitesize training and online tutorials, as well as flexible courses.

Apprenticeships have long been a growth area for New College Swindon and in September 2021, the college opened the Swindon and Wiltshire Institute of Technology, with a mission to be a high-quality employer-led training facility delivering high level technical and digital skills training for young people and to those already in employment.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Agriculture Act 2020

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

**[100428]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to implement the provisions in the Agriculture Act 2020 to deliver public money for public goods.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We are implementing three new schemes that reward farmers and land managers for producing public goods: The Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery. Our approach to environmental land management is the cornerstone of our new agricultural policy and will be realised through a combination of schemes using public money to reward farmers and land managers for delivering environmentally sustainable actions. The schemes are intended to provide a powerful vehicle for achieving the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan and commitment to net zero emissions by 2050, while supporting our rural economy.

The Sustainable Farming Incentive will pay farmers for actions they take, going beyond regulatory requirements, to manage their land in an environmentally sustainable way. In 2021 we launched the Sustainable Farming Incentive pilot and received over 900 applications. The first agreements have started and will run until 2024 when the full Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme offer will be available. This year we will start to rollout core elements of that scheme.

The Local Nature Recovery scheme will pay for actions that support local nature recovery and deliver local environmental priorities; making sure the right things are delivered in the right places. We plan to make an early version of the scheme



available to a limited number of people in 2023 as part of our plans for testing and rolling out the scheme. We will then roll out the scheme across the whole country by the end of 2024.

Landscape Recovery will support the delivery of landscape and ecosystem recovery through long-term, large-scale projects, including projects to restore wilder landscapes in places where that's appropriate, large-scale tree planting and peatland restoration projects. We will pilot Landscape Recovery between 2022-24 through initiating at least 10 large-scale projects.

## ■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

**Peter Grant:**

[\[103581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of the proposed reductions to the number of Seasonal Agricultural Worker visa routes from 2023 on the agricultural industry in (a) Scotland (b) the rest of the UK.

**Peter Grant:**

[\[103582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with representatives of (a) The National Farmers Union of Scotland and (b) The National Farmers Union of England and Wales on proposed changes to the number of Seasonal Agricultural Worker visa routes from 2023.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Defra works closely with a wide range of industry stakeholders – including the National Farmers Union of Scotland and the National Farmers Union of England and Wales – to discuss current immigration policy and the needs of the farming sector.

Under the Seasonal Workers Visa Route agreed with the Home Office for the period 2022-2024 there will be 30,000 visas available in 2022, but this will be kept under review with the potential to increase by 10,000 if necessary.

Immigration is a reserved matter and Seasonal Worker visas under this route for the horticulture sector will be available nationwide.

While acknowledging the sector's reliance on foreign workers, the UK is committed to becoming a high-skilled, high-wage economy and the Government has been clear that more must be done to attract UK workers through offering training, career options, wage increases and to invest in increased automation technology.

Therefore, the Home Office announced that the number of visas will begin to taper down from 2023 to account for this focus on British workers and automation, and Defra will bring forward further proposals in due course on ways to support the sector as well as progressing recommendations from the Automation Review.

Defra is also working with industry and the Department for Work and Pensions to raise awareness of career opportunities in the food and farming sectors among UK workers.

**■ Air Pollution: Greater Manchester****Jim McMahon:****[103632]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what (a) information his department holds and (b) estimate he has made of levels of air pollution at each motorway junction in Greater Manchester in the latest period for which information is available.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Defra Automatic Urban and Rural Network (AURN) and UK Urban NO2 Network (UUNN) have a combined 106 monitoring sites in Greater Manchester. We also model annual mean concentrations of air pollutants on urban major roads across the UK. However, we do not assess air pollution at motorway junctions because the Air Quality Standards Regulations stipulate that air quality should not be assessed in microenvironments, including within 25m of a junction.

There are locally managed sites in Greater Manchester, including sites monitoring urban traffic concentrations of particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide, located on 'Trafford A56' and 'Tameside A635 Manchester Road'.

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

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

**■ Animal Welfare****Greg Smith:****[100710]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the Government's policy is on the use of cages in respect of (a) pets, (b) poultry farming, (c) livestock farming and (d) game farming.

**Greg Smith:****[100711]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how his Department defines a cage for (a) pets, (b) poultry farming, (c) livestock farming and (d) game farming.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Government is delivering a series of ambitious reforms, as outlined in the Action Plan for Animal Welfare (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/action-plan-for-animal-welfare>). One of the ways we wish to improve the welfare of farm animals is strengthening protections against animal confinement. We are actively exploring options to phase out the use of cages in farming, including the use of enriched cages for laying hens, farrowing crates for pigs and cages for breeding pheasants and partridges. Ending the use of cages would have a significant impact on some sectors of the farming industry and so we would need to undergo a public consultation.

For pets, the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations, introduced in 2018, require businesses that carry out activities involving animals to obtain a valid licence from their local authority. Licences must meet strict statutory minimum welfare standards which are enforced by local authorities who have powers to issue, refuse or revoke licences. The 2018 Regulations are supported by statutory guidance which provides specific information about the conditions for each activity. This includes guidance on the size of cages that should be sold in the course of selling animals as pets:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-activities-licensing-guidance-for-local-authorities>

Current requirements on how farmed livestock should be kept, including detailed provisions on accommodation, are set down in The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007 with further guidance provided in Defra's species-specific farm animal welfare codes.

For gamebirds, the Statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Gamebirds Reared for Sporting Purposes provides keepers with guidance on how to meet the welfare needs of their gamebirds as required by the Animal Welfare Act 2006. It recommends that barren cages for breeding pheasants and small barren cages for breeding partridges should not be used and that any system should be appropriately enriched.

#### ■ **Clean Air Zones: Greater Manchester**

**Navendu Mishra:**

**[100725]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what (a) steps the Government has taken and (b) resources have been committed to support jobs and businesses in Greater Manchester following the introduction of a clean air charge zone.

**Jo Churchill:**

We have provided a substantial sum of £132 million from the Clean Air Fund to Greater Manchester authorities to help businesses and individuals upgrade to compliant vehicles. This is on top of providing £36 million to enable the implementation of the Clean Air Zone.

The HGV support scheme has recently opened for applications. Schemes for other vehicle types affected are due to launch later in the year. It is for Greater Manchester authorities to administer and distribute the funds according to the agreed business plan.

#### ■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Consultants**

**Gareth Thomas:**

**[100406]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 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.

**Victoria Prentis:**

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

Details of ministerial meetings are published quarterly and can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

**Environment Act 2021****Dr Rupa Huq:****[103624]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of expanding the due diligence clauses in the Environment Act 2021 to cover (a) breaches of international agreements on human rights and (b) all forms of damaging deforestation.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government has introduced world-leading due diligence legislation through the Environment Act to tackle illegal deforestation in UK supply chains associated with agricultural commodities. This is in recognition that, globally, a significant proportion of deforestation is illegal - close to 90% in some of the world's most important forests. The due diligence legislation complements the UK Timber Regulations, which prohibit the placing of illegally harvested timber and timber products on the UK market and require those first placing such products on the UK market to exercise due diligence.

Basing our approach on compliance with the local laws of producer countries, of which the UK is one, recognises the primacy of national and sub-national Governments' decisions in determining the management of their natural resources. Through the UK's aid programmes we work in partnership with producer countries to reinforce and strengthen their efforts to protect their ecosystems, which is fundamental to enhancing forest protection in the long term. The legislation also contains a provision requiring the Secretary of State to conduct a review of the law's effectiveness every two years once it comes into force, and set out any steps they intend to take as a result, ensuring we will take action if we do not see progress.

These regulations are part of a wider package of measures being adopted by the UK in our leading role working with partners globally to halt and reverse forest loss.

On human rights, the UK Government has consistently supported the United Nations Guiding Principles (UNGPs) on business and human rights, which are widely regarded as the authoritative international framework to steer practical action by Governments and businesses worldwide on this important and pressing agenda. Implementation of the UNGPs will support access to justice and remedy for victims of business-related human rights abuses, wherever these occur, and encourage businesses to adopt due diligence approaches to respecting human rights.

The Government is clear that it expects all UK businesses to respect human rights throughout their operations, in line with the UNGPs. In response to the Guidelines, the UK was the first State to produce a National Action Plan. The UK is also the first country in the world to require businesses to report on the steps they have taken to tackle modern slavery in their operations and global supply chains, and we have

announced measures to strengthen the transparency in supply chains legislation in the Modern Slavery Act.

## ■ Food: Production

**Paul Girvan:**

[\[100654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the removal of the basic payments scheme and transfer to a Countryside Stewardship grant on food production in the UK.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Basic Payment Scheme is not about food production. Decoupling of payments from food production took place some 15 years ago. Our evidence suggests that the removal of Direct Payments in England would only have a very marginal effect, if any, on overall production.

Direct Payments appear to stimulate a small (0-5%) increase in production only in the sheep, cattle, and dairy sectors, although the payments do not add to the economic value of these sectors. The overall profitability of those sectors is unlikely to be affected by a decrease in production.

Phasing out Direct Payments will free up money so we can reward farmers for delivering public goods, including environmental outcomes. Farmers will also be able to access grants to help boost their productivity through the Farming Investment Fund.

We recently reviewed Countryside Stewardship revenue payment rates and the new rates will apply to all agreements from 1 January 2022. Compared to 2013 rates, there is an average increase of around 30% but the changes vary for different options.

## ■ Game: Birds

**Greg Smith:**

[\[100706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of Natural England's progress in reviewing the consents for the release of gamebirds (a) on Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation and (b) within a 500 metre buffer zone of those sites.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Natural England are in the process of reviewing the historical SSSI consents issued under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, that relate to Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation.

Natural England's SSSI consenting regime provided by section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 only extends to land which is designated under this provision; it does not extend to the adjacent 500-metre buffer zone around the site.

**Greg Smith:**

[\[100707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many reviews of Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation and the 500m buffer zone around those sites in respect of consents for gamebird releasing have (a) been completed, (b) are in progress and (c) are planned but have yet to be commenced.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Natural England's review of historical SSSI consents relating to Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation is ongoing.

Natural England's SSSI consenting regime provided by section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 only extends to land which is designated under this provision; it does not extend to the adjacent 500-metre buffer zone around the site.

**Greg Smith:**

[\[100708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what Natural England's timeframe is for completing its review of consents relating to Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation and the 500m buffer zone around those sites for the releasing of gamebirds.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Natural England's review of historical SSSI consents relating to gamebird releasing on sites designated as Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation is scheduled to be completed by the end of March 2022.

Natural England's SSSI consenting regime provided by section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 only extends to land which is designated under this provision; it does not extend to the adjacent 500-metre buffer zone around the site.

**Greg Smith:**

[\[100709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what additional resources (a) his Department has provided to Natural England or (b) have been allocated within that organisation to review the consents on Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation and the 500m buffer zone around those sites for the release of gamebirds.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra provided Natural England with additional funding in 2021 to support their review of historical SSSI consents relating to gamebird releasing on sites designated as Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation.

Natural England's SSSI consenting regime provided by section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 only extends to land which is designated under this provision; it does not extend to the adjacent 500-metre buffer zone around the site.

## ■ Greyhounds: Imports

**Ian Lavery:**

**[100551]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many greyhounds were imported (a) commercially and (b) non-respectively from the Republic of Ireland to the UK in each year between 2015 and 2021.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Animal and Plant Health Agency is unable to provide the data requested for greyhounds as the breed of dog is not recorded on the system for commercial and non-commercial import of dogs from the Republic of Ireland to the UK.

## ■ Hedgerows: Conservation

**Richard Fuller:**

**[100476]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to (a) ensure the preservation of existing hedgerows and (b) encourage the creation of new hedgerows.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Hedgerows are one of the most important ecological building blocks in our farmed landscape. They maintain the distinctive character of our countryside and provide crucial habitats and food for wildlife.

Legal protection for hedgerows in England and Wales is provided by the Hedgerows Regulations 1997.

These regulations prohibit the removal of most countryside hedgerows (or parts of them) without first seeking approval from the local planning authority. It determines whether a hedgerow is 'important' because of its wildlife, landscape, historical or archaeological value and should not be removed.

A local authority also has the power to impose enforceable planning conditions on a developer to protect hedges or trees assessed as being worthy of retention, which might otherwise be harmed by construction or the new land-use. Land managers in receipt of Basic Payment Scheme payments are also required to protect hedgerows on their land.

Agri-environment schemes such as Countryside Stewardship fund the management and planting of hedgerows to deliver recognised benefits for wildlife, landscape, and the historic environment. Hedgerow management is one of the most popular options within Countryside Stewardship.

Following our exit from the European Union the development of our new environmental land management schemes will continue to recognise the role and fund the management of hedgerows. The hedgerow standard, part of the new Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme, will pay farmers to plant more hedgerows, leave them uncut or raise the cutting height.



**■ Plastics: Packaging****Alberto Costa:**[\[102661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the use of single-use plastic packaging for fruit and vegetables in supermarkets.

**Jo Churchill:**

We are taking action to reduce single use plastic packaging for all products in supermarkets, with whom we meet regularly.

We are planning to introduce Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging, which will place responsibility on producers for the full cost of managing their packaging waste, powerfully incentivising them to cut waste wherever possible. The Government's Plastic Packaging Tax comes in from April and will see a charge of £200 per tonne on plastic packaging with less than 30% recycled content, helping to support the use of increasingly sustainable packaging.

The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) has published guidance on the sale of loose and prepacked foods and we continue to explore opportunities to provide the best environmental outcome, reduce household food waste and the provision of unnecessary single-use plastic packaging.

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE****■ Afghanistan: Humanitarian Aid****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[103625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans she has to convene a UN-backed pledging conference to raise funds for humanitarian aid in Afghanistan.

**James Cleverly:**

We understand that the UN will be organising an international pledging conference in the coming months, which we fully support.

The UK remains fully committed to supporting Afghanistan and we have already announced a doubling of our humanitarian aid and development assistance commitment to £286 million. We have now disbursed over £145 million which will support over 3.4 million people in Afghanistan and the region, providing emergency food, health, shelter, water and protection.

**■ Africa: Coronavirus****Kirsten Oswald:**[\[103568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to end Africa's dependence on imported covid-19 vaccines.

**Amanda Milling:**

Building large scale vaccine manufacturing capacity in Africa will require a coordinated, long term approach to enable factories to be built, skills to be developed, regulatory frameworks to be put in place, licenses to be issued and demand to be managed effectively. The UK Government is working closely with the African Union and other international partners to achieve this. We are supporting the new African led "Partnership for African Vaccine Manufacturing" (PAVM) initiative to achieve its ambition of ensuring that by 2040 60% of vaccines consumed in Africa are produced there. We are doing so, for example, by helping design the overall strategy of PAVM, by ensuring key international organisations such as "Gavi, the vaccine alliance" support PAVM's objectives, by supporting African based vaccines producers to develop their business case and attract investment, and identifying where UK regulatory expertise could put appropriate frameworks in place. We are also working with the UK private sector and UK academic networks to help maximise their contribution. The results are already being felt, with announcements of up to 1 billion doses of Covid vaccines produced in Africa by the end of 2022.

**■ Amazonia: Indigenous Peoples****Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[103531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to help (a) protect the survival of indigenous peoples in the Amazon Basin and (b) address risks arising from (i) commercial exploitation of and (ii) violent incursions into their territories.

**Vicky Ford:**

British diplomats regularly engage with indigenous leaders and civil society organisations in Brazil. We are funding a three-year initiative, the Regional Action to Reduce Environmental Crime in the Amazon which aims to prevent and reduce environmental crime across the Amazon region, including in Brazil. The British Embassy in Brazil is committed to engaging widely with the Brazilian Government, civil society organisations, and other representatives to discuss issues related to indigenous rights and will continue to monitor the situation.

During the C-19 pandemic, we also supported Indigenous Communities through our International Programme Fund. This included a £10,000 project focused on maximising fundraising efforts to provide emergency assistance to a range of indigenous communities based in the Amazon basin. The project raised over £500,000 for indigenous communities in the form of health assistance and community support including food, hygiene products and information campaigns.

UK programmes designed to help speed the recovery from the pandemic include a focus on vulnerable groups, including in the Amazon region and support improvements in areas such as solar energy, primary health and skills development. We have also supported local and indigenous people in the Amazon through our International Climate Finance programmes, with nearly £120 million invested across the Amazon since 2012.

**■ Brazil: Indigenous Peoples****Dame Diana Johnson:****[103530]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations her Department has made to the Brazilian Government on (a) the safety of isolated indigenous tribes and the forests they inhabit in the Amazonian region, (b) renewing land protection orders for and subsequently completing the demarcation of (i) Ituna Itatá Indigenous Territory, (ii) Pará state, (iii) Piripkura Indigenous Territory, (iv) Mato Grosso state, (v) Pirititi Indigenous Territory, (vi) Roraima state, (vii) Jacareúba Katawixi Indigenous Territory and (viii) Amazonas state and (c) ensuring the eviction of illegal occupants from those areas.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK regularly engages with indigenous leaders and civil society organisations on these issues. Senior HMG officials discussed the indigenous lands situation with Brazilian authorities most recently in December 2021. We have hosted conversations with indigenous leaders from Amazonas and Pará at our Embassy in Brasília, and are in regular contact with the Brazilian National Foundation for Indigenous People (FUNAI), which is responsible for promoting indigenous people's rights and territorial protection in Brazil, including for uncontacted indigenous people to ensure that our own and others' engagement is coordinated. The UK is committed to defending and promoting the human rights of all, and we will continue to monitor developments around indigenous land rights in Brazil.

**Dame Diana Johnson:****[103532]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what funding has been allocated to indigenous peoples in Brazil through the UK's International Climate Finance Programmes, and for what purposes.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK supports local and indigenous people in the Amazon through our International Climate Finance Programmes, with nearly £120 million invested across the Amazon since 2012. One of these programmes is 'Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation for Early Movers' (REM) that operates in two Brazilian states. REM includes a project working with indigenous communities to develop sustainable income sources, safeguard their rights and strengthen food security; nearly 20,000 families have benefitted so far.

In June 2021, a four year, £7.4 million extension to the Rural Sustentável Programme was announced. This project will benefit Pará, Rondônia and Amazonas States and focus on strengthening sustainable value chains, supporting nature-based solutions to reduce deforestation and raise awareness of the importance of preserving the forests. It will cover 15 municipalities and ensure participation of indigenous communities, including in Altamira and São Feliz do Xingú, in Pará State.

In addition, the Partnerships for Forests (P4) programme provides grants and technical assistance to achieve zero-deforestation commodity supply chains through

the development of forest partnerships. The programme supports roughly 1,971 indigenous people by financing three projects. The focus is on strengthening livelihoods through sustainable forestry management practices.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[103533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government plans to take steps in the event that the Brazilian Government is found in breach of its responsibilities under international and domestic law to protect the lives and livelihoods of indigenous peoples, including isolated indigenous groups in remote areas who do not have regular contact with society, living within its borders.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK Embassy in Brasilia regularly engages with indigenous leaders and organisations in Brazil on matters relating to indigenous rights as well as with FUNAI, the Brazilian Government organisation promoting indigenous people's rights and territorial protection. In August 2021, the UK Deputy Ambassador met with indigenous leaders from Amazonas and Pará to discuss the experiences of indigenous communities in these regions and the impact of Covid19 on Indigenous peoples in Brazil. In December 2021, the Ambassador met with representatives from FUNAI as part of a roundtable discussion on Human Rights in Brazil and discussed the organisation's ongoing engagement with indigenous communities, including around land protection and health. We will continue this engagement with the Brazilian Government and raise any concerns that emerge.

## ■ Brazil: Rainforests

**Chris Grayling:**

[\[101649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with the Brazilian government on deforestation in the Amazon.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK regularly engages with the Brazilian Government on deforestation in the Amazon. In the run up to, and during COP26, COP President Alok Sharma met with Brazil's Environment Minister Joaquim Leite regularly, and The Minister for the Pacific and the Environment met with many Brazilian State Governors who are essential partners in meeting deforestation targets and climate change commitments. Our Ambassador to Brazil, Peter Wilson, also met with the Minister for the Environment, Joaquim Leite, on two occasions in December as well as with Senate Speaker Pacheco. The UK will continue to work with the Federal Government, state level leadership, the private sector and civil society to help tackle deforestation and protect the rainforest.

While we are concerned by the rising rates of deforestation in the Amazon, we were pleased to welcome Brazil's positive commitments at COP26. Brazil signed the Forest and Land Use pledge and committed to eliminating illegal deforestation by 2028, and to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030. The UK will

support this and other climate commitments by doubling our International Climate Finance to £11.6 billion over the next five years - we will be investing at least £3 billion of this in solutions that protect and restore nature. The introduction of world-leading due diligence legislation through the Environment Bill will also tackle illegal deforestation in UK supply chains.

## ■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus

**Kirsten Oswald:**

[\[103569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress her Department has made in promoting joint ventures between covid-19 vaccine manufacturers in the UK and local companies in low and middle-income countries.

**Amanda Milling:**

The UK backs the Oxford-AstraZeneca model of voluntary licensing to expand the production of affordable vaccines. With UK Government support, a global licencing deal helped transfer AZ's technology to other manufacturers and establish 20 supply chains across the world, including the Serum Institute of India. Around 2.5 billion Oxford-AstraZeneca doses have been delivered at cost to more than 170 countries. Almost two-thirds of these have gone to low and lower-middle-income countries, including more than 30 million doses donated by the UK through COVAX or bilaterally.

The UK has provided technical support to develop business cases for Biovac to manufacture vaccines in South Africa, Institut Pasteur in Senegal and to the Moroccan government. This technical support helped catalyse investment that will see COVID-19 vaccines produced on the African continent in 2022. We are also engaging with the new Partnership for African Vaccine Manufacturing to support development of its roadmap for African vaccine manufacturing.

## ■ Myanmar: Politics and Government

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[100690\]](#)

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

**Amanda Milling:**

The UK condemns the coup in Myanmar. We are deeply concerned by the military's actions, the mass displacement of people and the significant, and growing, humanitarian need. The UK is monitoring the recent increase in violence in North West and South East Myanmar closely. 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 UNSC 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.

As the one-year anniversary of the military coup in Myanmar approaches, we will continue working with partners to call for an end to violence, unhindered humanitarian access, and the importance of respect for human rights and the protection of civilians. The UK also continues to support ASEAN's leadership on the crisis and calls for the full implementation of the Five Point Consensus, and support for the work of the ASEAN Special Envoy.

### ■ **Nicaragua: Sanctions**

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[\[101642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, (a) what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the Government's existing sanctions on Nicaragua; and whether more sanctions are under consideration by her Department.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK's sanctions measures against Nicaraguan officials are part of a wider set of UK actions aimed at promoting democracy and respect for human rights in Nicaragua. Most recently, the UK announced a further eight designations in November 2021 following the sham elections. We continue to work with partners in the region and our allies to press the Nicaraguan Government to end the repression in the country. We will keep the situation under close review.

### ■ **Nicaragua: USA**

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[\[101641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her US counterpart on sanctions the placed by the US on Nicaragua.

**Vicky Ford:**

UK officials have been in close contact with US and Canadian counterparts over sanctions measures imposed by all three countries in recent months. In parallel with the US and Canada, the UK imposed sanctions on a further eight Nicaraguan officials in November following the detention of key opposition figures and a crackdown on fundamental rights and freedoms during Nicaragua's sham elections. The UK will continue to promote democracy in Nicaragua with countries in the region, with our allies and at relevant multilateral bodies.

**■ Overseas Aid: Environment Protection****Chris Grayling:**[\[101650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of her international development budget is allocated to environmental restoration projects as of 11 January 2022.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK has committed to invest at least £3 billion in climate change solutions that protect and restore nature and biodiversity between 2021-22 and 2025-26. FCDO systems to categorise Official Development Assistance do not include a specific category for environmental restoration, and we do not hold information centrally on such spending.

**■ Overseas Aid: HIV Infection****Steve Brine:**[\[100529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of her Department's programmes to reduce the global incidence of HIV and AIDS; and what plans she has for the future of those programmes.

**Amanda Milling:**

The UK remains committed to addressing HIV and AIDS through our overseas development programming. This currently includes our funding of £1.4 billion to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, and funding for UNAIDS and the Robert Carr Fund. Future funding, beyond our current commitments, will be determined as part of departmental business planning following on from the departmental allocations announced in last year's Spending Review. It will also be guided by the approaches set out in the Health Systems Strengthening Position Paper and the Ending Preventable Deaths of Mothers, Babies and Children Approach Paper published on the 14th December 2021.

**■ Overseas Investment: Slavery****Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[100477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to reports of HSBC allegedly facilitating investment in Xinjiang Tianye Ltd, what plans she has to create a modern slavery risk register to prevent UK financial services investing in companies overseas which are complicit in atrocity crimes.

**Amanda Milling:**

On 24 March 2021, the Government announced a review of the 2014 Modern Slavery Strategy.

In the meantime, to further enhance transparency, the Government launched an online GOV.UK registry for modern slavery statements. This service enables investors, consumers, Non-Governmental Organisations and others to scrutinise the



effectiveness of the actions being taken and monitor progress across sectors over time.

## ■ Sanctions

**Stephen Doughty:** [\[102647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many individual recommendations for Magnitsky style sanctions have been received by her Department or other Government departments in each of the last 12 months.

**Stephen Doughty:** [\[102648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many individual recommendations for Magnitsky-style sanctions have been received by (a) her Department and (b) other Government departments in each of the last 12 months.

**Amanda Milling:**

The Government has received a number of recommendations for Magnitsky sanctions from NGOs, parliamentarians and other organisations, for which we are grateful. We keep all evidence and potential designations under close review. We will consider targets, guided by the objectives of the sanctions regime and the evidence.

## ■ South Sudan: Humanitarian Aid

**Ruth Jones:** [\[102774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 January 2022 to Question 94525 on South Sudan: Humanitarian Situation, what representations she has made to the African Union on what steps the international community can take to support the humanitarian effort in South Sudan.

**Vicky Ford:**

HMG works closely with the African Union (AU) on a wide range of issues, including climate, health, free trade and conflict prevention. As part of our efforts to address the conflict and interlinked humanitarian crisis in South Sudan we engage frequently with the AU. However, AU activity in South Sudan is mainly focused on peace and security matters, rather than humanitarian delivery. As such, our engagement is primarily about collective international efforts to encourage implementation of the 2018 Peace Agreement. This remains the best means to address conflict and some of the underlying issues behind the humanitarian crisis, as well as improving the security and access issues that hamper humanitarian delivery in South Sudan.

## ■ Southern Africa: Coronavirus

**Ruth Jones:** [\[100691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with the Commonwealth Secretariat on its potential role in increasing the covid-19 vaccination rate in sub-Saharan Southern Africa.

**Amanda Milling:**

At the Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting (CFAMM) on 16 September 2021, chaired by the Foreign Secretary, member states agreed to continue to work collaboratively with each other and with the Commonwealth Secretariat to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, including supporting timely, equitable and affordable access to COVID 19 vaccines and related health products and technologies.

The Government remains committed to ensuring that people in the poorest countries receive vaccines. We have contributed £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) Facility, which is ensuring equitable access for 92 low and middle-income countries, 46 of which are in Africa. As of 6 January 2022, COVAX has delivered more than 335 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to 44 African COVAX AMC countries. In addition to our financial support to COVAX, the UK has donated 7.9 million surplus doses to 14 African countries.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Autism: Mental Health Services****Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[102743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that autistic people with mental health needs can access appropriate services in the community, from low level support to crisis provision.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We are investing £31 million in 2021/22 to support discharge and improve support in the community for autistic adults, children and for people with a learning disability. We are providing £3.5 million for local systems to identify children and young people on autism diagnosis waiting lists who might be at risk of crisis. We are also proposing to create new duties on commissioners to ensure there are adequate community-based services for autistic people and people with a learning disability.

**■ Care Homes: Cumbria****Tim Farron:**[\[101687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding from the National Insurance increase will be allocated to care home provision in Cumbria.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We are investing an additional £5.4 billion over three years, funded from revenues generated by the Health and Social Care Levy. Specific allocations of this funding at local authority level, including in Cumbria, have not yet been decided.

## ■ Care Homes: Visits

**Dan Carden:**

[\[905095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure (a) residents in care homes and (b) patients in hospitals are allowed safe and regular visits from family members.

**Edward Argar:**

We expect care homes to facilitate visits wherever possible. Our guidance says that each resident should be allowed three nominated visitors in addition to an essential care giver. Visitors to care homes should take a test before each visit and be asked to follow the infection control procedures set out in Government guidance. In hospitals, visiting arrangements are currently at the discretion of local trusts. Visiting should be welcomed in a careful, COVID-secure way.

## ■ Care Workers: Recruitment

**Karin Smyth:**

[\[102666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to recruit and retain social care staff.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The national recruitment campaign for adult social care launched on 3 November and will run until March 2022. Free rapid induction training and free and fast track Disclosure and Barring Service and barred list checks are also available to support fast onboarding of staff.

We have announced a total of £462.5 million in Workforce Recruitment and Retention Funds to support local authorities working with providers to further boost staffing and support existing care work through the winter.

On 24 December 2021, we announced social care workers, care assistants and home care workers will become eligible for the Health and Care visa for a 12 month period. These roles will also be added to the shortage occupations list.

## ■ Carers

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[100716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to (a) bring forward legislative proposals to make caring by people under the age of 16 illegal and (b) ensure that in future that care is undertaken by a paid adult.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We have no plans to bring forward legislative proposals to make caring by people under the age of 16 years old illegal. However, the Government believes that young people should be protected from inappropriate and excessive caring responsibilities. Adult and children's services should take a whole family approach to the identification and support of young carers.

Changes to section 17 of The Children Act 1989 introduced via the Children and Families Act 2014, extended the right to a assessment for all young carers. Local authorities must carry out an assessment upon request or on the appearance of need. Such an assessment must consider whether it is appropriate or excessive for the young carer to provide care for the person in question, considering the young carer's needs and wishes.

In addition, local authorities have a duty under the Care Act 2014 to produce a care and support plan and offer a personal budget following a needs assessment to ensure that the person being cared for and their carer's needs are adequately met. Personal budgets can be used to provide alternative care arrangements should the person being cared for wish to do so.

### ■ Carers: Gender

**Karin Smyth:** [\[102669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds regarding the sex of unpaid carers.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The Department does not hold information about the sex of unpaid carers.

### ■ Cataracts: Surgery

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[101694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many more cataract operations will be performed as a result of the additional £2 billion being allocated to the NHS.

**Edward Argar:**

This information is not held centrally, as this funding will not be distributed through set allocations.

### ■ Children: Protection

**Bob Blackman:** [\[100500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education and the Secretary of State for the Home Department about the impact of Health and Care Bill proposals on multi-agency safeguarding arrangements between health, the police and local authorities.

**Maggie Throup:**

Ministers from the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Education and the Home Office met in May 2021 to discuss the implications of the Bill for child safeguarding. Officials are considering and mitigating any impacts of the Bill for multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements through regular discussions and will continue to do so throughout the passage of the Bill.

**Bob Blackman:**

[\[100501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the accountable officer for health in multi-agency safeguarding partnerships has the (a) seniority and (b) health expertise required to commit the Integrated Care Board to decisions on policy, resourcing and practice matters following the transfer of statutory responsibility for child safeguarding from Clinical Commissioning Groups to Integrated Care Boards under the proposals in the Health and Care Bill.

**Maggie Throup:**

The statutory guidance 'Working together to safeguard children' designates accountable officers or chief nurses of clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and their counterparts in local authorities and police forces as representatives of the three safeguarding partners in an area. This provides an equal and joint responsibility for local child safeguarding arrangements. All existing child safeguarding responsibilities for CCGs will transfer to the respective integrated care board. The guidance sets out clear expectations on appropriate delegation and this will continue to apply to safeguarding partners for health.

**Bob Blackman:**

[\[100503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of Health and Care Bill proposals to amalgamate Clinical Commissioning Groups into Integrated Care Boards on the geographical boundaries of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

**Maggie Throup:**

Many local child safeguarding partnerships already work across the different geographical footprints of local authorities, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and police forces. 'Working together to safeguard children' sets out the expectations for how partnerships should work across geographical boundaries, including on appropriate delegation where a senior leader is responsible for more than one partnership. All existing child safeguarding responsibilities for CCGs will transfer to the respective integrated care board, which must continue to have regard to the duties on safeguarding partners in 'Working together to safeguard children'.

## ■ Chronic Illnesses: Health Services

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[103655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve NHS treatment and support for people with (a) ME, (b) chronic fatigue syndrome and (c) other chronic long-term pain conditions.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[103656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines, published in April 2021, on treating and caring for people with ME, are being implemented across the NHS effectively.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The Government is funding research into myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS) through the National Institute for Health Research and the Medical Research Council. Current research projects include DecodeME, looking into the causes of the condition. In November 2021, we met with a group of research experts on ME/CFS and continue to work with stakeholders to consider how best to support continued research. NHS England and NHS Improvement are also collaborating with stakeholders, including Versus Arthritis, to coordinate support for people with chronic long-term pain conditions. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published its guideline on chronic pain in April 2021, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng193>

NICE published its guideline on Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome ME/CFS in October 2021, which is available at the following link:

<http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng206>

Whilst guidelines are not mandatory, clinicians and commissioners are expected to take them fully into account in designing services that meet the needs of their local population and to work towards their implementation over time.

**■ Clandeboyne Agencies****Angela Rayner:****[103562]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many of the surgical gowns procured from Clandeboyne Agencies Ltd have been (a) used by the NHS during the covid-19 outbreak and (b) re-sold; at what average price each of those gowns was re-sold; what total amount has been recouped for the public purse from those re-sales; and how many of those gowns remain in storage.

**Edward Argar:**

So far, 3,161,950 million gowns supplied by Clandeboyne Agencies Ltd have been provided to the National Health Service. The remaining stock of 22 million items is stored in our network.

We are not aware of any being resold or being put up for resale.

**■ Coronavirus: Disease Control****Rachael Maskell:****[100597]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle covid-19 infection levels.

**Maggie Throup:**

We are reducing the levels of infection through pharmaceutical interventions such as vaccines, supporting the National Health Service and social care to prevent transmission, identifying and isolating positive cases and providing advice to the public on how to protect themselves and others. On 8 December 2021, the

Government introduced further measures including legally mandating face coverings and introducing mandatory vaccine-only COVID-19 status certification in certain settings.

#### ■ **Coronavirus: East Yorkshire**

**Sir Greg Knight:** [\[102556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of lateral flow tests in East Yorkshire constituency.

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[102562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the availability of lateral flow covid-19 tests in County Durham.

**Dr Kieran Mullan:** [\[102796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the supply of lateral flow and PCR covid-19 tests.

**Maggie Throup:**

*[Holding answer 17 January 2022]:* In December 2021, we delivered approximately 280 million lateral flow device (LFD) tests and we have since procured new stocks and increased delivery capacity. We expect to deliver 90 million LFD tests a week across the United Kingdom, including East Yorkshire and County Durham, including seven million a day through GOV.UK. In England, this includes approximately 12 million tests a week through pharmacies.

For polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing, we increased capacity before Christmas and developed a network which processed over four million tests by 10 January 2022. We expect that there is currently sufficient capacity to process PCR tests.

#### ■ **Coronavirus: Molnupiravir**

**Catherine West:** [\[100629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the NHS plans to offer molnupiravir to covid-19 patients who are not taking part in clinical trials.

**Maggie Throup:**

From 16 December 2021, molnupiravir was made available to a small group of patients as a second line treatment to neutralising monoclonal antibodies through COVID Medicines Delivery Units (CMDUs). In England, 1.3 million of the highest risk patients are eligible for treatments including molnupiravir through CMDUs. This includes patients at highest risk of hospitalisation and deterioration following COVID-19 infection. Should they receive a positive polymerase chain reaction test, they will be assessed by clinicians and offered antiviral or antibody treatments from a CMDU, if eligible.



The PANORAMIC national study has been established to produce conclusive data on those who would benefit from antiviral treatments for COVID-19. We will use this data to consider how to make antivirals available more widely in the United Kingdom.

#### ■ **Coronavirus: Paxlovid**

**Catherine West:** [\[100630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the NHS plans to make Paxlovid available for the treatment of covid-19; and under what eligibility criteria.

**Maggie Throup:**

We currently plan to deploy COVID-19 novel antivirals, including PF-07321332+ritonavir, co-packaged under the brand name Paxlovid, through the PANORAMIC national study. This will produce conclusive data on those would benefit most from antiviral treatments for COVID-19. We will provide an update in due course, including on whether any deployment outside the national study may take place.

#### ■ **Coronavirus: Protective Clothing**

**Angela Rayner:** [\[98321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2021 to Question 75897, which of the products supplied by Liaoning Zhonggiao Overseas Exchange Co Ltd were repurposed for use outside health and care settings; what the total value was of those products; and what value was recouped through resale.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 10 January 2022]:* Liaoning Zhonggiao Overseas Exchange Co Ltd were contracted to provide visors and goggles. It is likely that some goggles will be repurposed for use outside health and care settings. These products are currently being reviewed before re-distribution therefore the information requested on the total value and the amount recouped is not yet available.

#### ■ **Coronavirus: Schools**

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[100518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2022 to Question 94344 on Schools: Coronavirus, how many applications for the tender were received; whether the tender specified a date by which preliminary results must be provided to Ministers and what that date was; and whether any applications were rejected despite offering an earlier date for either (a) preliminary results or (b) full results.

**Maggie Throup:**

Two elements of the study were subject to a tendering process. The tender for upper-room ultraviolet germicidal irradiation received three applications and the tender for air quality power management received six applications.

The tenders did not specify a required date by which preliminary or full results must be provided and no applications were rejected on the basis of reporting timelines.

**Bridget Phillipson:**

[\[100519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2022 to Question 94344 on Schools: Coronavirus, on what date discussions were first held between his Department and the the Department for Education on the trial's (a) design, (b) funding and (c) timeline.

**Maggie Throup:**

Officials from the Department for Health and Social Care and the Department for Education first held discussions on 6 November 2020.

## ■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[100678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how his Department plans to collect accurate data on covid-19 cases following 11 January 2021 when confirmatory PCR tests for positive lateral flow tests will temporarily be suspended.

**Maggie Throup:**

Data will be reported based on lateral flow device (LFD) test results and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test results from those still required to do so and those who will choose to take a PCR test. Contact tracing will be initiated based on LFD and PCR test results.

We continue to encourage people to report their LFD results through the usual channels. Negative test results enable us to understand the prevalence of COVID-19, while positive test results allow us to provide the correct advice to individuals affected and their close contacts to prevent onward transmission.

## ■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[100506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to roll out a fourth covid-19 vaccine dose to certain age groups.

**Maggie Throup:**

On 7 January 2022, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised that the priority for the COVID-19 booster programme remains to increase coverage of the first booster dose across the adult population, particularly in older adults and those in clinical risk groups. A second booster dose was not advised at this time as there is evidence of continued high vaccine effectiveness against hospitalisation due to the Omicron variant following a first booster dose.

The JCVI continues to consider the latest available data and will review the booster programme, particularly in relation to the timing and value of any second booster doses for the most vulnerable.

**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[100508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the uptake of the covid-19 booster in (a) Greater London and (b) the London Borough of Barnet.

**Maggie Throup:**

The latest data published the UK Health Safety Agency on 11 January 2022 shows that 54.8% of eligible adults in London and 58.4% of eligible adults in Barnet are vaccinated with a booster or third dose. Nearly two million doses were administered in London in December. In total, 3,818,256 people in London have now received a booster vaccination.

**Jim Shannon:**[\[100549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential need for a fourth covid-19 vaccine dose.

**Maggie Throup:**

On 7 January 2022, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised that the priority for the COVID-19 booster programme remains to increase coverage of the first booster dose across the adult population, particularly in older adults and those in clinical risk groups. A second booster dose was not advised at this time, as there is evidence of continued high vaccine effectiveness against hospitalisation due to the Omicron variant following a first booster dose. The JCVI continues to consider the latest available data and its review of the booster programme, particularly in relation to the timing and value of any second booster doses for the most vulnerable.

**Catherine West:**[\[100633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to allow UK residents who received the Sinopharm covid-19 vaccine overseas to register that vaccination in order to receive an NHS Covid pass.

**Maggie Throup:**

We are reviewing the expansion of the service to record doses received overseas to include other vaccines, such as Sinopharm.

**Mike Amesbury:**[\[100681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of offering the covid-19 vaccination to primary school-aged children.

**Maggie Throup:**

On 22 December 2021, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advised that children aged five to 11 years old in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed, should be offered two 10 microgram doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, with an interval of eight weeks between the first and second doses. Further advice on the potential merits of

COVID-19 vaccination for other five to 11 year olds will be issued in due course, following consideration of additional data.

**Carolyn Harris:**

[\[101793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to submit the Sinopharm vaccine to the MHRA and JCVI for consideration as an alternative to currently available vaccines, for those who are unable to receive their first dose of covid-19 vaccine for medical reasons.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Department does not submit treatments or medicines to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) or the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation for authorisation. Vaccine developers must submit the relevant clinical trial data and safety information to the regulator for consideration. 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 this medicine's safety and efficacy before any authorisation.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[102684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with Government health advisers on the need for a second covid-19 booster jab.

**Maggie Throup:**

*[Holding answer 17 January 2022]:* At the time of the launch of the booster vaccination programme in September 2021, it was not known whether recurrent booster doses would be required in the long term. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation is continuing to review the booster vaccination programme and value of any second booster doses for the most vulnerable.

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[102783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will introduce a mechanism for GPs to update the NIMS database where (a) patient vaccine records have been missed or (b) they have been vaccinated overseas.

**Maggie Throup:**

*[Holding answer 17 January 2022]:* The Vaccine Data Resolution Service can correct vaccine records for individuals with missing first and/or second doses. Currently, there are no plans to allow general practitioners (GPs) to perform this function. The service for United Kingdom residents vaccinated abroad is trialling the expansion of wider health and care settings, including GPs, making submissions to the national team who process all recorded overseas vaccinations. This would be offered and available to those health settings who opted to utilise the service but would not be mandatory.

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[102788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to provide a way of displaying covid-19 vaccination status for people without smartphones.

**Maggie Throup:**

*[Holding answer 17 January 2022]:* Those without access to a computer or smartphone can contact 119 to request a Domestic or Travel NHS COVID Pass letter. A carer or family member can also request a letter on their behalf online at NHS.UK.

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[102789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people with severe allergies who are eligible for a covid-19 vaccine exemption pass.

**Maggie Throup:**

*[Holding answer 17 January 2022]:* Severe allergies are a potential basis for exemption from vaccination and testing. We estimate that 90,000 people in England are eligible for an exemption, excluding pregnant women. However, information on the number of people in this cohort with severe allergies who would be eligible for a medical exemptions NHS COVID Pass is not held.

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[99403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether vaccination records issued on the NHS Scotland app can be fully transferred to the NHS (England) app.

**Maggie Throup:**

The status certification service an individual accesses depends on where their general practitioner (GP) is registered. NHS Digital has established bi-directional live data flows between England and Scotland which update both the GP record and NHS COVID Pass status. Individuals who have received one or both of their primary course vaccines administered in Scotland can access the NHS COVID Pass, provided they are registered with a GP in England or have a National Health Service number. To use the NHS COVID Pass within the NHS App, an individual must be registered with a GP. However, any individual with an NHS number can access the NHS COVID Pass via NHS.UK.

## ■ Coronavirus: Wales

**Gerald Jones:**

[\[103616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussion he has had with companies in Wales on providing covid-19 lateral flow tests to meet the increase in demand.

**Maggie Throup:**

The Department has had no specific discussions on this issue.

## ■ Dental Services: Coronavirus

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[100611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the mandatory covid-19 vaccine programme on (a) dental services and (b) dental nurses.

**Edward Argar:**

The Department's impact assessment estimated that approximately 97,000 dentists and dental care professionals would be in scope of the COVID-19 vaccine requirements. Of these, 4% are estimated to remain unvaccinated at the end of the grace period and not medically exempt and would therefore no longer be deployable. The Government continues to encourage unvaccinated staff to make the positive choice to be vaccinated.

## ■ Health Services: Greater London

**Bambos Charalambous:**

[\[99035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional support his Department is providing to patients on waiting lists in North Central London CCG; and what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of using innovative medical technology to support the CCG in clearing its backlog of patients.

**Bambos Charalambous:**

[\[99036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional support is being provided for people in Enfield Southgate constituency who are on a waiting list for treatment at North Central London CCG; and what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of using innovative medical technology to support the CCG in clearing its backlog of patients.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 11 January 2022]:* We have made £2 billion available through the Elective Recovery Fund which assists local systems, including those in North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group, to tackle waiting lists. In addition, we have committed £8 billion between 2022 and 2025 to transform elective services and increase activity in England. A further £5.9 billion of capital funding was announced in the 2021 Spending Review to support elective recovery, diagnostics and technology.

Trusts in North Central London CCG are using all available resources to treat patients on waiting lists as quickly as possible, while prioritising those with the most urgent health needs. This includes providing surgery seven days a week; operating additional outpatient clinics; investing in new equipment for high-volume procedures; developing clinical networks and temporary specialist surgical hubs; and the use of independent sector beds and theatres.

In addition, Chase Farm Hospital are using artificial intelligence to improve efficiency. In North Central London CCG, a community audiology-led clinic is being supported

by tele-video-otology, to reduce unnecessary hospital visits and allow surgeons to focus on complex cases in their clinics. The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust is sharing its expertise in robotic process automation to improve on productivity and allowing staff to be returned to patient-centred activities.

## ■ Health Services: Private Sector

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[100435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to mandate private healthcare workers to work in NHS services in the response to the Omicron covid-19 variant.

**Edward Argar:**

We have no current plans to do so. New national arrangements between NHS England and 10 independent sector providers commenced on 10 January 2022 until 31 March 2022. Up to 3,000 staffed beds will be made available to the National Health Service to provide surge capacity in response to the Omicron variant. The arrangements will also enable NHS trusts to send a wider range of patients to the independent sector for treatment, including those requiring some forms of cancer surgery and other care not normally delivered by private providers under existing arrangements.

**Catherine West:**

[\[100628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the three month agreement between the NHS and private healthcare providers, as announced on 10 January 2022.

**Edward Argar:**

The new national arrangements with the independent sector will help the National Health Service to ensure all patients needing urgent care can be treated this winter, regardless of the impact of the Omicron variant. NHS England has estimated a minimum cost of between £75 million and £90 million per month whilst the 'surge arrangements' within the contract are not activated. This is equivalent to the value of elective activity delivered in January to March 2021. In the absence of surge activation, we do not expect there to be significant additional spending with the independent sector providers above normal Quarter 4 levels.

If surge arrangements are activated, NHS England has estimated the maximum cost to be £175 million per month. However, this is based on surge arrangements being activated nationally, which is considered unlikely.

## ■ Health Services: Waiting Lists

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[102693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his most recent estimate is of when the NHS backlog resulting from the impact of the covid-19 outbreak will be cleared.



**Edward Argar:**

No formal estimate has been made. We will publish a delivery plan for the recovery of elective services in due course.

**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[98358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of NHS staffing shortages on NHS waiting times; and what steps he is taking to ensure patients receive (a) timely and (b) quality care.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 10 January 2022]:* While no formal assessment has yet been made waiting times and staffing levels are kept under review. We are on schedule to deliver 50,000 more nurses by the end of this Parliament to deliver a sustainable long term workforce supply. With the National Health Service and Health Education England, we have established a programme to improve retention and support return to practice, invest in and diversify training and increase ethical and sustainable international recruitment. We have also made £2 billion made available in 2021/22 and a further £8 billion from 2022 to 2025 to increase activity, tackle backlogs in elective care and reduce waiting times for patients.

**Health: Females****Emma Hardy:**[\[905097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle health inequalities affecting women.

**Maria Caulfield:**

On 23 December 2021 we published “Our Vision for the Women’s Health Strategy for England”. This sets out an ambitious and positive new agenda to improve the health and wellbeing of women across England and reduce disparities. We will publish the full Women’s Health Strategy later this year.

In addition, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities was established on 1 October 2021 to tackle the causes of ill-health and reduce disparities, including those which affect women.

**Hospitals: Discharges****Stephen Morgan:**[\[82060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Carers UK report, Carers’ experiences of hospital discharge, published on 7 September 2021; and if he will make a statement.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We have considered Carers UK’s report, which highlights the need for good practice to be implemented consistently across the system. Since the publication of the report, we have worked with carers’ organisations to produce new hospital discharge

guidance, which is due to be published in spring 2022. This will set out best practice for supporting carers during hospital discharge processes.

Our current guidance advises that the status and views of carers should be accounted for when planning a patient's hospital discharge. This includes determining if carers are willing and able to provide care. All patients and where relevant, their carers, should be given information and advice when the patient is discharged, including who they can contact for further support.

## ■ Integrated Care Boards: Children

**Bob Blackman:**

[\[100502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he will take to assess the effectiveness of Integrated Care Boards in delivering the statutory child safeguarding responsibilities transferred to them under the Health and Care Bill's proposals.

**Maggie Throup:**

All existing child safeguarding responsibilities on clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) will transfer to the respective integrated care board, which must continue to have regard to the duties on safeguarding partners set out in the statutory guidance 'Working together to safeguard children'.

NHS England has a responsibility to safeguard all users of its services, including children. It assures this responsibility, including the safeguarding duties currently with CCGs, through the NHS Safeguarding Accountability and Assurance Framework. This is supported by the Safeguarding Commissioning Assurance Toolkit, its network of Regional Safeguarding Leads, and the designated and named professionals for safeguarding in every CCG, general practitioner practice and relevant health provider. This will continue to apply.

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**Mr John Baron:**

[\[100446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 20 October 2021, 17 November and 17 December 2021 regarding his constituent with reference JB34702.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 13 January 2022]:* We replied to the hon. Member on 13 January 2022.

## ■ Mental Health Bill

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[101659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Mental Health Bill will be published.

**Gillian Keegan:**

Legislation will be brought forward when parliamentary time allows.

■ **Mental Health Services**

**Laura Trott:**

[\[102787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional support he will provide to mental health support teams in response to increased pressures on CAMHS.

**Gillian Keegan:**

In March 2021, we announced an additional £79 million to expand children's mental health services in 2021/22. A portion of this funding will be used to accelerate the delivery of mental health support teams in schools and colleges to provide coverage of approximately 20 to 25% of pupils in England by 2022 and an estimated three million pupils or 35% by 2023. The funding will also accelerate the expansion of child and adolescent mental health services in the community, allowing an additional 22,500 children and young people to receive more specialist support.

■ **Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**

**Darren Jones:**

[\[98382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to reduce the amount of time that young people and children wait for mental health support from a referral to the beginning of treatment.

**Gillian Keegan:**

*[Holding answer 10 January 2022]:* We are investing an additional £2.3 billion a year to enable an extra two million people in England, including 345,000 children and young people, to access National Health Service-funded mental health support by 2023/24. We have made a further £500 million available in 2021/22, which includes £79 million to ensure that approximately 22,500 more children and young people can access community mental health services. A further 2,000 children and young people will be able to access eating disorder services and we are accelerating the coverage of mental health support teams in schools and colleges.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have consulted on a proposed waiting time standard for children and young people presenting to community-based mental health services, to start to receive care within four weeks from referral. The consultation closed on 1 September 2021 and NHS England and NHS Improvement expect to publish the response to the consultation in due course.

**Mr Toby Perkins:**

[\[98909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many CAMHS beds are available in each NHS commissioning area.

**Gillian Keegan:**

*[Holding answer 11 January 2022]:* The following table shows the number of children and young people's mental health inpatient beds commissioned by NHS England and NHS Improvement as at 7 January 2022.

COMMISSIONING AREA	NUMBER OF BEDS
North East and Yorkshire	153
North West	209
Midlands	297
East of England	164
South East	186
South West	60
London	255
Other	18

Source: NHS England and NHS Improvement

The availability of unoccupied beds changes on a daily basis and is dependent on the availability of staff, the acuity of other individuals in the unit and the acuity of the individual needing admission.

## ■ Mental Health Services: Staff

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[99031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of staffing in NHS mental health services; and what steps his Department is taking to expand the mental health workforce.

**Gillian Keegan:**

No such assessment has been made. The NHS Long Term Plan commits to the expansion of the National Health Service workforce, to achieve an additional 27,000 mental health posts by 2023/24. Health Education England (HEE) is leading a programme to develop and train the mental health workforce. HEE have commissioned approximately 6,000 training places in 2020/21, with a further 9,000 trainees in 2021/22. We have provided an additional £111 million in 2021/22 for the training and education of the NHS mental health workforce, based the workforce requirements in the NHS Long Term Plan.

In July 2021, the Department commissioned HEE to review long term strategic trends for the health and regulated social care workforce. This will ensure we have the right numbers of staff and the appropriate skills, values and behaviours.

## ■ NHS and Social Services: Coronavirus

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[93790]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will require health and care staff who are not vaccinated against covid-19 to wear FFP3 masks at work.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 5 January 2022]:* NHS England and NHS Improvement work with National Health Service trusts to ensure robust COVID-19 control measures and effective implementation of infection prevention and control (IPC) guidance. Measures including physical distancing, optimal hand hygiene, equipment and environment decontamination and the extended use of face masks by healthcare staff, patients and visitors, are continually reviewed.

Whether staff are vaccinated or unvaccinated, employers should always apply IPC guidance, Health and Safety Executive requirements, and 'How to work safely guidance' for adult social care to minimise the risk to vulnerable service users. We continue to encourage all health and care staff to make the positive choice to receive the vaccinations, to protect those they care for.

## ■ NHS: Staff

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[100610]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that staffing levels in the NHS do not become critical as a result of the mandatory covid-19 vaccine programme.

**Edward Argar:**

We continue to encourage all health workers to make the positive choice to take up the COVID-19 vaccine to help protect the people they care for, themselves and their colleagues. We have implemented a 12-week grace period, allowing time for workforce planning and for staff who are not yet vaccinated who may now wish to do so. We have set an enforcement date of 1 April 2022 to assist providers over the winter period and minimise workforce pressures. We are increasing opportunities to receive the vaccine through the booster programme such as walk-in and pop-up sites.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have written to all providers providing early guidance on vaccination as a condition of deployment to ensure smooth implementation and assist preparation and planning. Guidance has also been provided for managers on the use of one-to-one conversations with all unvaccinated National Health Service staff. We are also increasing engagement with targeted communities where uptake is lowest, including ethnic minority and faith networks to encourage healthcare workers to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Since the Government consulted on the policy in September, the latest data shows a net increase of over 75,000 NHS trust healthcare workers vaccinated with a first dose.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[102696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of calling former NHS staff back to work, including people who have left practice over three years ago.

**Edward Argar:**

Health Education England leads a national programme to encourage and support people who wish to return to practice in the National Health Service. The General Medical Council, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the Health and Care Professions Council and the General Pharmaceutical Council established emergency registers of former healthcare professionals to enable them to support the response to the pandemic.

At the end of 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement wrote to all individuals on the emergency registers on returning to practice and how temporary registrants could assist in NHS settings and support the vaccine deployment programme. In addition, NHS England and NHS Improvement have piloted an NHS Reserve model in eight areas, which is due to be implemented in all integrated care systems across England by early spring.

#### ■ **NHS: Uniforms**

**Robert Largin:**

[\[101856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government plans to introduce a nationally standardised uniform in the NHS in England.

**Edward Argar:**

At present, each trust decides their own uniform specification locally. However, NHS Supply Chain, with NHS England and NHS Improvement, issued a consultation paper in April 2021 on the introduction of a national uniform, with 82% of staff responding in favour. NHS Supply Chain and NHS England and NHS Improvement are exploring a national approach to standardising the purchasing and design of uniforms. Trials of uniform designs are ongoing at a range of acute and non-acute National Health Service trusts across the country.

#### ■ **Prescription Drugs: Addictions**

**Cat Smith:**

[\[100583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Public Health England review of dependence forming medicines, what plans he has to commission (a) a 24 hour helpline, (b) dedicated local withdrawal services, (c) an investigation into the harms caused by long-term prescribing of benzodiazepines and z drugs and (d) mandatory prescribing guidelines for dependence forming drugs such as benzodiazepines and z drugs, as a result of that review.

**Maggie Throup:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement are currently co-ordinating an assessment of the viability of a 24-hour helpline to support those dependent on prescription

medicines. Decisions to provide local withdrawal services should be made by clinical commissioning groups and integrated care systems with local authority public health partners, as they have responsibility for commissioning local services to meet the needs of their population.

There are no plans to undertake further investigation into the harms caused by long-term prescribing of benzodiazepines and z drugs as the risks associated with these drugs are well established in Public Health England's review. However, consideration will be given to any new emerging evidence. We have no plans to introduce mandatory prescribing guidelines. It is a contractual and professional obligation to follow the guidance set out by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), unless this does not meet a patient's clinical needs. NICE recently consulted on draft guidance on safe prescribing and withdrawal management of medicines associated with dependence or withdrawal symptoms. The consultation closed on 2 December 2021 and the guidance is due to be published in April 2022.

## ■ Prescriptions

**Daniel Kawczynski:**

[\[101686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the safety of prescribing medication by (a) telephone and (b) face-to-face consultation.

**Edward Argar:**

The Department has made no such assessment. NHS England and NHS Improvement have worked with professional and regulatory bodies, the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector and patient organisations to support the safe and effective use of remote consultations in general practice. The Department works with NHS England and NHS Improvement, NHSX and local commissioners to monitor and assess the extent to which general practice teams have the equipment and skills to provide remote consultations.

Clinicians use their discretion to invite patients for a face-to-face consultation where this is deemed necessary.

## ■ Protective Clothing: Coronavirus

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[103559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total value is of personal protective equipment procured from (a) Pestfix and (b) Ayanda during the covid-19 outbreak that has not been useable by the NHS; and what steps he is taking to recoup funds paid for that unusable equipment.

**Edward Argar:**

Pestfix supplied personal protective equipment (PPE) with a value of £169,320,000 which is not currently available for release to the National Health Service due to technical and quality issues. The Department is currently engaged in mediation with Pestfix.



Ayanda supplied PPE with a value of £145,701,240 which is not currently available for release to the NHS due to technical and quality issues. The Department is undertaking a further detailed technical analysis of the product and will consider any commercial options available following conclusion of that review.

Departmental contracts require that it undertakes mediation with its suppliers prior to the commencement of formal legal action, to establish if disputes can be resolved without recourse to litigation.

## ■ Schools: Coronavirus

**Bridget Phillipson:**

[\[100520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2022 to Question 94344 on Schools: Coronavirus, what assessment he made, before commencing that trial, of relevant evidence from research into the use of similar equipment for similar purposes (a) in the UK and (b) overseas.

**Maggie Throup:**

The trial was selected from an environmental innovations workshop in January 2021, where several technologies were presented by experts to an evaluation panel. The assessment was supported by advice from the Scientific Advisory Group on Emergencies' Environmental Modelling Group in their paper 'Potential application of air cleaning devices and personal decontamination to manage transmission of COVID-19' and the Royal Academy of Engineering.

**Bridget Phillipson:**

[\[100521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2022 to Question 94344 on Schools: Coronavirus, whether he plans to publish the full results of the trial as soon as possible.

**Maggie Throup:**

The results of the trial will be published in due course, following the end of the school year.

## ■ Social Services

**Lee Anderson:**

[\[905091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to provide a long-term solution to social care.

**Gillian Keegan:**

Last year, we announced an additional £5.4 billion over three years to begin a comprehensive social care reform programme.

This includes £3.6 billion to reform the social care charging system protecting everybody from unlimited and unfair costs and £1.7 billion to begin major improvements across the social care system.

In December we published a white paper that set out our 10-year vision for reforming adult social care and our priorities for that investment.

This includes at least £500 million investment to support the development and wellbeing of the social care workforce, a £300 million investment in increasing the range of supported housing and £150 million to improve technology and digital records.

## ■ Social Services: Dementia and Parkinson's Disease

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

[\[101645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that social care staff receive specific Parkinson's and dementia training.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We are investing £500 million over the next three years for training and development of social care staff. This will include a sector-wide Knowledge and Skills Framework, building on existing resources such as the Dementia Training Standards Framework. We will provide hundreds of thousands of training places and qualifications for the workforce, including those supporting individuals with Parkinson's and dementia.

**Sarah Green:**

[\[103711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the £500 million funding allocated to supporting and developing the social care workforce includes dedicated training on Parkinson's and Parkinson's-related dementia for staff involved directly in providing care.

**Gillian Keegan:**

Equipping the health and social care workforce with the skills they need is crucial to providing high quality of care for those living with dementia.

As announced in our recent white paper, People at the Heart of Care, Government will invest at least £500 million over the next three years in the training and development of the social care workforce. This will include co-producing a sector-wide Knowledge and Skills Framework, building on existing frameworks including the Dementia Training Standards Framework and providing hundreds of thousands of training places and qualifications for the workforce, including those working to support individuals with Parkinson's and dementia.

## ■ Social Services: Finance

**Karin Smyth:**

[\[102667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the funding gap in social care.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We have confirmed funding of £5.4 billion over 2022/23 to 2024/25 for adult social care reform. This includes over £3.6 billion to reform the social care charging system and enable all local authorities to move towards paying providers a fair rate for care

and over £1.7 billion to institute major improvements across the social care system in England.

In addition, the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2022/2023 proposes an additional £3.5 billion to councils, an increase in local authority funding for 2022/23 of over 4% in real terms. This will ensure councils across the country have the resources they need to deliver key services. As part of this settlement, local authorities will have access to over £1 billion of additional resource specifically for social care in 2022/23.

### ■ Social Services: Parkinson's Disease and Dementia

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[905099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure social care staff receive specific (a) Parkinson's and (b) dementia training.

**Gillian Keegan:**

It is crucial that the health and care workforce have the necessary skills provide high-quality care for those living with dementia and Parkinson's.

We announced in the White Paper, that the Government will co-produce a sector-wide Knowledge and Skills Framework building on existing frameworks including the Dementia Training Standards Framework.

Linked to this there will be a Learning and Development offer, providing training places, and qualifications for the workforce, including those supporting individuals with dementia and Parkinson's disease.

### ■ Social Services: Public Consultation

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

[\[100498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to consult the public as part of the Government's social care reform process.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We continue working with organisations in the social care sector, including members of the public with lived experience of care and support, to inform the implementation of the reforms. We will also launch a public consultation on the charging reform operational guidance in the spring.

### ■ Surgery

**Dr Kieran Mullan:**

[\[101861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress his Department has made on developing surgical hubs across England.

**Edward Argar:**

Following successful pilots in London, the National Health Service is launching surgical hubs across the country. There are currently 44 stand-alone hubs operating in England.

We are providing a further £1.5 billion for elective recovery and reconfiguration, which includes funding for developing surgical hubs. This is in addition to £500 million provided in September 2021. Surgical hubs will be developed in existing hospital settings and plan to provide 29 types of operations.

The Getting It Right First Time programme, in collaboration with NHS England and NHS Improvement, is providing guidance to systems and regions on how to use hubs effectively, to standardise pathways and adopt best surgical practice.

## ■ **Surgery: Waiting Lists**

**Mohammad Yasin:**

[\[101808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department will publish the Elective Recovery Plan.

**Edward Argar:**

The publication of the National Health Service elective recovery delivery plan has been delayed as a result of the emergence of the Omicron variant. The Department continues to ensure the NHS is in the strongest position to recover elective services and tackle the backlog. The delivery plan will be published in due course.

## ■ **Trodelvy**

**Siobhain McDonagh:**

[\[100416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will (a) provide an update on the discussions between NHS England and Gilead on an interim access arrangement for secondary breast cancer drug Trodelvy and (b) publish the timetable for the interim access arrangement to be agreed.

**Edward Argar:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) have agreed principles to allow potential interim access to medicines licensed through Project Orbis, where there is a gap between licensing and publication of NICE's guidance. NHS England and NHS Improvement are continuing discussions with Gilead, to urge the company to support interim access arrangements in line with the agreed principles. NICE expects to issue draft guidance on Trodelvy in spring 2022 with final guidance in June 2022.

## ■ **World Health Organization: Coronavirus**

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[101655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assistance the Government has provided to the WHO in connection with its inquiries into the origins of the covid-19 pandemic.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The United Kingdom supports a timely, transparent, evidence-based and expert-led study into the origins of COVID-19. In May 2020, we co-sponsored the World Health

Assembly's resolution which agreed an investigation. We supported calls from the joint report from phase one of the World Health Organization-China study for release of further data by China to inform subsequent analyses. We continue to engage internationally to support a robust phase two of the investigation.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Asylum: Females

**Owen Thompson:**

[99014]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of provisions in the Nationality and Borders Bill on women seeking asylum in the UK after fleeing sexual violence and trafficking.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Nationality and Borders Bill is the most significant overhaul of our asylum system in over two decades. It will bring in a new, comprehensive, fair but firm long-term plan, which seeks to address the challenge of illegal migration head on, and to take down the serious organised criminals exploiting people and profiting from human misery. Only by tackling illegal migration can we effectively help those in greatest need.

An Equality Impact Assessment was published on 16 September, and this includes consideration of possible impacts on women who have been subjected to sex-based violence and/or trafficked for a sexual purpose.

The Equality Impact Assessment can be found on the GOV.UK website at ; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nationality-and-borders-bill-equality-impact-assessment>.

### ■ Biometric Residence Permits: Afghanistan

**Dan Jarvis:**

[102639]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what urgent steps she is taking to issue Biometric Residence Permits to Afghan nationals in the UK with pending job offers.

**Kevin Foster:**

*[Holding answer 17 January 2022]:* Those who arrived in the UK were granted limited leave to enter with access to public funds and employment. Communications have been issued advising individuals of next steps to progress permanent residence in the UK. Amongst the information provided, those communications confirm individuals' rights to employment on their current leave. We have made arrangements to ensure prospective employers and landlords can contact the Home Office to confirm individuals' right to take employment and rented accommodation prior to them receiving a Biometric Residence Permit.

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 those here in the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy and those moving onto the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, in order to assist them to obtain Indefinite Leave to Remain status.

## ■ British Nationality

**Naz Shah:**

[\[102655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were deprived of their British citizenships in (a) 2019 and (b) 2020, under Section 40(2) of the British Nationality Act 1981.

**Kevin Foster:**

*[Holding answer 17 January 2022]:* Figures for numbers of conducive deprivation orders, which are made under Section 40(2) of the 1981 British Nationality Act, have been published as part of the HM Government Transparency Report: Disruptive and Investigatory Powers. Four reports have been published to date in 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2020 which provide the number of deprivation of citizenship orders made up until the end of 2018.

The Home Office also intends to publish the figures of those deprived under Section 40(2) of the 1981 British Nationality Act in 2019 and 2020 in due course.

## ■ Common Travel Area

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[102770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to write the Common Travel Area into domestic UK law.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Common Travel Area (CTA) is an administrative arrangement between the UK and Ireland, as well as the Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey.

It allows British and Irish citizens to travel freely between the UK and Ireland and reside in either jurisdiction. It also facilitates the enjoyment of associated rights and privileges including the right to work, to study and to access social security benefits and health services.

We have always been clear on the shared commitment to protect the rights of our citizens in each other's state and this is already underpinned by domestic legislation, which will be updated as necessary to ensure the agreed CTA rights and privileges are properly reflected.

## ■ Crimes against Humanity

**Owen Thompson:**

**[100621]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to prevent the UK from acting as a safe haven for people accused of crimes against humanity that do not hold British citizenship or residency.

**Kevin Foster:**

*[Holding answer 13 January 2022]:* The UK is committed to upholding international law and to ensuring the UK does not provide a safe haven for those involved in war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Immigration Rules provide for the mandatory refusal or cancellation of permission to enter or stay in the UK for those whose presence in the UK is not conducive to the public good, for example because of their conduct, character, associations or other reasons. A foreign national may also be excluded from the UK on the basis that it is conducive to the public good.

Whilst we have a proud history of providing protection to those who need it, we will deny the benefits of refugee status to those who have committed serious crimes, are a danger to the community, or who are a threat to national security. Those refused refugee status who cannot be removed because doing so would breach our obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights, may be granted shorter more restrictive leave, subject to regular review, until they can be removed at the earliest opportunity. They may also have conditions placed on residence, employment and study and be required to report until they can be removed.

The UK can also sanction individuals for human rights abuses using powers in the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018.

For those foreign nationals who have gained British citizenship, Section 40 of the British Nationality Act 1981 provides for the deprivation of that citizenship where it is conducive to the public good, and would not make an individual stateless. Deprivation of citizenship where it is conducive to the public good is taken where it is in the public interest on the grounds of involvement in terrorism, espionage, serious and organised crime, war crimes or unacceptable behaviour. Unacceptable behaviour could include activity such as inciting terrorist acts.

## ■ Demonstrations

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

**[100427]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that the democratic right to protest is maintained through the provisions of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The freedom to peacefully protest across the country is a fundamental right that this Government is proud to support. Most protest activity in this country does not require a police response and we expect that to continue. The public order measures in the



PCSC Bill are targeted at non-violent protests that cause serious disruption to the lives of others.

As with all existing powers to manage protests the police must not act incompatibly with the European Convention on Human Rights, namely articles 10 and 11 on the freedoms of expression and assembly, when making use of these measures.

## ■ Fire and Rescue Services: Finance

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[100604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support (a) North Yorkshire and (b) other fire authorities who have very low reserves.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[100606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the finances of the North Yorkshire fire and rescue service.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[100609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Police and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire on the financial situation of the fire authority in North Yorkshire.

**Damian Hinds:**

On 16 December the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2022/23. Under the proposals, North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) will have a core spending power of £33.4m in 2022/23, an increase of £1.3m (4.1%) compared to 2021/22. As at 31 March 2020, the PFCC held £5m in total usable reserves, equivalent to 16% of their 2020/21 core spending power.

My Department is in regular contact with fire and rescue authorities to ensure we remain informed of their financial circumstances and will continue to keep their funding needs under review.

## ■ Gender Based Violence

**Dr Kieran Mullan:** [\[100748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the progress of its Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Action we have taken since publishing our cross-Government Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy in June 2021 includes:

- appointing transport champions to help make public transport safer for women;
- awarded £30m to help make our streets safer through the 'Safer Streets Fund' and 'Safety of Women at Night' fund;

- launched a pilot of 'StreetSafe' to enable the public to anonymously report areas where they feel unsafe; and
- provided additional funding for specialist support services such as the Revenge Porn Helpline.

We are continuing to work with Departments across Government to drive progress in implementing the Strategy and are also working closely with Maggie Blyth who has been appointed as the National Policing Lead for VAWG to improve the policing response to these crimes.

In the coming months, we will also publish a complementary Strategy on tackling Domestic Abuse.

## ■ Human Trafficking

**Stuart C McDonald:**

[\[103567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of (a) clause 39, (b) part five and (c) other provisions in the Nationality and Borders Bill on the positive anti-trafficking duties on the UK under Articles four and six of the European Convention on Human Rights as set out in the ECtHR judgements of *Rantsev v Cyprus & Russia* [2010] and *V.C.L & A.N. v UK* [2021]; and if she will make a statement.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Nationality and Borders Bill is part of our New Plan for Immigration, delivering the most comprehensive reform of the asylum system in decades.

The Bill – and the wider plan – will also help us to tackle the heinous crime of modern slavery and ensure that vulnerable individuals are identified as early as possible so that we can ensure they have access to the right support.

The Bill is fully compliant with our international obligations, including the European Convention on Human Rights.

## ■ Knives: Crime

**James Daly:**

[\[100736\]](#)

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

**Kit Malthouse:**

Tackling knife crime is a priority and the Government is determined to crack down on the scourge of violence devastating our communities.

We are supporting the police every step of the way in this effort. We have given them more powers and resources to go after criminals and take knives and other dangerous weapons off our streets, including through the recruitment of 20,000 additional officers and increasing police funding.

The Government has made £130.5m available this year to tackle serious violence, including murder and knife crime. This includes: £35.5m for Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) which bring together local partners to deliver a range of early intervention and prevention programmes and tackle the drivers of violence in the 18 areas worst affected by serious violence; £30m to support the police to take targeted action in parts of England and Wales most affected by serious violence through the Grip programme, which uses data to identify violence hotspots and target operational activity in those areas; and £20m for new early intervention programmes that will help stop young people from being drawn into violence, including cognitive behavioural therapy, family therapy, as well as specialist support in crisis moments such as when a person is admitted to A&E with a knife injury.

We have also invested £200m over 10 years for the Youth Endowment Fund, which is funding projects to support children and young people at risk of violence and exploitation and to steer them away from crime.

We acknowledge there is more to do which is why we are bringing forward the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill so the law-abiding majority can be confident they are safe. The Bill includes: Serious Violence Reduction Orders, which will give the police the power to stop and search adults already convicted of knife or offensive weapons offences; the Serious Violence Duty, which will require authorities and bodies delivering public services to collaborate to prevent and reduce serious violence in their areas; and offensive weapons homicide reviews which will be introduced to improve the national and local understanding of causes, patterns, victims and perpetrators of violence and homicide.

We have also prohibited certain particularly dangerous types of knife through the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 and have introduced the offence of possessing specified offensive weapons in private. The Act also introduced Knife Crime Prevention Orders which will provide the police with a vital means to steer those most at risk away from serious violence. On 5 July 2021 we introduced a pilot for KCPOs across the Metropolitan Police area.

**Dr Kieran Mullan:**

**[100744]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce knife crime.

**Kit Malthouse:**

Tackling knife crime is a priority and the Government is determined to crack down on the scourge of violence devastating our communities.

We are supporting the police every step of the way in this effort. We have given them more powers and resources to go after criminals and take knives and other dangerous weapons off our streets, including through the recruitment of 20,000 additional officers and increasing police funding.

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We have also prohibited certain particularly dangerous types of knife through the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 and have introduced the offence of possessing specified offensive weapons in private. The Act also introduced Knife Crime Prevention Orders which will provide the police with a vital means to steer those most at risk away from serious violence. On 5 July 2021 we introduced a pilot for KCPOs across the Metropolitan Police area.

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**Debbie Abrahams:**

**[102635]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond substantively to correspondence originally sent by the hon. Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth on 28 January 2021, reference DA39000 and MPAM/0131372/21, which has since been followed up with her Department on 4 March 2021, 22 April 2021, 17 June 2021, 29 July 2021, 1 September 2021, 21 October 2021 and 9 December 2021.

**Tom Pursglove:**

I apologise for the unacceptable delay. The Home Office responded to the correspondence on 13 January 2022.

## ■ National Age Assessment Board: Membership

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[99335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the full membership of the Scientific Advisory Board for age assessments of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children will be made public.

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[99336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the recruitment process will be for membership of the Scientific Advisory board for age assessments.

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[99337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the membership of the proposed National Age Assessment Board will be made public.

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[99338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the recruitment process will be for members of the proposed National Age Assessment Board.

**Kevin Foster:**

The National Age Assessment Board will predominantly consist of qualified social workers who, through being dedicated to the task of conducting age assessments and the sharing of expertise, will seek to achieve a consistent and accurate approach to the task of age assessment.

The board will have responsibility for conducting age assessments on age disputed persons, upon referral from a local authority, although local authorities will still retain the right to conduct age assessments themselves if they prefer to do so.

Recruitment plans for the Board are still in development and will be in line with Civil Service recruitment policy and processes. The development of the recruitment plans will include engagement with relevant partners. There is no intention to publish the names of members of staff of the NAAB.

A gov.uk webpage is being created for the Age Estimation Scientific Advisory Council and will contain a list of committee members.

## ■ Organised Crime: Drugs

**Dr Kieran Mullan:** [\[100743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made on tackling county line drugs gangs.

**Kit Malthouse:**

This Government is determined to crack down on the county lines gangs who are exploiting our children and have a devastating impact on our communities. On 6 December the Government published a ten-year Strategy to combat illicit drugs which sets out a whole-system approach of how the Government is doing more than ever to cut off the supply of drugs by criminal gangs.

Through the Strategy, we will bolster our flagship County Lines Programme, investing up to £145m over the next three years to tackle the most violent and exploitative distribution model yet seen. By 2024, we expect this to result in over 2,000 more county lines closed, through a sustained attack on the distribution model.

This new funding will build on our progress in tackling drugs supply and county lines. Since November 2019, through our programme, the Police have already closed more than 1,500 lines, made over 7,400 arrests, seized £4.3 million in cash and significant quantities of drugs, and safeguarded more than 4,000 vulnerable people.

## ■ Police: Medals

**Taiwo Owatemi:** [\[100713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will support the award of the Platinum Jubilee Medal to former as well as serving members of the police.

**Kit Malthouse:**

This Government is steadfast in our support for the police. It is right that those serving on the front line in our emergency services are recognised in the award of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee medal. The medal allocations for the police and other services have now been finalised and officers who meet the criteria can expect to receive their medals in the coming weeks and months as we enter the jubilee year.

The criteria for jubilee medals are agreed on a cross-government basis. The criteria apply equally to the current workforce in other services including fire, ambulance and the armed forces, and have been established based on the precedent set for previous Jubilee Medals.

## ■ Police: Recruitment

**Dr Kieran Mullan:** [\[100741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress the Government has made on the recruitment of 20,000 additional police officers by 2023.

**Dr Kieran Mullan:** [\[100746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made on increasing the number of women police officers in England and Wales.

**Kit Malthouse:**

We are increasing the number of police officers in England and Wales by 20,000, by March 2023. I am pleased to say excellent progress is being made in delivering against this target. As a result of their hard work and commitment police forces in England and Wales have recruited 11,053 additional officers, as at 30 September 2021. This is 55% of the 20,000 officer target.

We are also attracting a broad range of people into policing from all communities and backgrounds, including more women. I'm pleased to see that forces are seizing the opportunity of the uplift to make forces more representative of their communities.

Published data [Police Officer uplift statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-officer-uplift-statistics) show that as at 30 September 2021 there were 47,425 female officers (headcount) in total, representing 33.9% of officers in England and Wales. This is the highest number of female officers than ever before. Since April 2020, more than four in ten new recruits (42%) were female, an increase on 37% the year before.

The next set of quarterly statistics, showing progress to 31 December 2021, will be published on Wednesday 26 January 2022.

## ■ Refugees

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

**[100430]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that the provisions in the Nationality and Borders Bill help to integrate refugees into UK society.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Nationality and Borders Bill is the cornerstone of the New Plan for Immigration, which sets out the Government's intentions to build a fair but firm asylum system.

The New Plan for Immigration announced a package of measures to improve integration support so that refugees arriving under safe and legal routes are fully supported to become self-sufficient and integrate well into society. The Enhanced Integration Package will deliver a package of tailored support, such as language training, skills development and employment support to help refugees rebuild their lives. More details will be released on this package in due course.

Refugees coming to the UK through the safe and legal routes our resettlement schemes provide will be granted indefinite leave to remain on arrival, providing them with the certainty and stability they need to rebuild their lives in the UK.

## ■ Refugees: Afghanistan

**Andy Slaughter:**

**[100463]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many of the initial 5,000 places on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme will be allocated to people already in the UK.

**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.

Due to the success of our emergency evacuation and the larger than anticipated number of people brought over to the UK, we plan to exceed our initial aim of 5,000 people in the first year of the ACRS.

There are around 6,500 people in the UK who have been brought to safety during and after the evacuation who are eligible for the ACRS. They include women's rights activists, journalists, and prosecutors, as well as the Afghan families of British



Nationals. This also includes some of those most at risk, such as members of the LGBT community.

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[100479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Statement on 6 January 2022 on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), Official Report, col. 185, if she will take steps to set up an ACRS implementation group (a) with the aim of ensuring the ACRS is run with an understanding by staff of Afghanistan's particular (i) cultural, (ii) security (iii) gender concerns, and (b) to include the expertise of (iv) women from the region with knowledge of the (A) cultural, (B) socio-religious and (C) geopolitical context of Afghanistan and (v) people working on the ground with those in need of UK assistance; and if she will make a statement.

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[100480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Statement on 6 January 2022 on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), Official Report col. 185, how many (a) Afghan nationals who are already in the UK and (b) British nationals evacuated from Afghanistan (i) have been and (ii) will be resettled under ACRS.

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[100481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Statement by the Minister for Afghan Resettlement on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, 6 January 2022, Official Report, column 185, how many people currently outside of the UK the Government plans to resettle in the first year of that scheme.

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[100482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, from what date does the first year of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme start.

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[100483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Statement by the Minister for Afghan Resettlement on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, 6 January 2022, Official Report, column 185, how Afghan nationals at risk, who are not Chevening alumni or British Council or GardaWorld contractors, can ensure their details are recorded and considered for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme as part of the third referral pathway from within Afghanistan; and if she will make a statement.

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[100484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Statement by the Minister for Afghan Resettlement on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, 6 January 2022, Official Report, column 185, whether discussions are taking place with (a) Qatar, (b) Pakistan, (c) other third-party countries to facilitate safe passage from Afghanistan to the UK for (i) Chevening Scholars and (ii) British Council and GardaWorld contractors; and if she will make a statement.

**Caroline Lucas:**

**[100485]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Statement by the Minister for Afghan Resettlement on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, 6 January 2022, Official Report, column 185, what measures will she put in place to ensure that undocumented Afghan national family members of British nationals in third countries, can make family member visa applications without delay; and if she will make a statement.

**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 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.

Due to the success of our emergency evacuation and the larger than anticipated number of people brought over to the UK, we will exceed our initial aim of 5,000 people resettled in the first year of the ACRS. There are around 6,500 people in the UK who have been brought to safety during and after the evacuation who are eligible for the ACRS.

British nationals who have a right of abode in the UK will not be resettled under the ACRS. However, we are supporting those British Nationals who have been assisted by Her Majesty's Government to the UK.

In addition to those already in the UK, we are working with the UNHCR to receive referrals of vulnerable refugees in need of protection in year 1 of the ACRS, and we will continue to receive referrals to the scheme in coming years. In the first year we will also offer ACRS places to the most at-risk British Council and GardaWorld contractors, and Chevening alumni. Beyond the first year of the ACRS, we will work with international partners and NGOs to welcome referrals of wider groups of Afghans most at risk. There will not be an application process.

The ACRS provides those at risk with a route to safety through three distinct referral routes and has been designed with partners, including the UNHCR, with whom we are designing the referral route for refugees outside of Afghanistan.

The Government will continue to work with international partners to seek to facilitate the travel of those eligible for resettlement in the UK.

Family members of British citizens and settled persons who were not called forward during the evacuation of Afghanistan, or who have not been offered resettlement under the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme, will need to apply to come to the UK under the existing economic or family migration and reunion rules. They will be expected to meet the eligibility requirements of their chosen route, which may include paying relevant fees and charges, and providing their biometrics.

The family Immigration Rules also allow a person to enter a spouse or partner visa if a couple have been in a relationship akin to marriage and have resided together for a two-year period prior to the application date. The two-year period does not have to be the immediate two years prior to the application date.

Information for those wishing to apply to enter or remain in the UK as a spouse or partner is available on GOV.UK at: <https://www.gov.uk/uk-family-visa/partner-spouse>

A full policy statement on this matter published on 13 September 2021 can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement-accessible-version>

Further information on the opening of the ARCS can be found in the Oral Statement <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/oral-statement-on-the-afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

**Stephen Farry:**

**[100737]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of expressly adding musicians to the list of vulnerable Afghans eligible for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) opened 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.

The 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+).

No specific provision has been made for musicians, although they could otherwise be eligible through one of the referral pathways.

## ■ Safer Streets Fund

**Dr Kieran Mullan:**

**[100745]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to reduce crime through the Safer Streets Fund.

**Kit Malthouse:**

We are delivering on the people's priorities to cut crime and make our communities safe. The Safer Streets Fund enables Police and Crime Commissioners and Local Authorities across England and Wales to support interventions, including improved CCTV and streetlighting in areas experiencing high rates of neighbourhood crimes, such as burglary.

In total, £70 million has been invested; the first round worth £25 million and the second worth £20 million focused on preventing neighbourhood crimes, whilst third

£25 million round, announced following the tragic death of Sarah Everard, aims to increase the safety of public spaces for all, with a particular focus on helping combat violence against women and girls.

As part of the October 2021 Budget, it was announced that £50 million per each for each of the three years of the Spending Review will be dedicated to the Safer Streets Fund, helping it continue its vital crime prevention role. Details of future rounds of funding will be announced in due course.

## ■ Security: Standards

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[101633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to ensure that the quality of services delivered in the security industry meet an adequate standard.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Security Industry Authority (SIA) is responsible for its own daily operations, including monitoring compliance with the legislative regime under the Private Security Industry Act 2001.

The SIA has independent inspection and enforcement powers to deliver this objective, along with an independent prosecution function. Anything that falls outside of the legislative regime is not within the SIA's remit, and is therefore properly a matter for businesses.

## ■ Security: Training

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[101630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to help ensure that training provided within the security industry is of sufficient quality.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Security Industry Authority (SIA) is responsible for setting training standards for each of the roles within the private security industry that it licences; this training is a mandatory requirement for obtaining a licence. The SIA reviews its training standards every five years in accordance with its obligations under the Private Security Industry Act 2001, with the most recent changes coming into force in October 2021.

The SIA works closely with the sector to develop standards and promote industry-led continuous professional development. The Home Office is satisfied that the SIA has the expertise to set standards of the appropriate quality.

## ■ Serious Crime Prevention Orders

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[103586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she will take to ensure the House of Commons has adequate opportunities to scrutinise serious crime prevention orders.

**Kit Malthouse:**

Serious Crime Prevention Orders (SCPOs) are civil protective orders made by the High Court or the Crown Court following an application by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), the Serious Fraud Office (SFO), or, in terrorism-related cases only, the police. There is no role for the House of Commons in this court process.

The original legislative proposals for SCPOs were scrutinised and debated by Parliament during the passage of the Serious Crime Act 2007.

In November 2012, the then Home Secretary presented to Parliament a memorandum to the Home Affairs Committee and the Justice Committee on post-legislative scrutiny of the Serious Crime Act 2007. This report is available in the public domain on GOV.UK at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-legislative-scrutiny-of-the-serious-crime-act-2007>

The legislation for SCPOs was later amended by the Serious Crime Act 2015, which was also scrutinised and debated in Parliament.

**■ Slavery****Siobhain McDonagh:****[100417]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to reports that HSBC acquired shares in a Chinese chemicals and plastics company Xinjiang Tianyen, what steps she is taking to extend Section 54 on transparency and supply chains of the Modern Slavery Act to regulate the activities of financial services institutions.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The UK was the first country in the world to require businesses to report on the steps they have taken to tackle modern slavery. The landmark provision in section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires organisations, including financial institutions, with a turnover of £36m or more, to report annually on the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

The prevalence of modern slavery and complexity of global supply chains means that it is highly unlikely that any sector or company is immune from the risks of modern slavery, including those in financial services. The Government encourages companies to monitor their supply chains with rigour to uncover and remedy any associations they may find with forced labour or other labour abuses.

The Government has already committed to take forward an ambitious package of changes to strengthen the Act's transparency legislation, including mandating the specific reporting topics that statements must cover and introducing financial penalties for organisations that fail to comply.

To further bolster our approach to modern slavery, on 24 March 2021, the Government announced a review of the 2014 Modern Slavery Strategy. As part of the strategy review we will consider how to strengthen our approach to transparency in supply chains, including in relation to financial institutions. A revised strategy will

allow us to build on the considerable progress we have made to date, adapt our approach to the evolving nature of these terrible crimes, and continue our international leadership in tackling modern slavery.

#### ■ **Travel Requirements: Coronavirus**

**Mike Kane:**

[\[102653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to provide passenger locator forms in languages other than English.

**Kevin Foster:**

The rapidly changing landscape of international travel health measure requirements has placed considerable pressure on maintaining the technical development of the Passenger Locator Form; therefore, translation of the form has not been possible.

Each language added to the system increases the technical development time required, meaning the system could not be accurately maintained given the pace of policy changes as we have dealt with the Covid-19 pandemic.

We have though introduced a guide to support the completion of the PLF which has been translated into 22 languages and is available on GOV.UK. An animated video to support guidance on how to complete the Passenger Locator Form is also in production. This will be placed on GOV.UK and social media platforms.

We will look to introduce translation of the PLF in the future, however this will be dependent on a long-term stable policy for it across the 4 nations of the United Kingdom given the devolution of public health regulations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

#### ■ **Visas: British National (Overseas)**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[101721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of changing the BN(O) visa scheme to enable any persons from Hong Kong who have at least one parent who is a British national (overseas) to apply for the British National (Overseas) visa.

**Kevin Foster:**

The BN(O) route is an unprecedented and generous offer reflecting the UK's historic and moral commitment to the people of Hong Kong who chose to retain their ties to the UK by taking up BN(O) status. We are sympathetic to the circumstances of this cohort and are looking at whether more can be done to support them.

#### ■ **Visas: Married People**

**Matt Western:**

[\[103638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what income the Government received from Spouse Visa Applications from EU Nationals in the 2019-20 financial year.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office does not hold the information in the format requested. Amounts received in immigration fees are not recorded or categorised by visa type. So we do not have separate codes or fields for either income received for spouse visa applications, or nationality.

Total visa and immigration income data is published annually in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts. Please see page 152 of the Home Office 2019-20 Annual Report and Accounts for the most recent disclosure of visa and immigration income. [Home Office annual report and accounts 2019 - 2020 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

**HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION****■ House of Commons: Dismissal****Mrs Maria Miller:****[101663]**

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the Commission's policy is on the use of non-disclosure agreements in employment severance agreements by organisations supplying goods and services.

**Sir Charles Walker:**

*[Holding answer 14 January 2022]:* No such policy exists nor is one in active contemplation. The use of non-disclosure agreements in severance agreements is widespread and lawful.

In entering into contracts with other organisations, we do not want to restrict their freedom of action in dealing with their own staff in line with their own terms and conditions and in accordance with the law. This is important in ensuring that our contracts are not onerous to manage for either party.

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE****■ Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership: Impact Assessments****Gareth Thomas:****[102542]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish an updated impact assessment of access to the CPTPP; and if she will make a statement.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

Following the conclusion of negotiations, a full impact assessment will be published. This will present estimated economic impacts of the agreement, including impacts on UK sectoral output and employment and the potential implications for the UK nations and English regions. This Government is committed to transparency, and we will ensure that parliamentarians have access to the information they need on the



Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) through our robust scrutiny process.

## ■ Exports

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[103694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department has taken to help increase the number of businesses in (a) Northern Ireland and (b) the rest of the UK develop exports abroad.

**Mike Freer:**

The refreshed Export Strategy launched last November focuses on the barriers faced by UK businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), by helping them at every stage of exporting, as part of our UK-wide Export Support Service (ESS).

We are establishing a trade and investment hub in Belfast this year to bring more investment, jobs and export opportunities into Northern Ireland. The team will be improving access to DIT services for Northern Ireland businesses.

In addition to negotiating free trade agreements with SME chapters, our work on market access includes removing non-tariff barriers – last year we resolved 200 of such barriers across 74 countries.

## ■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Heathrow Airport

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[100468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the (a) dates and (b) outbound destinations for each occasion when (i) she and (ii) her predecessor made use of the VIP suites at Heathrow Airport in (A) 2019, (B) 2020 and (C) 2021.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade has never used the VIP suites at Heathrow Airport. Her predecessor also did not use them during her time as Secretary of State for International Trade.

## ■ Trade Agreements: India

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[102543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when her Department plans to publish a response to the consultation, Trade with India: call for input, which concluded on 31 August 2021; when she plans to publish an economic impact assessment relating to any future free trade agreement between the UK and India; and if she will make a statement.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

A summary of responses to the consultation and the Department's response was published on 13 January 2022. This was part of a broader suite of documents on the UK-India Free Trade Agreement, including an economic scoping assessment.

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade made a [Written Ministerial Statement](#) on the 13th of January about the launch of negotiations. Once the provisions of the agreement have been negotiated, HM Government will publish a full impact assessment reflecting the outcome.

## ■ Trade Promotion

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[100397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the activities conducted by each trade envoy since their appointment; and if she will make a statement.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

The Prime Minister's Trade Envoy Programme has 34 Trade Envoys, covering 72 markets, who support the UK Government's overall strategy to drive economic growth, promote UK trade and encourage inward investment, helping to level up the country. When undertaking their role they meet numerous people, including key government contacts, stakeholders and businesses and undertake to make two visits to their respective market(s) per year, although this varies depending on the market and the commercial opportunities being pursued. A summary of their activity will be published in the Department's annual report.

## JUSTICE

## ■ Employment Tribunals Service

**Justin Madders:**

[\[100579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent steps he has taken to reduce the backlog of employment tribunal claims.

**James Cartlidge:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 5 January 2022 to Parliamentary Question [94448](#).

## ■ Legal Aid Scheme: Post Offices

**Liz Saville Roberts:**

[\[103630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to improve the accessibility of legal aid for postmasters.

**James Cartlidge:**

The scope of legal aid is set out under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, and applicants are subject to a means and merits test. There are limited circumstances where legal aid may be available for pursuing a compensation claim; this includes claims in relation to abuse by a public authority of its position or powers, and claims involving a breach of convention rights by a public authority subject to the statutory means and merits tests.

Where an issue falls outside the scope of legal aid, funding may still be available through the Exceptional Case Funding (ECF) Scheme, where it would breach or risk a breach of human rights or retained enforceable EU law if funding is not provided, subject to the statutory means and merits tests.

## ■ Ministry of Justice: Public Consultation

**Anna McMorris:**

**[99370]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 6 January 2022 to Question 94497, whether the Government plans to ensure large font and easy read formats are available immediately and not only upon request; how many large print versions have been requested; how long does it take to process these requests; and whether there are other methods of accessibility available.

**James Cartlidge:**

The Government's Service Standard (<https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/service-standard>) guides government teams as to how they should design and produce content providing information regarding public services. Departments are required to make sure that all information is accessible across all channels, including online, phone, paper and face to face.

For all consultations, the department gives due consideration to the needs of the audience group and we take whatever action we can to improve reach and accessibility, including by following best practice through provision of accessible formats for consultation documents.

For the Victims Bill consultation, a large print version of the consultation document was available from publication on request; we also distributed it to key partners in the Victims sector in December. A British Sign Language version has also been developed and will be available shortly. A HTML version has gone live this week.

The number of large print versions requested for all published documents is not held centrally.

The standard accessible consultation format that Ministry of Justice uses for publications online is an 'accessible PDF'. Accessible PDFs are readable by people using screen readers. This is made available alongside the online version on our consultation hub which meets the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines V2.1 AA standard.

## ■ Prison Accommodation

**Paul Girvan:**

**[100650]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the current capacity of the prison system.

**Paul Girvan:**

**[100652]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of potential prison capacity in (a) five and (b) ten years' time.

**Victoria Atkins:**

As at 7 January 2022, the total operational capacity of prisons in England and Wales was 81,291.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) publishes weekly prison population and capacity information through the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/prison-population-statistics-2022>

We are committed to building as many prison places as we need. Over the next ten years, additional capacity will come in to use for a range of reasons, including new build prison accommodation, existing accommodation returning to use following the completion of essential maintenance or places coming into use following a change in function. We are investing £3.8 billion to deliver 20,000 additional, modern prison places including 2,000 temporary prison places across England and Wales. This includes creating four new prisons over the next six years and expanding another four prisons over the next three years. The first of these, HMP Five Wells in Northamptonshire, is due to open in February and work is also well underway at Glen Parva, Leicestershire.

**■ Prisoners: Coronavirus****Liz Saville Roberts:****[103629]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many cases of covid-19 have been recorded among inmates at each prison in Wales in each month since 1 October 2021.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The information requested is provided in the attached spreadsheet.

We have well-developed policies and procedures in place to manage outbreaks and infectious diseases. This means prisons and probation services are well prepared to take immediate action whenever cases or suspected cases are identified. These measures so far have included restricting regimes, minimising inter-prison transfers, compartmentalising our prisons into different units to isolate the sick, shield the vulnerable and quarantine new arrivals, and introducing an extensive testing programme to test staff and prisoners.

The vaccination programme is managed by the NHS. In line with the community, prisoners have been vaccinated in order of priority based on the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisations (JCVI) advice. We continue to support healthcare colleagues to vaccinate prisoners and to encourage prisoners to accept the offer of the vaccine. Our plans for easing re-introducing and restrictions in prisons and probation will be guided by public health advice alongside an operational assessment of what can be safely implemented, whilst ensuring we can keep staff and prisoners safe.

**Attachments:**

1. [Table \[2022-01-18 10362 103629 data.xlsx\]](#)

## ■ Prisons

**Paul Girvan:**

[\[100651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which prisons are being (a) built and (b) refurbished as at January 2022.

**Victoria Atkins:**

As of January 2022, the only prison currently being built in England and Wales is Glen Parva (Leicestershire), due to open in spring 2023. Minor post-completion work is being carried out at HMP Five Wells (Wellingborough) which is due to open in early 2022. Each will provide c.1,680 modern prison places. We have started enabling work in preparation for the construction of a new prison next to HMP Full Sutton after receiving full planning permission. It is due to open in 2025.

As of January 2022, a major programme of refurbishment is underway at HMP Liverpool.

## LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

### ■ Building Safety Fund: Newham

**Stephen Timms:**

[\[103513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the letter to him from the hon. Member for East Ham, dated 16 December 2021, what assessment he has made of whether the Building Safety Fund will cover the removal of tiling in order to access flammable insulation in buildings managed by Gallions Approach Management Ltd (GAML) in the Royal Docks area of Newham.

**Christopher Pincher:**

As set out in the Building Safety Fund prospectus, government funding covers all works directly related to the removal and replacement of unsafe cladding systems. This includes works required to access eligible materials for removal and replacement. In this case, it was found that these terracotta cladding systems do not have combustible insulation.

**Stephen Timms:**

[\[103514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that decisions on Building Safety Fund applications in respect of Eastern Quay Apartments in the Royal Docks area of Newham are communicated in a timely manner to (a) building owners and (b) occupants.

**Christopher Pincher:**

It is the responsibility of the Applicant to make sure that they promptly provide all the information required for the Department to make a decision on their application. The result of an application will be communicated to the Applicant, and they should communicate this to leaseholders.

We will also improve the information available to leaseholders and residents about the Building Safety Fund with a new online service for them that will provide direct access to information about the stage their building has reached in the funding process.

**Stephen Timms:**

**[103515]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many applications to the Building Safety Fund he has received for buildings in (a) East Ham constituency and (b) London Borough of Newham; and how many of those applications have been determined so far in each of those areas.

**Christopher Pincher:**

As of 17 January 2022, 30 registrations for the Building Safety Fund have been received for buildings in the East Ham constituency. 16 have been deemed eligible, 3 ineligible and 2 withdrawn.

133 registrations have been received for building in the London Borough of Newham. 47 have been deemed eligible, 25 ineligible and 9 withdrawn.

The remaining registrations are still under review by the Department.

## ■ Buildings: Construction

**Apsana Begum:**

**[100717]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of building owners using permitted development rights to build additional stories on buildings deemed in need of remediation following an EWS1 report.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Under the permitted development rights to extend detached blocks of flats or detached buildings in commercial or mixed use upwards to create new homes developers must obtain the prior approval of the local planning authority on certain matters. This includes a requirement, in relation to an existing building which is 18 metres or more in height, that a report from a chartered engineer or other competent professional is provided confirming that the external wall construction of the existing building complies with the paragraph B4(1) of Schedule 1 to the Building Regulations 2010 (S.I. 2010/2214). Where a report is not provided the local planning authority must refuse prior approval and the development cannot proceed.

Where additional storeys and homes are added to a building some aspects of the building as a whole may also be required to be upgraded under Building Regulations, including in respect of fire safety. These provisions are described in detail by a circular which can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/924449/Building\\_regs\\_circular\\_032020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/924449/Building_regs_circular_032020.pdf).

## ■ Community Ownership Fund

**Ben Lake:**

**[100648]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department plans to publish the updated prospectus, assessment guidance and application form for the second round of the Community Ownership Fund.

**Neil O'Brien:**

We are currently reviewing the first bidding round of the Community Ownership Fund and in order to implement the lessons learned, the second round will open in the spring.

We will be launching an updated prospectus, assessment guidance and application form ahead of the second round opening and will also be offering additional support to interested groups to help as many projects as possible to benefit from the fund.

## ■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Consultants

**Gareth Thomas:**

**[100410]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 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.

**Eddie Hughes:**

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

Details of ministerial meetings are published quarterly and can be found on Gov.uk.

## ■ Development Plans

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

**[103622]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to (a) ensure that communities are involved in development in their area and (b) reduce the length of planning permission.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Local planning authorities are required to undertake a formal period of public consultation of no less than 21 days, prior to deciding a planning application.

Effective consultation allows local planning authorities to identify and consider all relevant planning issues associated with a proposed development. Where relevant considerations are raised by local residents, these must be taken into account by the local authority before a decision is made.

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

**[103623]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing people who have made representations on development plans to participate in examination hearings.



**Christopher Pincher:**

Section 19 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that any person who makes representations seeking to change a development plan document must (if they so request) be given the opportunity to appear before and be heard by the person carrying out the examination. Further details of the Government's planning reforms will be announced in due course.

**■ Disadvantaged: Greater London****Stephen Timms:**[\[103512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to take into account in its policies the impact of the covid-19 outbreak in areas of East and North East London with relatively high levels of inequality and deprivation; and whether that sub-region will be allocated resources in line with other parts of the country that have comparable socio-economic conditions.

**Neil O'Brien:**

Newham and Barking and Dagenham were identified as priority 1 areas for levelling up funding alongside other more deprived areas of the country. I am delighted that in the subsequent Round 1 competition, Newham and Tower Hamlets went on to be successful and will receive £49.1 million to deliver community enhancing projects. This includes Newham's 15-minute neighbourhood project that will create innovative commercial and civic spaces, imaginative public realm, and sustainable transport infrastructure to provide the catalyst for inclusive growth.

In addition to this funding, the East and North East of London have benefitted from further funding commitments, including £510,000 of Community Renewal Funding for Unlocking Green Economy options in the south of Newham, £3 million of Getting Building Funding for 3 Miles Studio in Newham and an uplift to the ongoing programme of regeneration through our Olympic legacy, through £168.1 million for the East Bank Project on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park site.

Whilst some local Levelling Up Fund bids have been unsuccessful, we encourage bidders to reapply in round two which is to be opened in Spring 2022.

The Levelling Up Fund is only one element of levelling up, which means empowering local leaders and communities to drive real change; boosting living standards, particularly where they are lower; spreading opportunity and improving public services, particularly where they are weaker; and restoring local pride across the UK. Levelling up the UK does not mean levelling down London.

The Government will shortly be publishing the Levelling Up White Paper that builds on existing action being taken across Government, setting out a new policy regime that will drive change for years to come.

## ■ Fire and Rescue Services: Standards

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[100605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it her policy to introduce greater precept flexibility for all fire authorities.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[100607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, for what reason she selected only eight fire authorities to exercise greater precept flexibility.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[100608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment she has made of the effect on income for the North Yorkshire fire authority of the 1.99% precept increase compared to the effect of the greater precept flexibility available to eight local authorities.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

On 16 December 2021 the provisional local government finance settlement proposed council tax referendum principles as part of a wider package of funding for local authorities in 2022-23. The principles strike a balance between ensuring local authorities are able to generate income to fund their services, and protecting residents from excessive increases. A £5 flexibility was proposed to assist the eight lowest-charging fire and rescue authorities in addressing immediate pressures and to maintain a sustainable income baseline for future years. Following consideration of consultation responses the final set of referendum principles will be subject to the approval of the House of Commons in due course.

## ■ Holiday Accommodation

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[100602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it his policy to empower local authorities to set a cap on the number of holiday lets within their jurisdiction.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government has no current plans to limit the number of holiday lets. It is for local planning authorities to decide where new development is needed and where mitigation is required. Each local planning authority has to create a Local Plan which shows which kinds of development would be acceptable or otherwise in different parts of the authority's area. Where the Local Plan contains relevant policies, planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Government however takes concerns about the impact of the increase in short-term and holiday letting on communities seriously. That is why we will shortly be bringing forward a call for evidence with a view to subsequently consulting on introducing a Registration Scheme for Tourist Accommodation.

## ■ Leasehold: Insurance

**Apsana Begum:**

[100718]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of incidence of property managers taking commission for high building insurance costs which are then passed onto leaseholders.

**Eddie Hughes:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that those living in the leasehold sector are protected from abuse and poor service. We believe very strongly that service charges should be transparent and communicated effectively, and that there should be a clear route to challenge or redress if things go wrong. The law is clear that service charges must be reasonable and, where costs relate to work or services, the work or services must be of a reasonable standard. Leaseholders may make an application to the First-tier Tribunal to make a determination on the reasonableness of their service charges or fees.

We established an independent working group chaired by Lord Best that considered how the service charge regime could be improved to increase transparency for leaseholders. The working group published its final report to Government (see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulation-of-property-agents-working-group-report>) and we are considering the report's recommendations.

**Apsana Begum:**

[100719]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions he has had with (a) property managers and (b) their professional bodies on mitigating high insurance costs for leaseholders.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department has continued to engage with the Association of Residential Managing Agents (ARMA) on the increasing insurance costs facing leaseholders. We believe that buildings insurance issues require leadership directly from insurers and the Association of British Insurers (ABI) and have engaged them in seeking evidence and solutions that could enable customers to find affordable premiums, for reasonable coverage.

In the Secretary of State's oral statement to parliament on the 10 January, he has asked Lord Greenhalgh to press the sector further on the increasing insurance costs facing leaseholders.

## ■ Poverty

**Dan Carden:**

[103664]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of a potential reduction in local authority budgets on levels of poverty in each local authority area.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement published on 16 December 2021 for 2022/23 makes available an additional £3.5 billion to councils in England, including funding for adult social care reform. This is an increase in local authority funding for 2022/23 of over 4% in real terms, which will ensure councils across the country have the resources they need to deliver key services. In total, we expect Core Spending Power to rise from £50.4 billion in 2021/22 to up to £53.9 billion this year.

Most of the funding made available through the Local Government Finance Settlement is unringfenced, acknowledging that local authorities are best placed to understand local priorities, such as tackling deprivation and levels of poverty within local communities.

This is not the only source of funding available to councils with regards to supporting vulnerable families. For example, recognising that some people may require extra support over this winter, vulnerable households across the country can also access a £500 million support fund to help them with essentials. The Household Support Fund provides £421 million to help vulnerable people in England with the cost of food, utilities and wider essentials, which can include beds.

**■ Research: Finance****Chi Onwurah:**[\[103546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much money was (a) allocated from the European Regional Development Fund and (b) spent on research and innovation in each region from 2014 to 2020.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The value of European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) in the England ERDF programme is €3,649,257,601. The sterling value of the programme will fluctuate depending on the exchange rate but contracts are made in sterling

The programme has funding ring-fenced for Promoting Research and Innovation. The table sets out the amount contracted in each administrative region and has been paid as of November 2021

REGION	ERDF PAID	ERDF CONTRACTED
GSE	£27,227,049	£49,756,471
London	£13,688,450	£29,611,874
Midlands	£80,981,304	£147,811,043
NEYH	£79,845,708	£137,263,251
NW	£103,279,677	£173,453,271
SW	£72,635,554	£119,690,598
<b>Total</b>	<b>£377,657,741</b>	<b>£657,586,509</b>

The programme rules allow for spending to continue to the end of 2023.

## ■ Second Homes: Registration

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[100603]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it his policy to implement a register of second homes.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department has no current plans to implement a register of second homes. The Government recognises that large numbers of second homes concentrated in a single area can have a negative effect on local communities and has introduced a number of measures to help mitigate those effects, including introducing higher rates of Stamp Duty Land Tax for those purchasing additional properties.

## PRIME MINISTER

## ■ 10 Downing Street

**Angela Rayner:**

**[103561]**

To ask the Prime Minister, with reference to his oral contribution of 8 December 2021, Official Report, volume 705, column 372, what was the evidential basis for his statement that he had been repeatedly reassured there was no party held in 10 Downing Street.

**Boris Johnson:**

I refer the Rt Hon. Member to the Terms of Reference for the Cabinet Office investigation, which have been deposited in the Library of the House. It would not be appropriate to pre-empt that process.

## SCOTLAND

### ■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

**Peter Grant:**

[\[103580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what assessment he has made of the impact of the proposed reductions in the number of Seasonal Agricultural Worker visa routes from 2023 on the fruit and vegetable industry in Scotland.

**Mr Alister Jack:**

The UK Government is extending this visa route until the end of 2024, to allow migrant workers to come to the UK for up to six months to pick both edible and ornamental crops. There will be 30,000 visas available until 2023 when it will begin to taper down, but this will be kept under review with the potential to increase by a further 10,000 if necessary.

We appreciate that growers in Scotland are reliant on workers from overseas, nevertheless the UK Government is committed to the UK becoming a high-skilled, high-wage economy and we are clear that more must be done to attract UK workers into jobs through offering training, career options, wage increases, and to invest in increased automation technology. The extension to the route strikes the right balance of supporting the horticulture sector while it transitions to employing more domestic workers.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Cars and Vans: Carbon Emissions

**Judith Cummins:**

[\[101765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether regulations to require all new cars and vans to emit zero emissions by 2035 will recognise hydrogen internal combustion engines as a compliant zero-emission technology.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Removing tailpipe emissions from road vehicles is fundamental to decarbonising transport. Regulations that ensure that from 2035 all new cars and vans are fully zero emission at the tailpipe will remain technology neutral. The Government's response to our recent consultation on the regulatory options for the design of those regulations will be published in due course.

### ■ Department for Transport: Consultants

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[100411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, 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.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

Based on the Department for Transport internal database, we have had financial contracts with Clifford Chance LLP to provide legal advice on specific work during this period.

We do not have any record of any financial contract with FTI Consulting and Fenchurch Advisory Partners in the last five years.

With regard to meetings, the Department has no central database of meetings so to try and obtain a complete list of any or all meetings with these three companies across the whole Department over the past five years would incur disproportionate cost. However, Permanent Secretary and Ministerial meetings with external organisations are routinely published on Gov.uk.

**■ Department for Transport: UN Climate Conference 2021****Ruth Jones:**[\[102764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to deliver on the declarations made at COP26, including (a) Operation Zero and (b) the Clydebank Declaration.

**Robert Courts:**

Operation Zero and the Clydebank Declaration were launched at COP26 to help drive the decarbonisation of the maritime sector and meet our targets under the Clean Maritime Plan and IMO Initial GHG Strategy.

The Clydebank Declaration represents the beginning of a multi-year process to develop green shipping corridors. As such, launching the Declaration is the first step to establish at least 6 corridors by the middle of this decade. We are now moving, with other States and the industry, to explore, design and then deliver corridors involving the UK.

My Department is working with industry partners and other government departments to also develop the next steps for Operation Zero, with a view to making zero-emission operations and maintenance vessels a reality in the North Sea offshore wind sector by 2025.

**■ Driving Licences: Applications****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[103657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the waiting time is for people receiving (a) new and (b) renewed driving licences; and what steps he is taking to tackle ongoing delays in the issuance of those documents.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[103658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the impact of delays in issuing new driving licences on (a) individuals and (b) businesses.



**Trudy Harrison:**

The quickest and easiest way to apply for a driving licence is by using the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)'s online service. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their licence within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application and the DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day. The DVLA understands the impact of delays on those who make paper applications and is working hard to process them as quickly as possible. To help reduce waiting times for paper applications, the DVLA has introduced additional online services, recruited more staff, increased overtime working and has secured extra office space in Swansea and Birmingham. There may be additional delays in processing more complex transactions, for example if medical investigations are needed. The latest information on turnaround times for paper driving licence applications can be found [here](#).

The large majority of applicants renewing an existing licence will be able to continue driving while their application is being processed, providing the driver can meet specific criteria. More information can be found online [here](#).

Employers wishing to check an employee or potential employee's driving licence status can do so using the DVLA's online enquiry services. These services allow third parties to obtain relevant information relating to an individual's driver record, with the consent of the driving licence holder.

**■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points****Matt Western:****[103641]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many public electric vehicle charge points were installed in 2021 compared to 2020.

**Trudy Harrison:**

As of the 01 January 2021, there were 20,775 public electric vehicle charge points installed in the UK, an increase of 4,270 compared with 01 January 2020.

Additionally, the most recently published statistics show that as of the 01 January 2022, there were 28,375 public electric vehicle charge points installed, an increase of 7,600 compared with 01 January 2021.

**■ Garages and Petrol Stations****Justin Tomlinson:****[102623]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department has taken to expand access to (a) electric charging stations, (b) compressed hydrogen and (c) bio-fuels at fuelling stations across the UK.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Government and industry have supported the installation of over 28,000 publicly available charging devices including more than 5,100 rapid devices – one of the largest networks of rapid in Europe. The Government will provide over £1.3 billion

over the next four years to support the continued roll-out of chargepoints on motorways and major A roads, in homes and businesses and on-street. Government's forthcoming EV Infrastructure Strategy will define our vision for the continued roll-out of a world-leading charging infrastructure network across the UK. The strategy will be published soon.

The UK is well placed to lead on hydrogen powered transport, and government is supporting the use of hydrogen cars, vans, buses and lorries through our £23m Hydrogen for Transport programme. As of December 2021, there are fourteen publicly accessible hydrogen refuelling stations across the UK providing hydrogen for road vehicles, with just over 350 hydrogen vehicles operating on UK roads. Additional refuelling infrastructure will be deployed as part of our plans to demonstrate at scale hydrogen fuel cell trucks on UK roads.

One of the benefits of biofuels is that they can be deployed using existing infrastructure. The Department has supported the supply of liquid biofuels at fuelling stations across the UK through the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation which has been successful for 13 years in promoting a market for biofuels. The recent introduction of E10 in September 2021 now means that up to 10% bioethanol is blended into petrol while diesel is also blended with up to 7% biodiesel, a grade known as B7.

#### ■ Highway Code: Bosworth

**Dr Luke Evans:**

**[101846]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he (a) has had and (b) plans to have with relevant stakeholders in Leicestershire on helping to ensure that proposed changes to The Highway Code are successfully implemented in Bosworth constituency.

**Trudy Harrison:**

When carrying out the review of The Highway Code to improve road safety for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders, the Department for Transport worked closely with an expert stakeholder group from the outset representing different users of the road.

We agree that for the changes to have the desired impact it will be important that these are supported by effective communications. We will communicate the changes in two phases, the first being an awareness raising campaign alerting road users to the changes as they come into effect. A broader behaviour change campaign is then planned later in the year, to align with seasonal increases in active travel, to help embed the changes and encourage understanding and uptake of the new guidance. We are also developing a toolkit for stakeholders to use to promote the changes in their area.

## ■ Railways: Coronavirus

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[103654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of the key workers identified by the Prime Minister as needing to test for covid-19 every day from 10 January 2022 work in the rail industry.

**Wendy Morton:**

The precautionary testing scheme is intended to help isolate asymptomatic cases and limit the risk of outbreaks in workplaces, and is therefore focused on those who are at greater risk of infecting each other - for example, due to working together in an enclosed space as well as the criticality of their roles. Approximately 1,200 of all those taking part in the scheme work in highly specialised roles in the rail industry.

## ■ Road Traffic Act 1988

**Anna McMorris:**

[\[103652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to review the provisions of the Road Traffic Act 1998.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Department for Transport will be conducting a call for evidence on parts of the Road Traffic Act 1988. It is expected that we will be in a position to publish this in the first half of 2022.

While details are still being worked up as to its scope, it is expected that it will include drink and drug driving offences, and the offence of failure to stop and report.

## ■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

**Louise Haigh:**

[\[103604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2022 Question 99009 on Roads: Repairs and Maintenance, what the total Highways Maintenance funding allocation was for (a) Hertfordshire Council, (b) Lancashire County Council, (c) Oxfordshire County Council, (d) Cumbria County Council and (e) WMCA in (i) 2020-21 and (ii) 2021-22.

**Trudy Harrison:**

For 2020/21 and 2021/22, the total funding for highways maintenance allocated by the Department for Transport to (a) Hertfordshire Council, (b) Lancashire County Council, (c) Oxfordshire County Council, (d) Cumbria County Council and (e) WMCA in (i) 2020-21 and (ii) 2021-22 is listed in the table below. These figures also include allocations from the Potholes Fund.

£ MILLION	2020/21	2021/22	TOTAL
Hertfordshire	28.673	22.230	50.903
Lancashire	38.325	28.811	67.136

£ MILLION	2020/21	2021/22	TOTAL
Oxfordshire	27.315	20.846	48.161
Cumbria	44.305	33.813	78.118
WMCA	33.705	20.347	54.052

### ■ Shipping: Carbon Emissions

**Ruth Jones:**

**[102763]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to support the development of coastal and inland shipping to help decarbonise the transport sector.

**Robert Courts:**

The Clean Maritime Plan, published in 2019, and the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, published in 2021, set out the Government's plans to decarbonise the maritime sector, including coastal and inland shipping. The Clean Maritime Plan can be found on Gov.Uk via this link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/815664/clean-maritime-plan.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/815664/clean-maritime-plan.pdf)

### ■ Travel: Coronavirus

**Mike Kane:**

**[102652]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to plan for the potential effect on international travel of new variants of covid-19.

**Robert Courts:**

The Government will conduct a full review of international travel restrictions by the end of January, including the approach to responding to future variants, to ensure a stable system for 2022.

### ■ Travel: Night-time Economy

**Mike Amesbury:**

**[100682]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the regulation and licensing provisions in respect of public transport, taxis and private hire vehicles in ensuring the safety of late night workers using those forms of transport.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Government recognises the vital role that public transport, including taxi and private hire vehicles, play in getting people to work at all times of the day and night. Passenger safety is integral to the regulation and licensing of passenger transport service providers and policy is constantly kept under review.

The Department for Transport is also working closely with the Home Office on the Government's cross-departmental strategy to address Violence Against Women and Girls. The Department for Transport's first Women's Safety Champions are engaging with campaign groups, industry and Government to understand areas for improvement across the UK's transport network. They will shortly produce independent recommendations for the Department and wider transport network on what best practice should be adopted to improve safety of the transport network for women and girls. We expect that these measures will enhance safety for all passengers at all times.

## TREASURY

### ■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[100697\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential effect of the proposed changes to the Alcohol Duty System announced in October 2021 on the prices of (a) port, (b) sherry and (c) fortified wines.

**Helen Whately:**

To better support public health and provide a more level playing field, we are moving to a system where all drinks between 8.5% and 22% ABV will pay the same rate of duty, linked to the alcohol content of the product. This means that the stronger the drink, the more duty will be paid, and vice versa.

Subsequently, higher strength fortified wines, port and sherry will increase in price, while still wines below 11.5% ABV will become cheaper. However, the changes will also mean that the duty on spirit-based liqueurs will reduce, and will for the first time pay the same duty as wines.

The Government is continuing to engage with industry on these reforms. A consultation was launched in October and industry members are encouraged to respond to the alcohol review consultation before the deadline of 30 January 2022.

### ■ Beer: Coronavirus

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[100619\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the economic impact of covid-19 on the brewing sector.

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[100620\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support the brewing sector.

**Helen Whately:**

The Government is continuing to monitor the economic impact of covid-19 on the brewing sector and is taking steps to support pubs and brewers in their recovery.

As announced at Autumn Budget, the duty rates on alcohol including beer will be frozen for another year. This is expected to save beer drinkers £900 million over the next five years, and has resulted in beer duty rates being at their lowest level in real terms since the 1990s.

In addition, as part of our alcohol duty review, the Government has announced a number of reforms which will further support brewers. This includes our proposal to widen the reduced rate for lower strength beers from 2.8% alcohol by volume (ABV) to extend to beers below 3.5% ABV, and to move the higher rate for beers above 7.5% ABV to start at 8.5% ABV.

The Government has also announced it will reduce the duty on draught beer by 5% from 2023. This will cut the duty on a pint of beer served in a pub by 3p.

### ■ Development Aid: Research

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[103549]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much and what proportion of research spending from the Overseas Development Assistance budget is allocated by (a) her Department, (b) research councils and (c) the NHS.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

In 2021/22, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) was allocated an Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) research and development budget of £251m. This is equivalent to 43% of the total ODA research and development budget this year.

Research councils were allocated £139m of ODA research and development expenditure in 2021/22 by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). This is equivalent to 24% of the total ODA research and development budget this year.

The NHS is not responsible for the allocation of any ODA research and development expenditure.

The UK reports ODA spending on a calendar year basis in our annual Statistics on International Development publication:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-international-development>.

### ■ Fuels: Excise Duties

**Colum Eastwood:**

**[103695]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the changes to rebated diesel and biofuels scheduled for April 2022 on (a) consumers and (b) suppliers in Northern Ireland.

**Colum Eastwood:**

**[103696]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of proposed fuel duty on (a) biodiesel, (b) bio blends and (c) fuel substitutes used in

heating on the attractiveness of transitioning to lower carbon fuels as part of a transition to net zero emissions.

**Colum Eastwood:**

**[103697]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the proposed changes to rebated gas and oil scheduled for April 2022 on the sustainability of the construction sector in Northern Ireland.

**Helen Whately:**

At Budget 2020, the Chancellor announced that the Government will remove the entitlement to use rebated diesel and biofuels from most sectors from April 2022. This will more fairly reflect the negative environmental impact of the emissions they produce and help to ensure that the tax system incentivises the development and adoption of greener alternative technologies. As part of the changes, duty will also be extended to biodiesel used for heating.

The Government recognised that these reforms would be a significant change for some businesses and ran a consultation to gather information on the expected impact and make sure it had not overlooked any exceptional reasons why affected sectors should be allowed to continue to use rebated diesel and biofuels beyond April 2022. During the consultation period, the Government engaged directly with a wide variety of organisations from all parts of the UK, including sectors which consume rebated diesel and biofuels, and fuel suppliers.

Following the consultation, the Chancellor granted entitlements to use rebated diesel and biofuels after April 2022 for a limited number of users, including for use in non-commercial heating and power generation. In the case of non-commercial heating, the Government felt there was a risk that removing entitlement would significantly increase the heating bills of households that use diesel, especially those in areas off the gas grid where there is no alternative.

The Government did not believe that the cases made by sectors that will not retain their red diesel entitlement outweighed the need to ensure fairness between the different uses of diesel fuels and the Government's environmental objectives.

To support the development of alternatives that affected businesses can switch to, the Government is at least doubling the funding provided for energy innovation through the new £1 billion Net Zero Innovation Portfolio. From that portfolio, the Government announced the £40 million Red Diesel Replacement Competition, which will provide grant funding for projects that develop and demonstrate lower carbon, lower cost alternatives to red diesel for the construction, and mining and quarrying sectors.

HMRC have published interim guidance on the implementation of the changes to the tax treatment of rebated fuels, which is available at:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-rebated-fuels-entitlement-from-1-april-2022](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-rebated-fuels-entitlement-from-1-april-2022)



## ■ Housing: Building Alterations

**Drew Hendry:**

**[103583]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of removing all VAT from costs incurred as a result of building works undertaken in residential properties that are required to adapt a property to meet a disabled persons needs prior to the economic and fiscal forecast in spring 2022.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Disabled people benefit from the zero rate of VAT on certain building works, the reduced VAT rate of 5 per cent on residential construction under certain conditions, and some additional zero-rates on alterations, such as work on ramps, bathrooms, lifts, and widening doorways. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reliefs-from-vat-for-disabled-and-older-people-notice-7017>

Extending the current reliefs further would come at a cost to the Exchequer, and this must be viewed in the context of around £50 billion worth of requests which have been received since the EU referendum.

Although the Government keeps all taxes under review, going further would impose additional pressure on the public finances, to which VAT makes a significant contribution. VAT raised around £130 billion in the year 2019-20, and helps to fund key spending priorities, including on health, education, and defence.

## ■ Soft Drinks: Taxation

**Munira Wilson:**

**[103689]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how revenue from the Soft Drinks Levy was allocated in financial years (a) 2018-19 (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020-21 .

**Helen Whately:**

The Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) is not formally linked to any individual spending programme.

However, the government will continue to invest in supporting public health and tackling obesity, including the Department for Education's Holiday Activities and Food programme, which was extended by £200 million per year at the 2021 Spending Review, and the £320 million per year PE and Sport Premium.

The money allocated to these causes exceeds the revenue raised by the SDIL.

## ■ Treasury: Consultants

**Gareth Thomas:**

**[100413]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 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.

**Helen Whately:**

HM Treasury has contracted with Clifford Chance LLP in the last five years as follows:

SERVICE DESCRIPTION	START DATE	END DATE	VALUE
Provision of legal services to support the issuance of UK Sovereign Sukuk	28/10/2019	20/08/2024	£1,000,000
Provision of legal services to support the launch of the inaugural UK Green Gilt	03/03/2021	02/03/2023	£200,000
Provision of legal services supporting UK engagement with the European Commission on financial services equivalence questionnaires	04/06/2020	31/07/2020	£90,000
Provision of legal services supporting UK engagement with the European Commission on financial services equivalence questionnaires	09/04/2020	31/07/2020	£35,000
Provision of additional legal resource for Treasury Legal Advisors	01/02/2018	24/05/2019	£1,000,000

The department has not contracted with the other named suppliers in that period.

Details of ministerial meetings are published quarterly and can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

**■ UK Trade with EU****Daisy Cooper:****[100699]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many queries HMRC has received from UK businesses about the VAT regimes and operation of EU member states.

**Lucy Frazer:**

HMRC is not able to advise on the VAT regimes of EU member states and its correspondence systems do not systematically record where queries specifically relate to EU VAT regimes. When HMRC receives such enquiries, it directs businesses to guidance on EU websites or advises them to contact the relevant tax authority.

**WALES****■ Common Travel Area: Wales**

**Ruth Jones:** [\[102772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits to Wales of writing the Common Travel Area into domestic UK law.

**Simon Hart:**

The Common Travel Area (CTA) is an administrative arrangement between the UK and Ireland, as well as the Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey.

It allows British and Irish citizens to travel freely between the UK and Ireland and reside in either jurisdiction. It also facilitates the enjoyment of associated rights and privileges including the right to work, to study and to access social security benefits and health services. We have always been clear on the shared commitment to protect the rights of our citizens in each other's state, and this is already underpinned by domestic legislation, and will be updated as necessary, to ensure that the agreed CTA rights and privileges are properly reflected and Wales as part of the UK would continue to benefit from the CTA.

**■ Trade Agreements: Wales**

**Ruth Jones:** [\[102767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on how people in (a) Newport West constituency and (b) Wales can benefit from trade agreements signed by the Government.

**Simon Hart:**

I regularly meet with my ministerial colleagues to discuss a range of topics, including our future trade agreements. This includes the quarterly Inter-Ministerial Trade Advisory Groups, in addition to regular bi-lateral meetings.

Leaving the EU has given us the ability to strike our own trade deals, creating new opportunities for our excellent businesses in Wales to trade internationally. The Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is the first we have negotiated from scratch since leaving the EU and shows what we are capable of as a sovereign trading nation. This trade deal can boost Wales' economy by around £60 million. We have further achieved an agreement in Principle with New Zealand, and through this Welsh automotive companies will benefit from the removal of tariffs of up to 10% and build on their £3.4m of exports to New Zealand in 2020.

Further trade agreements in the pipeline include agreements with India, the US, Gulf Co-Operation Council, along with the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Joining CPTPP puts us into the dynamic economies of the Pacific region, with UK exports to current CPTPP countries already set to increase by 65% by 2030, equating to £37 billion for the UK as whole.

In addition to this, we are also renegotiating FTAs with Canada and Mexico later in the year to build on our existing bilateral trade relationship with these countries. These exciting trade deals will open up new markets to Welsh businesses and create exciting new export opportunities.

Businesses across Wales and the UK have the ability to seize the opportunities provided by these trade agreements, and the UK Government will continue to support businesses to achieve their trading potential. To support this vision, the UK Government has announced its new Export Strategy called 'Made in the UK, Sold to the World', with the aim of helping UK businesses hit £1 trillion in exports. This twelve-point strategy includes support for businesses through the UK Export Academy, UK Export Finance, and a new UK Tradeshow Programme, all designed to provide UK businesses with the tools they need to promote and export their products abroad, and help the UK become a nation of exporters.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ **Admiral Group: Newport**

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[99378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact on the employment rate in Newport West constituency of the Welsh-based financial services company Admiral closing its Newport office.

**Mims Davies:**

No assessment has been made.

Where redundancies do occur, the Department for Work and Pensions' Rapid Response Service (RRS) works to address the effects of job losses on individuals and on the local community. The RRS work with employers to deliver flexible, timely, and appropriate support for them and their employees and help individuals secure a job or move into self-employment quickly and ideally without the need to claim welfare benefits.

The RRS is available to private and public sector employers. Third sector employers are also eligible where the job losses affect paid workers. The RRS support can start when people are under threat of redundancy or during the period of notice.

Where individuals have not found alternative work before they lose their job, RRS support can continue for a further 13 weeks whether they make a claim for benefits or not. This is in addition to the ongoing support provided by DWP for claimants moving them forward in their journey closer to/back into employment.

DWP has provided additional support to help people into work since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, through our Plan for Jobs, including recruiting an additional 13,500 Work Coaches to provide support to unemployed people to find a job, and launching new schemes like Kickstart, Restart and Sector Work Academies Programmes.

## ■ Employment Schemes

**Alison McGovern:**

[\[98273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many work coaches there are at each job centre in the UK, broken down by job centre.

**Mims Davies:**

The total Staff in Post (SIP) for all Work Coach activity has been provided broken down by district. As of January 2022, the total number of Work Coaches in our Jobcentres is 27,049 SIP. It is not possible to give an exact number for each Jobcentre because Work Coaches work across whole of their district and sometimes beyond.

The standard DWP definition of Work Coach activity includes Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) activity. Also included here are a number of staff carrying out related activities including those in temporary Work Coach Team Leader roles.

JCP DISTRICT	SIP
Avon Somerset and Gloucestershire	836
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire	654
Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire	637
Birmingham and Solihull	946
Black Country	761
Central Scotland	343
Cheshire	359
Cumbria and Lancashire	840
Devon and Cornwall	691
Dorset Wiltshire Hampshire and Isle of Wight	1024
Durham and Tees Valley	626
East Anglia	814
East London	1257
East Scotland	467
Essex	738
Greater Manchester	1384
Kent	631

JCP DISTRICT	SIP
Leicestershire and Northamptonshire	612
Lincolnshire Nottinghamshire and Rutland	767
Mercia	717
Merseyside	874
National	111
North and Mid Wales	347
North East Scotland	483
North East Yorkshire and Humber	582
North London	1026
Northern Scotland	150
Northumberland Tyne and Wear	699
South East Wales	547
South London	1314
South West Scotland	395
South West Wales	518
South Yorkshire	651
Staffordshire and Derbyshire	749
Surrey and Sussex	877
West London	1152
West Scotland	404
West Yorkshire	1066
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>27049</b>

■ **Employment: Long Covid**

**Cat Smith:**

**[100581]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is taking to support people unable to work as a result of having long covid.

**Chloe Smith:**

The DWP offers financial support through Universal Credit and New Style Employment and Support Allowance for people affected by the pandemic, including those with long-COVID, if they satisfy eligibility criteria. In addition, people with long-COVID may be eligible to Personal Independence Payment.

Employers are legally required to pay Statutory Sick Pay to eligible employees who are off work sick including where sickness absence is due to long-COVID. Some employers may also decide to pay more, and for longer, through Occupational Sick Pay.

Furthermore, the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIAC), who advise the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions regarding Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB), are investigating whether long-COVID can be prescribed as an occupational disease for the purposes of IIDB.

**Industrial Health and Safety: Motor Sports****Alec Shelbrooke:****[100499]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Health and Safety Executive has considered making risk assessments, including protective barriers, vehicle run-off zones and noise distancing, a mandatory requirement at temporary motorsport events, including grass track meetings on farmers' fields.

**Chloe Smith:**

There is already a legal requirement to assess risk at motorsport events by identifying control measures, such as protective barriers, run-off zones and noise control. This includes temporary events such as those taking place upon farmer's fields.

Employers and organisers of such events are subject to wide ranging duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Section 2 (relating to duties owed to employees) and Section 3 (a duty to ensure the safety of persons not employed by the dutyholder, such as spectators or members of the public).

The Health and Safety Executive has produced the guidance publication HSG112 "Management of Health and Safety at Motorsport Events, [HSG112](#). Whilst this publication has a focus upon the professional sport, the information within it is of use to those planning and controlling smaller temporary events.

**Jobcentres****David Linden:****[100665]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish opening dates for each of her Department's confirmed temporary job centres.

**Mims Davies:**

The Department has published the list of temporary Jobcentres on <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/temporary-jobcentres-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic> and, in the next week, opening dates will be included for those sites that have already opened. The Department will continue to update



<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/temporary-jobcentres-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic> as more sites open. The date a site opens is dependent on a number of factors including, but not limited to, lease signing dates, planning approvals and completion of the building work required.

## ■ Jobcentres: Industrial Health and Safety

**Marion Fellows:**

**[100584]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to protect Job Centre staff's health and wellbeing when (a) conducting face-to-face appointments and (b) ensuring local work from home covid-19 guidance is followed.

**Guy Opperman:**

DWP takes the health, safety and wellbeing of colleagues very seriously and all of our offices are COVID secure. We have a suite of Health & Safety risk assessments in place developed following extensive consultation with departmental trade union representatives that cover all of the measures in place to protect staff and customers. These risk assessments are regularly reviewed, for example following changes to government guidance, including that from the respective governments in the devolved nations.

In addition, DWP offers a comprehensive Employee Assistance Programme that offers short and long-term support for any physical or mental health issues that staff face.

DWP also has a network of Mental Health First Aiders on hand across all parts of the DWP to offer immediate emotional support and also to signpost to expert support.

The DWP's network of Wellbeing Advocates are a community of staff representing all grades, job roles and geographical areas who regularly cascade key Wellbeing messages and support packages to their local teams and sites who also provide an invaluable service in feeding back to the central Wellbeing team on challenges that their colleagues are facing.

## ■ Kickstart Scheme: Social Services

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

**[102643]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many social care providers have signed up to provide placements as part of the kickstart scheme.

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

**[102644]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential for the Government's Kickstart scheme to fill vacancies in the social care sector.

**Mims Davies:**

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer given for PQ [87676](#) for a recent breakdown of Kickstart jobs made available and started by sector. This shows that as of 5<sup>th</sup> December 2021, 4,740 Kickstart jobs within the social care sector were made

available for young people to apply to and that 1,840 Kickstart jobs had been started by young people.

Kickstart jobs are categorised by the nature of the role rather than the sector of the employer. This means for example, that an administrative job within the social care sector would be categorised as 'administrative', rather than 'social care'. Therefore, it's likely that there are a number of other jobs with social care providers that have been categorised within other sectors.

We do not centrally collate information regarding jobs filled or advertised in the social care sector. To gather this would require each Kickstart application to be reviewed to ascertain the principle activities of each employer, which would incur disproportionate costs.

Kickstart jobs are additional and must not displace existing opportunities within the wider labour market. We continue to support employers to fill available jobs including those within the care sector for the remainder of the Kickstart Scheme.

More widely, DWP are working with the social care industry, and the Department of Health and Social Care, to provide our Work Coaches with the knowledge they need to identify suitable candidates and to develop relationships with social care employers in their local areas. As a result, local jobcentres are now directly connecting with employers in their area, to discuss their recruitment needs.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

## ■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Vacancies

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[\[102641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential for the kickstart scheme to fill vacancies in the haulage sector.

**Mims Davies:**

I refer the Honourable Member to PQ [87676](#) for a recent breakdown of Kickstart jobs made available and started by sector. This shows that as of 5<sup>th</sup> December 6,260 Kickstart jobs were made available within the delivery and storage sector (the nearest applicable sector category), and 3,180 of these jobs had been started by young people.

Kickstart jobs are categorised by the nature of the role rather than the sector of the employer. This means for example, that an administrative job within the haulage sector would be categorised as 'administrative', rather than 'haulage'.

Kickstart jobs are additional and must not displace existing opportunities within the wider labour market. We continue to support employers to fill available jobs including those within the haulage sector for the remainder of the Kickstart Scheme.

More widely, DWP are working with the haulage industry, and the Department for Transport, to provide our work coaches with the knowledge they need to identify suitable candidates and to develop relationships with key employers in their local areas. As a result, local jobcentres are now directly connecting with employers in their area, to discuss their recruitment needs enabling them to provide young people with the skills and knowledge they need to enter the sector.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

## ■ Restart Scheme

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[\[102642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to publish statistics on the number of people who have moved into secure employment as a result of their participation in the Restart scheme.

**Mims Davies:**

*[Holding answer 17 January 2022]:* The Restart Scheme started in July 2021 and offers a 12 month period of enhanced support to participants. The main objective for the Restart Scheme is to secure sustained employment for participants, which is achieved when a participant reaches a level of earnings equivalent to 16 hours per week at National Living Wage for 6 months, within 18 months of starting on the Scheme. This means it will take time before job outcome data is sufficiently robust and representative of Scheme performance.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

#### ■ 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.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 14 January 2022. The correct answer should have been:**

**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.

**The substances on the EU REACH candidate list were automatically carried forward to UK REACH. In future, substances will be added to the list on the basis of the best UK scientific advice, taking into account our own risk assessments.**

**Defra, the Welsh and Scottish governments have agreed an interim approach to adding new SVHCs to the list (published on gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-reach-approach-to-including-substances-of-very-high-concern-on-the-candidate-list>). This is based on expert advice from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Environment Agency (EA), as well as feedback from a range of stakeholders.**

**We believe that focusing the Candidate List on identifying substances that are genuine candidates for authorisation – the statutory purpose of the list – will more effectively enable substitution away from the most hazardous substances. The regulatory pressure from inclusion on the Candidate List can be diluted if there is little realistic chance of added substances being made subject to authorisation.**

**As part of our approach, HSE and EA will conduct analysis to identify the most effective regulatory action to manage the risks from a chemical. When**

substances are on the incorrect regulatory pathway it can lead to unintended consequences such as regrettable substitution, where a hazardous substance is replaced by a substance with similar hazards; this can then increase the time taken to effectively control the risks. Both the HSE and EA are well placed to act as a strong and effective regulator to operate UK REACH. Both organisations have substantial expertise having worked on some of the most complex dossiers under EU REACH.

This approach makes no practical change to helpful consumer information.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

#### ■ Local Government Update

##### **Minister of State for Equalities and Levelling Up Communities (Kemi Badenoch):** **[[HCWS540](#)]**

All Members will recognise the crucial role that local councils play as the frontline of our democracy and the contribution they make to our levelling up agenda. That is why the situation at Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council is of such concern.

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council has struggled for many years to resolve a variety of governance issues, including allegations of serious misconduct by both members and officers. The Council has had six different Leaders in six years and three Chief Executives over the past three years. This instability has led to a breakdown in trust, respect and confidence between those holding governance roles at the Council.

In August 2021, the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, initiated a Value for Money Governance Review into the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. In their view, until the Council is able to resolve various persistent challenges, it is at risk of not having adequate governance arrangements in place to ensure the effective discharge of its statutory responsibilities and maintain financial sustainability. This comprehensive Governance Review ("the Report"), based on evidence gathered from 75 interviews over a period of three months, was issued to the Council on 3 December 2021. It makes 45 wide-ranging recommendations, three of which are Statutory Recommendations, and in my view provides evidence of significant and systemic best value failure. I would like to thank the team at Grant Thornton for their work, and to recognise the critical importance of external audit in protecting and enhancing local accountability as we level up across the country. Copies of the Report will be deposited in the libraries of both Houses.

The Report paints a deeply troubling picture of mismanagement, a significant breakdown in trust across the Authority, and of ineffective scrutiny and accountability arrangements at the Authority. This includes, but is not limited to:

- On governance, a lack of a clear performance management framework and agreed key corporate indicators has impacted on the ability of the Leadership Team and Cabinet to take an effective grip of the key issues. The effectiveness of the Scrutiny Boards and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee need improvement.
- On culture and leadership, poor behaviour and a lack of trust across the wider organisation continues to exist. Insularity, along with poor engagement with local residents, businesses, external partners, the West Midlands Combined Authority and Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, has resulted in a lack of clarity on the Authority's key strategic priorities.

- On financial governance, there has been an ineffective approach to budget monitoring and budget setting, and there remains no visible consultation on the Council's budget setting priorities.
- On services, the time the Authority has spent responding to internal allegations and complaints has impacted on its ability to focus on service improvement. Inadequate procurement and contract management arrangements have led to poor decision-making and has impacted negatively on key services. While a recent Ofsted rating of fostering services demonstrates some positive progress with children's social care services, which were removed from council control and have been run by Sandwell Children's Trust since April 2018, some areas of significant improvement are still required.
- On capacity and capability to improve, while progress under the Interim Chief Executive Officer, Kim Bromley-Derry CBE DL is recognised, historically senior officers and members have been unable to make the changes required to move away from the past. Recruitment of a permanent Chief Executive Officer has not yet been achieved.

In light of the evidence in the Report, the Secretary of State is minded to implement the intervention package set out below. While the Secretary of State is encouraged by the "green shoots" of progress described in the Report, his view is that the risk of progress stalling or slowing is significant. He believes the proposed intervention is necessary and expedient to secure compliance with the best value duty.

I acknowledge this is not the conclusion of the Report, which states that the "green shoots" identified mitigate the risk that the Council is unable to manage and govern itself. However, I believe that on balance and in these particular circumstances the risk of government inaction in the face of evidence of best value failure is too great. Historically, the Council have been slow to improve. Furthermore, the Report is clear that it is the Interim Chief Executive Officer who is now driving change; and a recent recruitment round has failed to find a new permanent Chief Executive Officer. The Council's recovery is fragile and needs consistent leadership capacity. This should not be taken as a criticism of those who have been working hard to generate "green shoots" of recovery, in particular the interim Chief Executive Officer, and I acknowledge the good recent work of the Council to take steps in the right direction. I would also like to thank Mr Bromley-Derry's employers, McLaren Construction Group, for enabling his appointment.

I recognise that it is unprecedented to propose an intervention without a best value inspection or a government review. However, I have considered this report carefully and the evidence contained within it satisfies me that there is no need for an additional Best Value Inspection. Instead, I believe what is needed now is support for a council at the beginning of a fragile journey of recovery.

Expressed in formal terms, the Secretary of State is satisfied that Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council is failing to comply with its best value duty and he is considering exercising his powers of intervention to secure compliance with that duty. To that end, and in line with procedures laid down in the Local Government Act 1999, officials in my



department have today written to the Council asking for representations on the Report and on the proposed intervention package. That letter emphasises the importance of ensuring that the proposed intervention does not distract the Council from the improvements that are starting to be made, and that the Council should engage with the Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Challenge at the end of the month.

The proposed package is centred on the appointment of Commissioners to exercise certain and limited functions as required, for two years – it is envisaged this will be a shorter and narrower intervention than has been seen previously. The proposal is for the Council, under the oversight of the Commissioners, to prepare and implement an Improvement Plan, and report on the delivery of that Plan to the Secretary of State every six months; and for the Commissioners to appoint a permanent Chief Executive Officer within 18 months and then step back from the Council.

I expect the Council to continue to take the lead on their recovery. Given the gravity of the Report's findings, the Secretary of State must consider what would happen if the Council failed to deliver the necessary changes, at the necessary speed.

The Secretary of State is, consequently, proposing to direct the transfer to Commissioners all functions associated with:

- The governance and scrutiny of strategic decision making by the Authority.
- The appointment and dismissal of persons to positions the holders of which are to be designated as statutory officers, and the designation of those persons as statutory officers.

The new Leadership Team are putting in place the necessary foundations and the Secretary of State envisages that the Commissioners will work closely with them to build on the work they have begun. I hope it will not be necessary for the Commissioners to use these powers, but they must be empowered to do so if they consider that required improvement and reforms are not being delivered.

The Commissioners will work closely with Emma Taylor, Chief Executive of Sandwell Children's Trust, and Mark Gurrey, the Department for Education's children's services adviser and Chair of the Council's improvement board for children's services. This will ensure that the improvements that he has overseen to date through the Department for Education's statutory intervention continue to be made, and that services for Sandwell's vulnerable children and families are delivered to an acceptable standard.

We are inviting representations from the Council on the Report and the Secretary of State's proposals by 11 February. We are also seeking their views on moving to a four yearly election cycle at the earliest opportunity and how best to achieve this.

We want to provide the opportunity for members and officers of the Council, and any other interested parties, especially the residents of Sandwell, to make their views on the Secretary of State's proposals known. Should the Secretary of State decide to intervene along the lines described here, he will make the necessary statutory directions under the 1999 Act and appoint Commissioners. I will update the House in due course.

The Government does not take these steps lightly and recognises and respects the role of local councils in our communities and our democracy. The Government also recognises the importance of councils having an effective relationship with their local auditor. I urge all councils to consider whether they could be doing more to ensure they are delivering the good governance that residents deserve, including considering the governance risk and resilience toolkit developed by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. Despite the rare cases like Sandwell, as a whole, local authorities in England have a good record of service delivery, transparency, probity, scrutiny, and accountability. It is a reputation worth protecting. Local people deserve better than this from their local councils.