



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 19 January 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:31 P.M., 19 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

■ Disability: Crimes of Violence

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[102715\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published 28 July 2021, what progress she has made on forming the Crown Prosecution Service panel to advise on improvements for support to prosecutors and the Policy Statement on Disability Hate Crime and Other Crimes against Disabled People.

Alex Chalk:

A National Scrutiny Panel on Disability Hate Crime was convened by the CPS in March 2021. The Panel consisted of community stakeholders, academics and police. Discussion focused on a deep-dive into the handling of disability hate crime cases. As a result, the CPS will this month circulate a bulletin to all prosecutors. This will highlight key findings, lessons and top tips arising from the review. In addition, operational guidance has been refreshed and will be launched this month. It will provide prosecutors with an updated appreciation of how disability hate crime occurs, based on the lived experience of disabled people.

Building on this review, a refreshed communications approach is aiming to raise awareness of hate crime and in particular the confidence to report. The CPS Hate Crime webpage has been refreshed, along with prosecution guidance, policy statements, operational guidance and promotional material.

■ Prime Minister: Prime Minister's Questions

Ruth Jones:

[\[102775\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, whether she had discussions with the Prime Minister before his oral answer of 12 January to the hon. Member for Vale of Clwyd on the content of that answer.

Ruth Jones:

[\[102776\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, whether she was involved in drafting the contents of the Prime Minister's oral answer of 12 January to the hon. Member for Vale of Clwyd.

Ruth Jones:

[\[102777\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, when she first knew that the Prime Minister was present at the gathering in the Downing Street garden on 20 May 2020.

Suella Braverman:

The Law Officers have regular discussions with Ministerial colleagues across government on a range of topics.

By convention, whether the Law Officers have been asked for formal advice, and the contents of any such advice, is not disclosed outside Government.

Public Sector: Misconduct**Emily Thornberry:**[\[104303\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, pursuant to the Answer of 10 January 2021 to Question 98226 on Public Sector: Misconduct, on what date the Solicitor General's decision was communicated to (a) the family of Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry and (b) the officials responsible for publishing the outcome of unduly lenient sentence referrals.

Alex Chalk:

The Solicitor General communicated his decision to officials on the morning of 24 December 2021. Where a referral is made to this office by a victim, their family or a Member of Parliament, the Law Officers communicate the outcome of their decision in writing. This case was referred by members of the public. Due to the volume of referrals received, we are unable to provide individual responses to members of the public. The outcomes of all decisions are communicated to the Crown Prosecution Service who in turn advise others concerned.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY**Airbnb: Expenditure****Bill Esterson:**[\[104327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what purposes his Department spent £9121.42 on Airbnb on 20 September 2021.

George Freeman:

The Department spent £9,121.42 on an Airbnb private house rental for two weeks covering COP26 in Glasgow. This cost covered the accommodation for 4 members of the UK delegation.

Bounty Joy: Company Accounts**Gareth Thomas:**[\[101614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether plans to require Companies House to prosecute Bounty Joy Ltd for not producing publicly available accounts; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

All limited companies must file their accounts at Companies House each year. Failure to do so is an offence and can result in a criminal prosecution of each of the company's directors.

The law also imposes an automatic civil penalty on a company if the accounts are filed late. The period allowed for filing is set out in law, although a company may apply to extend this in certain circumstances. The amount of the penalty depends on how late the accounts are when delivered and whether the company is private or public at the date of the balance sheet. Penalties are doubled if the company accounts are filed late in consecutive years.

The filing deadline for this company has not yet been reached.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[94459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when guidance will be made available for businesses expected to implement NHS Covid Pass entry for indoor and outdoor gatherings.

Paul Scully:

The Working Safely guidance was updated on 15 December to reflect Plan B measures including the NHS COVID Pass. Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19/restaurants-pubs-bars-nightclubs-and-takeaway-services#hospitality-2-2>.

■ Companies House

Antony Higginbotham:

[\[101855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department plans to introduce reforms to Companies House.

Paul Scully:

The Department's plans for Register Reform and improvements to the powers of Companies House will deliver significant improvements to the integrity of the UK's register of companies and assist greatly in the fight against economic crime.

We will legislate when Parliamentary time allows.

■ Dementia: Research

Chi Onwurah:

[\[103545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 94366 on Dementia: Research, how much the Government spent on dementia research in the financial year 2020-2021.

George Freeman:

[Holding answer 18 January 2022]: I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 14 January 2022 to Question 101715.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Expenditure

Bill Esterson:

[\[104329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to BEIS transparency data: spending over £500, published on 13 January, to which companies did his Department authorise payments of £41,833 to anonymised retailers to support market surveillance activities between July and August 2021.

George Freeman:

The Office for Product Safety and Standards is a Market Surveillance Authority, based within BEIS, that makes test purchases for goods as part of its enforcement

activities. Within the legislation there are different obligations for the different organisations in the supply chain. Whilst these purchases are from retailers rather than manufacturers these retailers could potentially play a role in proceedings if an investigation arose. Making this commercially sensitive information public could compromise a future investigation.

■ Employment Bill

Peter Aldous:

[\[101708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department is making on the Employment Bill; and when he plans to introduce that legislation.

Paul Scully:

The Employment Bill will support the Government's aim to build 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. COVID-19 is having a profound impact on the labour market, so it is right that we introduce the Employment Bill when we are sure it will address the needs of businesses and workers in the post-Covid economy. We will bring forward the Employment Bill when the Parliamentary time allows it. In the meantime, we will continue to take necessary action to support businesses and protect jobs.

We have already made significant progress in bringing forward legislation to protect workers' rights, including:

- Giving all workers the right to receive a statement of their rights from day one;
- Introducing new rights to workers to receive a payslip and for payslips for hourly paid workers to include the numbers of hours worked;
- Quadrupling the maximum additional penalty fine that Employment Tribunals can use for employers who treat their workers badly;
- Closing a loophole which sees agency workers employed on cheaper rates than permanent workers;
- Extending the holiday pay reference period from 12 to 52 weeks, ensuring those in seasonal or atypical roles get fair holiday pay; and

Announcing a new naming scheme for employers who fail to pay Employment Tribunal awards.

■ Foreign Companies: Property

Antony Higginbotham:

[\[101853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he expects his Department to (a) conclude considerations and (b) establish a beneficial ownership register of overseas individuals and entities which own UK property.

Paul Scully:

As set out in my Written Ministerial Statement made on 2nd November 2021, the Government remains committed to establishing a new beneficial ownership register of overseas entities that own UK property. This register will help combat money laundering and achieve greater transparency in the UK property market. We are continuing to finalise the draft legislation, to align with the broader reform of Companies House. We will legislate when parliamentary time allows.

Fuel Poverty**Jim Shannon:**[\[101723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to provide additional support for energy bills to fuel poor and vulnerable households in winter 2022.

Greg Hands:

The Government already supports low-income and fuel poor households with their energy bills through the Warm Home Discount which provides eligible households with a £140 rebate on their winter energy bills. Additionally, Winter Fuel Payments and Cold Weather Payments help to ensure the most vulnerable are better able to heat their homes over the colder months. The Government has also provided an extra £500 million for local authorities through the new Household Support Fund to provide help to millions of the most in need and engages constantly with energy companies and consumer groups on further steps to take.

Heating: Impact Assessments**Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[103508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department conducted an impact assessment on vulnerable and protected groups for the Heat and Buildings Strategy, as required by the Equality Act 2010.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 18 January 2022]: In the Heat and Buildings Strategy, the Government provides a strategic overview of the existing and planned policy interventions required to meet decarbonisation ambitions in heat and buildings. In this strategy, the Government detailed a coherent package of policies, comprising existing, planned and future policies which are yet to be fully developed. Each policy will undergo its own equalities impact assessment ahead of its final design.

Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus**Jim Shannon:**[\[101726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he (a) has had and (b) will have discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on further support for the hospitality industry whilst any covid-19 restrictions and guidance are in place which will adversely affect those businesses.

Paul Scully:

In order to support all businesses across the UK economy throughout the Covid-19 pandemic we have provided businesses with an unprecedented support package of £400 billion, including grants, loans, business rates relief, VAT cuts and the job retention scheme. This includes a total of over £26 billion in business grants.

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced on 21 December that additional support will be available for businesses in recognition of the impact that that the spread of Omicron variant had on hospitality over the Christmas period. The Government is providing one-off grants of up to £6,000 per premises for businesses in the hospitality and leisure sectors in England plus more than £100 million discretionary funding will be made available for local authorities to support other businesses. Around 200,000 businesses will be eligible for business grants which will be administered by Local Authorities. The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) fund is open until March 2022.

The Department continues to speak regularly with the hospitality sector to understand their needs and represent these across Government.

■ Music: Video on Demand**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[100426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that music makers receive equitable remuneration when contracting their product to streaming platforms.

George Freeman:

A comprehensive programme of work is underway to investigate the issues raised by the Digital, Media, Culture and Sport Select Committee's inquiry into the economics of music streaming. This includes Government-funded research and extensive stakeholder engagement to strengthen the evidence base needed to determine whether intervention is warranted.

■ Natural Gas: Storage**Daisy Cooper:**[\[97134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made any assessment of the costs, benefits and potential merits of restoring the Rough Storage Complex Facility to store natural gas on an interim basis while the Government's hydrogen strategy is under development.

Greg Hands:

Gas storage will not lower the price of gas in the short term as the United Kingdom exists in a global market.

Rough Storage could play an important part in Hydrogen storage as was set out in the Hydrogen Strategy, published in August 2021.

■ Security: Pay

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[101632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to ensure that wages within the security industry rise above the rate of inflation.

Paul Scully:

The Government announced that on 1 April 2022, the National Living Wage (for workers aged 23 and over) will rise by 6.6% to £9.50. The independent Low Pay Commission recommended this rate and concluded that workers should see their pay rise faster than inflation.

The minimum wage applies to all sectors of the UK economy, including the security industry.

■ Shipping: Finance

Ruth Jones:

[\[102765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much of Innovate UK's increased budget will be made available to support the maritime sector.

George Freeman:

Following the Spending Review, BEIS will set R&D budgets through to 2024/25. Further details of how this funding will be allocated will be announced in due course.

■ Supply Chains

Patrick Grady:

[\[104352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing legislation to impose a duty on all companies, including parent companies, to prevent (a) human rights abuses and (b) environmental abuses in their global supply chains.

Paul Scully:

The UK has a strong record on human rights and environmental awareness and protection, much of which results from our framework of legislation. The UK Government expects all British companies to adhere to the rule of law and build respect for human rights and the environment into all aspects of their operations both domestically and in other territories.

The Companies Act 2006 includes the need for Public Interest Entities with 500 or more employees to describe its business relationships which are likely to cause adverse impacts, and how it manages risks arising from matters such as environmental considerations and human rights.

Under international law, there is no requirement for States to regulate the extraterritorial activities of their businesses. It is up to individual States to protect against and prosecute human rights and other abuses that are committed within their borders.

CABINET OFFICE■ **10 Downing Street: Repairs and Maintenance**

Florence Eshalomi: [\[104423\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether any repairs were carried out at Number 10 Downing Street estate between 17 and 24 April 2021.

Michael Ellis:

The Downing Street complex is a working building and also contains two Ministerial residences. As has always been the case, refurbishments and maintenance are made periodically. Substantive refurbishment works are outlined in the Cabinet Office's annual report and accounts.

■ **Business: Closures**

Seema Malhotra: [\[105543\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate his Department has made of the number of business deaths that have occurred during the last three recorded quarters.

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 PQ105543 \(1\).pdf\]](#)

■ **Government Departments: Civil Servants**

Rachel Hopkins: [\[103709\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make a statement on the socio-economic diversity of civil servants in the (a) Treasury and (b) Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Michael Ellis:

As committed in the Declaration on Government Reform and in order to better serve the public, the government must ensure it draws on the talent of people from the widest possible range of geographical, social and career backgrounds. We will make sure that citizens who have experienced disadvantages in their early lives are able to flourish in public service.

The hon. Member should direct their question to HM Treasury and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to request statements on the socio-economic diversity of Civil Servants in those respective departments.

■ Ministers: Leave**Kirsten Oswald:**[\[105589\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November 2021 to Question 68322, on Ministers: Leave, and with reference to the Written Ministerial Statement of 15 July 2021, HCWS185, when the Government plans to present a report to Parliament setting out considerations and proposals on adoption and parental leave, absences for sickness and other reasons and unpaid roles.

Michael Ellis:

Policy development in these areas is ongoing. These are complex policy matters and the Government is giving them careful and thorough consideration. It remains the Government's intention to lay a report before Parliament in due course.

■ Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman: Postal Services**Peter Grant:**[\[104354\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment the Parliamentary Health & Services Ombudsman has made of the extent of the technical problems with its postal mailbox in summer 2021 which led to some submitted complaints not being processed.

Michael Ellis:

We have been informed by officials at the Parliamentary Health & Services Ombudsman (PHSO) that the technical problems were caused by third-party servers used by the House of Commons. This issue was swiftly resolved by the House of Commons IT team. Members wanting to follow up on any cases submitted during this time should contact the PHSO directly via the MP mailbox as usual.

COP26**■ Business: Climate Change****Mr Gagan Mohindra:**[\[905166\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what assessment he has made of the role of businesses in implementing the Glasgow Climate Pact.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The private sector has an absolutely vital role to play in implementing the Glasgow Climate Pact, building on the success it helped achieve at COP26 itself.

In particular, through taking immediate action to deliver on their commitments and supporting initiatives that were launched in Glasgow.

■ COP26

James Sunderland: [\[905165\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what priorities he has for his COP26 Presidency year.

David Johnston: [\[905171\]](#)

What priorities he has for his COP26 Presidency year.

Mark Fletcher: [\[905172\]](#)

What priorities he has for his COP26 Presidency year.

Alok Sharma:

Throughout the UK's Presidency year, we will work with Egypt as the incoming Presidency, and all countries, to deliver on the agreed outcomes in the Glasgow Climate Pact and keep 1.5 in reach.

In doing so we will continue to champion science, especially the IPCC and its major reports in 2022, and the urgency of action on emissions reductions, adaptation, finance to support developing nations and loss and damage.

■ COP26: Staff

Sarah Green: [\[905169\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he is taking to ensure that the reduction of staff in the COP26 unit does not affect the delivery of COP26 commitments.

Alok Sharma:

We will maintain a team of around 140-150 officials in the COP Unit.

The Unit will continue to work closely with other government departments to ensure we build on and secure the legacy of our COP Presidency and the UK's international reputation as a climate leader.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's diplomatic network will remain essential to our international efforts, as will leadership from other government departments.

■ Hydrogen: Climate Change

Jacob Young: [\[905167\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps the Government is taking to meet commitments made on hydrogen as part of the Glasgow Breakthroughs launched at COP26.

Greg Hands:

The UK is collaborating closely with partners to embed the Breakthrough Agenda, reinforcing the international leadership on hydrogen delivered under our G7 and COP Presidencies.

A report will be published on the global state of transition in Breakthrough sectors, and leading actors will convene to discuss accelerating Hydrogen Breakthrough delivery.

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Rachael Maskell:

[\[104357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many homes his Department has provided to people arriving under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence works closely with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and the Home Office to identify where we can best support those under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy.

Around 550 Service Family Accommodation properties have been made available, however this is not intended as a long-term or settled housing solution and the standard is a 12-month lease. There may be options for extensions on a case-by-case basis in discussion with the relevant Local Authority based on Service need.

■ Ajax Vehicles

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[104301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the report entitled HS&EP Ajax Noise and Vibration Review, Director Health, Safety and Environmental Protection, published December 2021, which office was responsible for enacting the preliminary findings, published 10 September on a drop of maximum speed to 20kph from 30kph to further reduce risk during the ATDU trials for the AJAX Armoured Fighting Vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

The office responsible for considering the advice provided in the preliminary findings of the Royal Navy's Institute of Naval Medicine was the Defence Equipment & Support Ajax Delivery Team.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[104302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to point number 50 of his Department's HS&EP Ajax Noise and Vibration Review, which officeholder was responsible for acting on the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory's concerns that there was an error with the General Dynamics UK noise and vibration calculator that meant crews were exposed to significantly higher levels of noise than previously thought.

Jeremy Quin:

The office responsible for considering the advice provided by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory is the Defence Equipment & Support Ajax Delivery Team.

■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[104300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2022 to Question 100451 on Ajax Vehicles: Procurement, who at General Dynamics is responsible for implementing QA checks as vehicles arrive from Spain.

Jeremy Quin:

General Dynamics (UK)'s Quality Assurance Department is responsible for implementing these QA checks.

■ Annington Homes: Empty Property**Rachael Maskell:** [\[104355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many empty homes does Annington holds on behalf of his Department.

Rachael Maskell: [\[104356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many units of empty property his Department directly holds that can be used or repurposed for residential accommodation.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) leases 37,620 properties in England and Wales that are owned by Annington Homes Ltd (AHL). Of these, 7,230 are vacant. No properties are leased from AHL in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In the UK, there are a total of 9,230 vacant Service Family Accommodation (SFA) properties. A total of 4,629 are required by the MOD. The remaining 4,601 have either been identified for disposal or are in process for modernisation.

The MOD is required to retain an overall management margin of short-term, empty, properties to ensure their availability for when Service Personnel (SP) apply for accommodation, and to also allow for intrusive major improvement works to be carried out.

Information on other units of vacant property that could be repurposed for residential accommodation is not held.

■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and War Pensions**Owen Thompson:** [\[102707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure transparency in the process by which Veterans UK produces a statement of case for War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Tribunal hearings.

Leo Docherty:

A full copy of the statement of case is provided to the appellant with all documents used to make the decision, and the appellant is then given the opportunity to raise any concerns or make any comments on the same.

Owen Thompson:

[\[102709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, who is responsible for preparing the statement of case during a War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Tribunal.

Leo Docherty:

The First Tier Tribunal Rules states the "decision maker" must provide a response as soon as is reasonably practicable following receipt of an appeal. In practice, this is prepared by caseworkers from the Veterans UK Operational Appeals team and peer checked before dispatch.

Owen Thompson:

[\[102711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Tribunal process.

Leo Docherty:

The First-tier Tribunal War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Chamber is administered by the HM Courts and Tribunals Service, to ensure that it is independent of the Ministry of Defence (MOD). As such, this is not a question which can be addressed by the MOD.

■ **Armed Forces: Disability**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[102720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy, what plans his Department has published to bring more disabled people into the civilian workforce to meet its target of 15.3 per cent by 2030; and what progress has been made towards that target as of 12 January 2022.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is committed to creating the best possible working environment for, and maximising the potential of, all our people. Defence has made commitments to the new Government wide Disability Strategy and have been developing new working models and policies to create a better working environment for Defence people that require assistance. As part of the National Disability Strategy, the MOD committed to publishing a plan to bring more disabled people into the civilian workforce and achieve our 15.3% target. We had hoped to have this in place by September 2021, as stated in the Strategy, but this has not proved possible, and we aim to do so as soon as practicable. The most recent available statistics show that, as of 1 April 2021, the Defence civilian disability representation rate was 11.9%.

■ **Armed Forces: Workplace Pensions**

Owen Thompson:

[\[102714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether those who served in the armed forces for less than five years and paid into the Armed Forces Pension Scheme prior to the minimum criteria of five years reckonable service coming into force are entitled to pension payments.

Leo Docherty:

Armed Forces Pension Schemes are non-contributory, Service personnel do not 'pay in'. If the Service person did not meet the minimum reckonable service requirement for the pension policy in place at the time of their discharge, then there would be no pension entitlement.

Ministry of Defence: Consultants**Gareth Thomas:****[101600]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has held (a) any financial or consultancy contracts and (b) meetings with representatives of (i) Clifford Chance LLP, (ii) FTI Consulting and (iii) Fenchurch Advisory Partners in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

A search has found no contracts awarded by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to (i) Clifford Chance LLP, (ii) FTI Consulting and (iii) Fenchurch Advisory Partners in the last ten years (this would not preclude them being engaged by a Prime as a Sub-Contractor). Clifford Chance LLP acts as legal advisor to the MOD owned company, International Military Services Ltd. Officials have met with Clifford Chance LLP in connection with this appointment. Details of any other possible meetings with these companies across the Department are not held centrally.

Information about the contracts that we place with industry is available on gov.uk as part of our MOD Trade, Industry and Contracts statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/defence-trade-and-industry-index>.

In addition, MOD contracts worth over £10,000 are published on the Government's Contracts Finder website, which is available on gov.uk at:

<https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>.

Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly and can be found on gov.uk at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings-with-external-organisations-in-the-ministry-of-defence>.

National Flagship: Construction**John Healey:****[101624]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether there are targets for the use of British steel in the construction of the National Flagship.

Mr Ben Wallace:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave on 28 July 2021 to Question 26101 to the Member for Houghton and Sunderland South (Bridget Phillipson).

Attachments:

1. [National Flagship: Iron and Steel \[UIN 26101.docx\]](#)

■ Ukraine: Cybercrime

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[104338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, in light of the cyber attack on the Ukrainian Government on 14 January 2022, whether he is taking steps to advise the Ukrainian Government on strengthening its cyber defences.

James Heapey:

The UK Government has a longstanding relationship with Ukraine, providing support and advice in many areas, including security assistance and defence reform. Since 2015, the UK has helped to build the resilience and defensive capabilities of the Ukrainian armed forces through Operation ORBITAL.

The UK regularly engages with the Ukrainian Government to support the implementation of their cyber strategy in addition to close political cooperation and programme support.

■ Veterans UK

Owen Thompson:

[\[102708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the governance structure is of Veterans UK.

Leo Docherty:

Veterans UK is a business unit of Defence Business Services (DBS) led by a Chief Executive and is one of 12 Enabling Organisations within the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

The MOD's Enabling Organisations are governed through independently chaired boards with a majority of non-executive members, Corporate Plans including agreed Key Performance Indicators, and regular Performance and Risk Reviews. The MOD's Chief Operating Officer is responsible for operating these mechanisms.

■ War Pensions

Owen Thompson:

[\[102712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the minimum criteria of five years reckonable service for claiming a war pension came into force.

Owen Thompson:

[\[102713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that service personnel are aware of the minimum criteria of five years reckonable service for claiming a war pension.

Leo Docherty:

There is no minimum reckonable service requirement to qualify for a War Pension.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Arts: Self-employed**

Caroline Lucas: [\[101689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the announcement of 23 December 2021 on £1.5million of additional funding for arts freelancers in England, what estimate the Government has made of the proportion of the arts freelance workforce that will benefit from that fund.

Nigel Huddleston:

We recognise the significant challenge the pandemic poses to our arts and creative sectors and to the many individuals and freelancers working across these industries.

Government funding via Arts Council England will provide an immediate £1.5 million emergency support to support freelancers affected by the pandemic, alongside a further £1.35 million contribution from the theatre sector. This will provide grants of £650,000 each directly to the Theatre Artists Fund, Help Musicians, and £200,000 to a-n, the Artists Information Company, a charity for visual artists which will distribute cash to freelancers over the coming weeks. We are keeping the situation under review, and will consider further interventions as needed.

Freelancers are also supported through the unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund support package of almost £ 2 billion, which has helped ensure the venues and organisations which support and employ freelancers have survived the pandemic.

We will continue to work closely with freelancers and organisations across the sectors to see how we can best provide support to those affected.

■ Internet: Safety

Julian Knight: [\[105581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to undertake a child impact assessment on the Online Safety Bill.

Chris Philp:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave to the Member for Sunderland Central on 11 January, [UIN 96883](#).

■ Social Media: Abuse

Jim Shannon: [\[102628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if her Department will hold discussions with social media firms to help ensure that they conduct investigations into allegations of incidents of online abuse.

Chris Philp:

Ministers and officials have regular meetings and discussions with social media platforms on a range of issues, including to discuss incidents of online abuse. Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly on GOV.UK.

Under the draft Online Safety Bill, social media firms will need to protect users from illegal abuse. Services will need to have effective systems in place to minimise and remove illegal content and protect children from harmful abuse. Major platforms will also need to address legal but harmful content for adults. Priority categories of legal but harmful content for adults will be set out in secondary legislation and these are likely to include some forms of online abuse.

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.

■ **Swimming: Kent**

Rosie Duffield:

[\[104378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of places in swimming lessons for (a) adults and (b) children in (i) Canterbury constituency and (b) Kent.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government recognises the importance of ensuring public access to indoor and outdoor pools. Swimming is a great way for people of all ages to stay fit and healthy as well as being a crucial life skill in terms of water safety.

The Government has provided a range of support for swimming pools during the pandemic. The £100 million National Leisure Recovery Fund supported the reopening of local authority swimming pools throughout the country. Local Authorities in Kent were awarded £2,855,093 through the National Leisure Recovery Fund, of which £374,030 was awarded to Canterbury City Council. Sport England has awarded over £166,000 for specific investments in swimming in Kent since 2012.

■ **Youth Services**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[101819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to provide accessible youth services which are open every day of the week.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government recognises the vital role that accessible youth services and activities play in improving the life chances and wellbeing of young people. This is why DCMS is investing £560 million in youth services in England over the next 3 years, including the Youth Investment Fund (YIF) and our ongoing support for the National Citizen Service. This will transform the government's offer for young people and level up opportunities right across the country. This funding builds on more than £12 billion given to Local Authorities this year who have a statutory duty to allocate funding to youth services in line with local need.

■ Youth Services: Finance

Mike Amesbury: [\[101817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of current funding levels for youth services; and what steps is she taking to release the Youth Investment Fund in full.

Mike Amesbury: [\[101818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of the sustainability of Government funding for youth services.

Nigel Huddleston:

I would like to refer the honourable member to Parliamentary Question [88971](#), regarding adequacy of the current funding levels for youth services:

To kickstart the Youth Investment Fund, £10 million will be spent this year in key levelling up areas. This will enable local youth providers to invest in capital projects that expand the reach, number and range of services they currently offer. Further details including investment areas and eligibility criteria, alongside plans regarding the remainder of the fund, will be announced in due course.

The Government recognises that local youth provision relies on a mix of statutory and voluntary sector provision. The Youth Investment Fund will seek to build on locally available provision and will encourage bids that show all partners working together to maximise the impact of investment to help create sustainable funding for the new facilities.

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices and Vocational Education: Swindon

Justin Tomlinson: [\[102620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of people in (a) apprenticeships and (b) vocational educations in (i) Swindon and (b) England.

Alex Burghart:

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

Apprenticeship participation for Swindon between academic years 2018/19 and 2020/21 is contained in the below table:

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Participation	3,030	2,920	2,720

More data on apprenticeship participation by region can be found here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/fast-track/7cb8ccbd-43d2-4909-822d-6cac2fae30eb>

Apprenticeship participation for England between 2018/19 and 2020/21 is contained in the below table:

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
England - Participation	742,400	719,000	713,000

More information on apprenticeship participation can be explored here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/8b98defb-9b2b-4edd-89a5-4177bbf27fed>

■ Education: Finance

Bridget Phillipson:

[104326]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the (i) name of each local authority in receipt of monies for the Wellbeing for Education Recovery Grant, (b) amount of money granted to each of those authorities in 2021-2022, (b) number of children of school age resident in the area of each of those authorities and (c) amount of money per school age child that grant represents for each of those authorities.

Will Quince:

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

A grant determination letter for 2021-22 was published on 10 June 2021, confirming the funding allocations for all local authorities in receipt of the grant. The funding allocations were based on the number of state-funded settings per upper tier local authority. The grant determination letter for 2021-22 can be found here:

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

Wellbeing for Education Recovery grants are intended to be spent in the 2021-22 financial year by local authorities on:

- helping local schools and colleges to navigate existing provision and available support for wellbeing and mental health
- continuing to deliver or expand previous Wellbeing for Education Return training for education staff

- providing ongoing support and advice for schools and colleges that need it
- supporting schools and colleges to plan for, conduct or refresh local assessments of current and anticipated needs for mental health or wellbeing support.

The grants are not intended to be spent on interventions with children and young people, and consequently, providing a breakdown of funding on a per child basis would not be meaningful in this context and cannot be provided.

■ Education: Social Mobility

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[102610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what changes his Department made to (a) guidance for schools, (b) Departmental practice and (c) funding decisions as a result of the independent evaluation of the implementation of Opportunity Areas published in October 2018.

Will Quince:

The Implementation of Opportunity Areas independent evaluation, published in October 2018, looked at how the Opportunity Area (OA) programme was initially established. It highlighted the positive work carried out in setting up the OAs, including the collaboration between local stakeholders and the department's delivery teams, the development of clear delivery plans, and the commitment in each area to improving young people's social mobility.

The evaluation's recommendations influenced (a) the way the department works with schools in those areas, for example in the way that schools are supported on teacher recruitment and retention; (b) the development of other departmental policies and practices, such as the setting up of Opportunity North East, which involved strong engagement with local stakeholders and the development of a clear, agreed delivery plan; and (c) funding decisions, such as the decision to allocate longer-term funding to the OAs, to allow the changes they are making to be embedded. The OA programme has continued to evolve and develop since that report. In particular, the departments close, on-going engagement with the schools in those areas has helped them to respond to the difficult issues emerging from the COVID-19 outbreak.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[102611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to embed the learning from the Opportunity Areas projects into its policies and practices; and what targets he has set for the implementation of such learning by his Department.

Will Quince:

One of the two key objectives of the Opportunity Areas (OA) programme is to identify what works in these areas, capturing which challenges all areas share and what is unique to a particular place; and spreading effective practice to other areas. As one of the key objectives, sharing learning is embedded within the programme, rather than having specific targets set against it.

Our sharing learning strategy has three main strands. Firstly, each of the 12 OAs has been twinned with one or more non-OA areas facing similar challenges and is delivering programmes in those areas, directly sharing effective practice from the OA programme. Secondly, the department has published a set of case studies from every OA, detailed effective practice, and is now publishing a series of thematic guides to share our learning from the OA programme on particular issues. These are available for national policy makers, local authorities and other stakeholders right across the country to draw on. The published guides so far include case studies to support teacher recruitment, careers advice and guidance, health and education, and early years. Thirdly, we are publishing a national process evaluation this summer which will identify key learning from the OA's place-based approach to delivery. This will set out what has worked well on the programme as well as identifying the key barriers to effective delivery.

In addition to the above, the department's OAs team has worked with officials across government to share the lessons on place-based working learnt from the OA programme, particularly in regard to supporting and developing local leadership.

Details of the published thematic guides can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/opportunity-areas-insight-guides>. Case studies from every OA can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/753695/DFE_-_Opportunity_Areas-One_Year_On_.PDF.

■ National Tutoring Programme

Stephen Morgan:

[103666]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils have started tuition courses through the National Tutoring Partnership, by region.

Mr Robin Walker:

The National Tutoring Programme aims to deliver up to 2 million courses this year, and up to 90 million tuition hours by the 2024/25 academic year across the programme's three pillars. Schools have the freedom to enrol the pupils they think could benefit most.

The programme is on course to deliver its objectives. Since September we have seen more than 300,000 courses started, almost the same number as the whole of last year. 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. A course consists of 15 tuition hours, meaning that pupils who need it most will be receiving millions of hours of high-quality support.

The department does not currently publish regional performance data. We will consider doing so going forward. We will continue to work closely with the delivery partner to ensure the tuition partner and academic mentor pillars fulfil their objectives by the end of the academic year and will publish further data for the spring and summer terms later this year.

■ Numeracy

Munira Wilson:

[\[101845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department plans to make the secondary legislation on the multiplication tables check.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department amended the Education Order 2003 (National Curriculum, Key Stage 2 Assessment Arrangements, England) in 2019 to make provision for the statutory administration of the multiplication tables check (MTC). This is for all eligible year 4 pupils from the 2019/20 academic year. Due to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, the department cancelled all primary assessments including the MTC in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years, and disapplied the legislation for these assessments for these two academic years.

The department has confirmed that statutory primary assessments will take place in the 2021/22 academic year, including the MTC.

■ Physical Education

Rosie Duffield:

[\[104379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on fulfilling the core objectives of the national curriculum physical education programme for primary school children.

Will Quince:

The department recognises that the extended school closures have had a substantial impact on children and young people's education.

While we do not collect detailed data on PE outcomes, we have been monitoring the effect of the COVID-19 outbreak on education. The department's school snapshot panel survey in December 2020 provided insights into the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on PE provision, showing a mixed picture. 73% of schools had changed their delivery of PE in some way, for 90% the change was around delivering different or modified activities. 19% of all schools reported increased PE time, for example due to pupils attending school in PE kit reducing changing time, and 15% of all schools reported reduced time for PE often due to the lack of appropriate inside space. The school recovery report of January 2022 shows that whilst some schools report increased hours for PE, 56% of primary schools have reported reducing hours for some subjects, such as PE.

The department's COVID-19 guidance has supported schools to continue to provide PE, sport and physical activity through COVID-19 restrictions, and online PE lessons have been available through Oak National Academy.

PE will play an important role in supporting recovery. We are continuing to support schools to provide high quality PE. Primary schools continue to receive the £320 million PE and sport premium, which is supporting improvements to the quality of the PE, sport and physical activity which they offer. In October 2021 the government also

announced nearly £30 million a year will go towards improving the teaching of PE at primary school, as well as to improving and opening up school sport facilities in England.

■ **Pregnancy: Vulnerable Adults**

Rachael Maskell: [\[101783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the pause programme on preventing successive pregnancies in vulnerable women.

Rachael Maskell: [\[101784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department is providing to ensure the efficient delivery of the pause programme throughout the UK.

Will Quince:

The November 2020 independent evaluation of the Department for Education funded Pause programme, reported a statistically significant reduction in rates of infants (under 12 months) entering care in local authorities with a Pause practice, compared to an increase in comparator sites over the same period. There were an estimated 215, or 30%, fewer children over 3 years and 5 sites compared to the comparator local authorities.

The estimated benefit to cost ratios associated with these effects are £4.50 per £1 spent on Pause over 4 years and £7.61 per £1 spent over 18 years. Wider observed impacts for female participants include:

- improved emotional wellbeing and reductions in psychological distress;
- housing and financial security, with significant reductions in rent arrears, and the number of women who were homeless or in unstable accommodation almost halved;
- increased engagement in education, employment, and specialist services, including a 60% increase in the proportion of women in paid employment;
- improvements in key relationships in women's lives, including relationships with existing children and their carers, with a 25% increase in the proportion of women reporting face-to-face contact with children.

There are currently 17 local authorities delivering Pause projects with £3.6 million of funding from the department's innovation fund. In 2021, we provided additional funding for 3 regions to scale and spread Pause projects under strand 3 of the Recovery and Build Back Better Fund.

■ **Schools: Coronavirus**

Stephen Morgan: [\[103669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many applications were made to the Coronavirus workforce fund for schools in each month of 2021.

Stephen Morgan: [\[103670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many applications to the Coronavirus workforce fund for schools were accepted in each month of 2021.

Stephen Morgan: [\[103671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many applications to the Coronavirus workforce fund for schools were made to cover teacher absences in each month since the inception of that fund.

Stephen Morgan: [\[103672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many applications to the Coronavirus workforce fund for schools were made to cover support staff absences in each month since the inception of that fund.

Stephen Morgan: [\[103673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many applications to the Coronavirus workforce fund for schools that were made to cover support staff absences were granted in each month since the inception of that fund.

Stephen Morgan: [\[103674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many applications to the Coronavirus workforce fund for schools that were made to cover teacher absences were granted in each month since the inception of that scheme.

Stephen Morgan: [\[103675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many applications to the Coronavirus workforce fund for schools were rejected because they were not in scope.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department has had one round of claims to the COVID-19 workforce fund to date, covering the costs of staff absences experienced between 1 November and 31 December 2020. The claims window closed on 31 March 2021. We received claims from 974 schools and made payments to 902 schools by the end of June 2021.

All schools that met the conditions set out in the guidance were paid. Claims were received at school level and could cover both teacher and support staff absences experienced across the eligibility period.

The COVID-19 workforce fund has been reintroduced to cover the costs of staff absences experienced between 22 November 2021 and 18 February 2022.

The claims portal for this period will open in the spring.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[104325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2022 to Question 100514 on Schools: Coronavirus, what date officials at his Department first discussed ventilation in schools with the Department for Health and Social Care in the context of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Robin Walker:

I refer the hon. Member for Houghton and Sunderland South to the answer I gave on 13 January 2022 to Question [100514](#).

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, experts have been consulted and the evidence monitored. Engagement with the Department of Health and Social Care is part of this and has been ongoing relating to CO2 monitoring and air cleaning units, to assess whether this is a viable approach for schools in England based on the existing science and practical considerations.

Schools: Licensing**Chris Loder:****[101842]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of unlicensed schools operating in (a) West Dorset constituency, (b) Dorset and (c) England.

Mr Robin Walker:

Any education institution which provides full-time provision to 5 or more pupils of compulsory school age (or one or more pupils of compulsory school age who is 'looked after' or who has an education, health and care plan) is required to register with the Secretary of State for Education. It is a criminal offence under section 96 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 to conduct an independent educational institution unless it is registered.

Since those conducting an unregistered school are committing a criminal offence, they do not generally inform the Department for Education about the school's operation. It is not therefore possible to accurately estimate the number of unregistered schools operating in (a) West Dorset constituency, (b) Dorset, and (c) England.

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

Ofsted publishes statistics on the number and outcomes of investigations carried out into unregistered schools. Statistics have been published online for the period 1 January 2016 to 31 August 2021. The statistics up to 31 August 2021 showing the investigations and inspections which have taken place both nationally and in the south-west are in the table attached.

Attachments:

1. [101842 table \[101842 table investigations of unregistered schools.xls\]](#)

■ Schools: Protective Clothing

Gareth Thomas:

[\[101615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the time taken to deliver face masks to secondary schools in (a) Harrow West constituency and (b) England; what steps his Department is taking to ensure that deliveries are made in time to meet demand; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Robin Walker:

To support the temporary measures recently introduced, the department has worked with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to deliver a contingency supply of face coverings to education providers. These face coverings have been provided by DHSC at no cost to education providers.

We would expect most staff, pupils and students already have access to face coverings. However, we recognise that some individuals may not have access or might forget their face covering. We hope that this extra supply will mean all students, pupils and staff are able to access a face covering when needed.

We delivered the majority of face coverings to secondary schools before the Christmas break, with the remaining deliveries completed in early January, including to those schools in Harrow West.

■ Teachers: Recruitment

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[104314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of former teachers who responded to the Government's appeal for support on 16 December 2021 had left the profession (a) after 16 June 2021, (b) between 16 December 2020 and 15 June 2021, (c) between 16 December 2015 and 15 December 2020, (d) between 16 December 2010 and 15 December 2020 and (e) before 16 December 2010.

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 directed the call for ex teachers through employment agencies as they are best placed to match the supply that is coming forward with the demand that is there from schools. Using employment agencies also reduces the administrative burden of temporary recruitment from our schools.

We need to balance the need for data with the burden we place on those collating it. Therefore, we have not asked agencies to collect data such as how long ago people worked in schools.

■ Unemployment: York

Rachael Maskell:

[\[101773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of people who are classified as not in education, employment or training in (a) York Central constituency and (b) York.

Alex Burghart:

The department publishes national statistics on those not in education, employment or training (NEET) for England from the labour force survey for young people aged 16-24. However, these are only published at national and regional level due to limitations with sample sizes for lower-level geographies. Therefore, NEET rates for young people aged 16-24 cannot be provided for the areas requested.

The publication is available to view here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/neet-statistics-annual-brief>.

Local authorities are required to encourage, enable, or assist young people's participation in education or training and return management information for those aged 16 and 17. This data is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neet-and-participation-local-authority-figures>.

This shows that of the 3,500 16 and 17 year olds who were known to York local authority around the end of 2020 (average of December 2020, January 2021 and February 2021), 110 were NEET or their activity was not known (65 known to be NEET and 45 young people whom the local authority could not confirm their activity). These are not national statistics but published as transparency data so some caution should be taken if using these figures.

In addition, 16-18 destination measures are published. These official statistics show the percentage of pupils not continuing to a sustained education, apprenticeship, or employment destination in the year after completing 16-18 study, that is 6 months of continual activity. This can be used as a proxy for NEET at age 18.

The below statistics show that of the cohort of young people leaving state funded mainstream schools and colleges ¹ in 2019/20:

16-18 DESTINATION MEASURES ^{2,3} , 2019/20	NUMBER IN COHORT	NUMBER NOT IN A	
		SUSTAINED DESTINATION ⁴	NUMBER ACTIVITY NOT CAPTURED ⁵
York	3,510	525	248

16-18 DESTINATION MEASURES ^{2,3} , 2019/20	NUMBER IN COHORT	NUMBER NOT IN A SUSTAINED DESTINATION	NUMBER ACTIVITY NOT CAPTURED
York Central Constituency	353	21	14

1. Covers all state-funded mainstream schools, academies, free schools, city technology colleges, sixth forms and other and further education sector colleges. Excludes alternative provision, special schools, other government department funded colleges and independent schools.
2. Local authority figures are based on the local education authority area responsible for the young person whereas constituency figures are based on the provider location.
3. Links to the destination measures statistics quoted in table: York local authority: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/8dacd6e4-a5b1-401c-b834-3fbc62621b0e> York Central Constituency: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/ebedb6cb-4536-4aa5-aca9-cbad3c42ea9b>
4. Students who had participated in education, apprenticeships or employment during the academic year but did not complete the required 6 months participation.
5. Student was not found to have any participation in education, apprenticeship, or employment in England.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture Act 2020

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[100429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including public access to the countryside in the definition public good as set out in the Agriculture Act 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

Section 1(1) of the Agriculture Act 2020 sets out a list of purposes for which the Secretary of State may give financial assistance, and Section 1(1) (b) confirms that the Secretary of State may give financial assistance for, or in connection with supporting public access to, and enjoyment of the countryside, farmland or woodland, and better understanding of the environment.

Support for increasing access into the countryside will be made through existing schemes and support mechanisms already in place. We are still considering our approach of how support for increasing and maintaining access to the countryside in our future schemes including our environmental land management schemes.

■ Agriculture: Subsidies

Paul Girvan:

[\[100655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the total agricultural subsidy in each year of the next seven years; and what his timetable is for reviewing that level of spending.

Victoria Prentis:

We have committed to maintain the farming budget for the duration of this parliament. On 1 January 2021 the agricultural transition period in England commenced.

Between 2021 and 2027 the Government will seize the opportunity of EU exit to increase the sustainability, productivity and resilience of the agriculture sectors by:

- fulfilling the commitment to maintain total farm support in every nation of the UK worth a cumulative £3.7 billion a year.
- progressing the Agricultural Transition in England including the roll out of Environmental Land Management schemes to pay farmers for delivering climate and environmental benefits while producing the nation's food.

Figure 1 of the Agricultural Transition Plan, published in November 2020, sets out our high-level spending plans across the rest of the parliament.

This is the first four years of the agricultural transition period and is covered by the Government's commitment to maintain current levels of spending in England, based on 2019 funding levels when the manifesto commitment was made. This amounts to an average of £2.4 billion a year over that period.

In 2021/22, the period covered by the Government Spending Review, total spend is expected to be £2,415 million. Of that we intend to spend £1,644 million on Direct Payments, £562 million on new and existing schemes for environmental outcomes and £210 million on schemes supporting prosperity in the sector in addition to contributing to environmental and animal health welfare outcomes.

We will quantify spending plans for meeting the manifesto commitment in future years as part of future Spending Reviews and subject to final policy designs.

As we move through the transition, we need to be able to adjust our funding allocations in-year as we see what works, and what schemes and support farmers are interested in.

We will keep adjustments to a minimum, to provide as much certainty as possible, and we will make any changes in an open and transparent way. We intend to continue to make gradual reductions in Direct Payments across the rest of the transition until the last year of Direct Payments in 2027.

We continually review our spending plans as we learn more about farmer uptake in our schemes, iterate policy development and roll out new schemes.

■ Air Pollution: Standards

Paul Bristow:

[\[101849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to improve air quality in (a) Peterborough and (b) the rest of the UK.

Jo Churchill:

Local authorities are responsible for tackling air quality in their local communities. The landmark Environment Act 2021 enables greater local action on air pollution by improving the local air quality management framework in England.

The Act also introduces a clear duty to set two new targets for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) – the pollutant of most harm to health. Our dual-target approach will tackle the highest concentrations and ensure continuous improvement across the country.

The Government is taking robust and comprehensive action to improve air quality in the UK. We are working with local authorities to drive down levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) to within legal levels, supported by £880 million of funding to develop and implement plans, alongside Clean Air Fund grants to support those most impacted by these plans. In addition, we have committed £1.5 billion to support the early market and remove barriers to zero emission vehicles ownership. We have pledged a further £2.8 billion package of measures to support industry and consumers to make the switch to cleaner vehicles. In Summer 2020 the Prime Minister launched ambitious plans to boost walking and cycling in England, with a vision for half of all journeys in towns and cities to be cycled or walked by 2030. This commitment is backed with £2 billion of investment over five years.

The Clean Air Strategy sets out the comprehensive action that is required in England from across all parts of Government and society to meet our targets.

Air quality is a devolved policy the UK Government and the devolved administrations work collaboratively and consult on actions needed to improve air quality across the UK.

■ Climate Change: Research

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[101646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support research on (a) the effect of climate change on nature and (b) the carbon capture potential of woodland; and if he will hold discussions with the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research on the implications for his policies of research carried out in the northern hemisphere's largest free-air CO₂ enrichment facility.

Jo Churchill:

The environment is facing unprecedented challenges, including climate change, and we recognise the importance of building resilience to these challenges. Climate change increases risks such as from pests, diseases and wildfires, and is likely to influence long term changes to habitat conditions. We are working to ensure that climate risks are embedded and addressed across government policy, including in

our approach to nature protection and restoration, culminating in our third National Adaptation Programme due for publication in early 2023.

Defra funds relevant research through their Public Sector Research Establishments (PSREs) including Forest Research (an Agency of the Forestry Commission) and Natural England, as well as engaging with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) in identifying themes for research council spend, such as the current TreeScapes programme. We are also directly funding 3 projects this financial year (2021/22):

- Model Development for Carbon in Trees Outside Woodlands
- Aboveground Carbon in Natural Colonisation Woodland Sites
- Natural Woodland Colonisation and Soil Carbon

Furthermore, Defra is also overseeing a large Nature Based Solutions project designed to research and monitor the potential for diverse habitats to sequester carbon which is being led by Natural England.

Defra are supporting the work of the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research (BiFoR) via Forest Research (FR) who are a project collaborator. We will consider opportunities for increased collaboration between FR, BiFoR and Defra - including to discuss policy implications of the work BiFoR are doing.

■ Environmental Land Management Scheme

Daniel Zeichner:

[101752]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to identify the support that is required by farmers during the transition from direct payments to Environmental Land Management Schemes.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government's Agricultural Transition Plan sets out how we will maintain the same level of investment for farmers in England, which is £2.4 billion a year across this parliament, and is covered by the Government's commitment to maintain current levels of spending in England, based on 2019 funding levels when the manifesto commitment was made.

We will re-invest money saved by reducing Direct Payments into improved and new environmental schemes, as well as schemes which will help farmers get their businesses ready for the transition.

These include [The Future Farming Resilience Fund](#) which provides business support to farmers and land managers to help them navigate the changes over this period, and the [Farming Investment Fund](#) providing grants to improve productivity and bring environmental benefits.

The transition period will also give farmers time to adapt and prepare for our new schemes.

■ Forests: Environment Protection

Chris Grayling:

[\[101653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that forest risk products entering the UK come from sustainable sources.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is committed to a package of measures to tackle deforestation in our supply chains.

In 2019, the Government asked an independent task force, the Global Resource Initiative (GRI), to provide recommendations on how to reduce the UK's global environmental footprint, with a focus on deforestation. The GRI published its report and 14 recommendations in March 2020.

In response, we have introduced world-leading due diligence legislation through the Environment Act to tackle illegal deforestation in UK supply chains. Our law will make it illegal for larger businesses in the UK to use key forest risk commodities produced on land illegally occupied or used. We launched a consultation on 3 December 2021 to seek views on the detail of regulations that will implement the Environment Act provisions, to ensure that we design them effectively.

The Government also funds and convenes the UK Roundtables on Sustainable Palm Oil and Soy, which bring together UK businesses and provide technical assistance and support to businesses committed to reducing deforestation in these supply chains.

In addition, the Government will lead by example in the procurement of sustainable forest risk commodities. Our consultation to update the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services, taking place early this year, will propose ambitious new requirements that champion legal and sustainably sourced foods.

■ Forests: Research

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[101647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will hold discussions with the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research on the implications for his policies of research on the rate of photosynthesis in mature woodland exposed to artificially raised levels of CO₂.

Jo Churchill:

There is already good engagement between BiFoR and my Department via Forest Research (an Agency of Defra), through BiFOR chairmanship of The Trees and Woodlands Scientific Advisory Group (TAW-SAG) and links with the Plant Health Policy Team. We recognise that there are opportunities for closer cooperation between BiFor, FR and Defra and we will consider how best to achieve that, including opportunities to discuss policy implications of the work BiFor are doing.

■ Meat: Seasonal Workers

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[103566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the suitability of using the four existing labour providers operating within the seasonal worker scheme to local suitable butchers for the 800 six-month emergency visas announced on 14 October 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

The temporary visa schemes for poultry, food sector HGV drivers and pork butchers were facilitated by the 'Temporary Work - Seasonal Worker' visa route, which requires approved scheme operators to sponsor workers entering the UK.

Pilot operators select, sponsor and monitor migrants, and adhere to all Home Office requirements in practice, including those on migrant safety and welfare. The Seasonal Workers Pilot requires operators to ensure that all workers have a safe working environment; are treated fairly, paid properly including time off and breaks; are housed in safe hygienic accommodation; that their passport is never withheld from them; and that robust systems are in place for the reporting of concerns and rapid action.

More information about the Seasonal Workers Pilot RFI can be found on the Government website:

[Seasonal Workers Pilot request for information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/seasonal-workers-pilot-2021)

■ Paint: Recycling

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[101813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to provide support to paint recycling initiatives to reduce wastage of reusable paints; and what steps he is taking to make it easier for consumers to recycle paints.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[103551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to develop a national strategy for the re-use and recycling of unused household paint.

Jo Churchill:

We recognise that solvent-based paint, paint thinner and white spirit are hazardous and as such, disposal can be challenging.

We welcome voluntary action being taken by industry, such as the British Coatings Federation's Paintcare proposals, and community initiatives, supported by local authorities, to allow donations to local community repaint schemes. The law at present encourages reuse and recycling through waste hierarchy obligations on all waste handlers.

To strengthen action on reuse, we will shortly publish our new Waste Prevention Programme for England on which we consulted in 2021, including on steps to improve local systems and services that facilitate reuse and recycling of this nature.

■ Pigs: Livestock Industry

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[103564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, DEFRA Press Release, Package of measures announced to support pig sector, published on 15 October 2021, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effectiveness of the measures announced on 15 October 2021 to support the pig industry; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

We continue to work closely with the pig industry to help them respond to a number of challenges caused by the pandemic, labour shortages and access to supplies of CO₂ that have led to a growing backlog of pigs on farms.

The package of measures we announced on 15 October 2021 included temporary work visas for up to 800 pork butchers, and Private Storage Aid (PSA) and Slaughter Incentive Payment (SIP) schemes to facilitate an increase in the throughput of pigs through abattoirs. Together with Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), we are working to identify new export markets for pork.

In addition, in England and Scotland, the two meat levy bodies, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board and Quality Meat Scotland, suspended the statutory levy for pig farmers and producers during November 2021.

While interest in the temporary visa scheme was high, recruitment has taken longer than initially expected. Concern around the Omicron variant led to many butchers not taking up visas to travel to the UK. The time of year and the skilled nature of the role have also contributed to this delay. Details of the numbers of temporary work visas granted for pork butchers will be published in the usual way via the Home Office's quarterly immigration statistics.

There was no take up of the initial SIP Scheme and only limited uptake to date of the PSA scheme, this was because processors were already working additional shifts in the pre-Christmas period to meet their contracted requirements which limited opportunities to add extra shifts in the period and reduced the amount of pig meat that was available to enter the PSA scheme.

Once more butchers arrive, it is expected that processors will have greater capacity to access both schemes, particularly in the period January – March when demand for pig meat is typically lower.

Recognising this and the additional challenges that processors might face as a result of covid related workforce absences, the Government is extending the PSA scheme and introduced a new SIP scheme on 14 January, both of which are expected to run until 31 March 2022. We have also adapted the original SIP scheme to align it with

the PSA scheme by extending eligible products to include those that have been butchered, increasing the contribution towards processors costs by an increase in the incentive payment and capping the scheme at 100,000 pigs.

■ Slaughterhouses: Migrant Workers

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[103565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what information his Department holds on which meat processing companies applied for one or more of the 800 six-month emergency visas for overseas abattoir workers announced on 14 October 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

Visa statistics relating to the number of visas issued under any aspect of the temporary scheme will be released in the usual way by the Home Office as part of their quarterly immigration statistics reporting requirements.

Information regarding workers and organisations involved in the temporary visa schemes will be managed by our scheme operators. This information is commercially sensitive and not held by Defra.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Africa: Bain and Company

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the potential risks to UK influence in (a) South Africa and (b) other African countries of continued participation in UK public procurement by Bain and Company.

Vicky Ford:

The UK's Integrated Review sets out the UK Government's approach to fighting corruption and illicit finance as threats to democratic values and open societies around the world. We are fully committed to driving forward this commitment in South Africa and across the African continent, including through our law enforcement agencies. In South Africa, President Ramaphosa has identified the fight against corruption as one of his top priorities; we are working in close partnership with his government on this agenda. As an example of our commitment to tackling corruption in South Africa, in May 2021 under the UK Global Anti-Corruption Sanctions regime, the UK imposed sanctions against Ajay Gupta, Atul Gupta, Rajesh Gupta and Salim Essa for their roles in serious corruption. As a long-standing friend of South Africa, the UK will continue to engage the South African authorities, business and civil society on a shared agenda of security, economic and social issues including in light

of the conclusions of the Zondo Report. We will, of course, also consider carefully any implications for UK public procurement.

■ Bangladesh: Rohingya

Rushanara Ali:

[\[101728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of the fire at the Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

Amanda Milling:

We are deeply saddened by the recent fire in the Rohingya refugee camp 16 in Cox's Bazar, which has affected approximately 2,000 people and damaged shelters, water and sanitation facilities, and learning centres. Lord Ahmad, the Minister for South Asia, tweeted his condolences to those impacted by the fire on 10 January. We are providing immediate support to the UN to replenish destroyed stoves and cooking gas, and to rehabilitate camp infrastructure. We stand ready to provide further humanitarian assistance once the UN concludes the needs assessment.

■ Cost of Living: Females

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of any disproportionality in the impact on women and girls of recent rises in the prices of basic foodstuffs.

Vicky Ford:

Conflict, climate change and now Covid-19 have caused food insecurity and acute hunger to reach record levels. Agriculture investment has plummeted, and recovery is not yet visible. Food prices have risen above a 10-year high. The poor are highly vulnerable to food price inflation, and within that are women who are traditionally land poor and more dependent on the informal economy or in poorly paid, precarious jobs.

The UK provides humanitarian aid but also invests in building resilience to crises and supporting sustainable recovery. We provided assistance to 40 countries to help adapting social protection in response to COVID-19, integrating gender equality and social inclusion to support women and girls and other groups disproportionately impacted by the crisis.

The FCDO also adapted ongoing programmes, preventing countries from deteriorating into full-blown emergency and influenced partners, including to promote women's economic empowerment. For example:

- FCDO's CASA programme works to improve food security by attracting investment into the agri-food sector and helping to keep food supply chains flowing. Women account for nearly half of the farmers reached.
- The multilateral GAFSP has adapted its commitments to mitigating COVID-19 impacts and build resilience for the most vulnerable. In 2021 the total share of

women reached has increased to 38%, while 54% of the full-time equivalent jobs created has gone to women.

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

Gareth Thomas:

[\[100408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, 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.

Vicky Ford:

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.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Heathrow Airport**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[100466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to Contract Reference 283290/1030331 concerning the use of Heathrow Airport's VIP suites, how many of the 50 of her Department's movements through that airport between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2022 are planned to be made by (a) herself and (b) other Ministers in her Department.

Vicky Ford:

The contract with Heathrow Airport does not cover movements by UK Ministers.

■ **Kakwenza Rukirabashaija**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she has taken to raise the case of Kakwenza Rukirabashaija with the Government of Uganda.

Vicky Ford:

We are concerned that the Ugandan novelist, Kakwenza Rukirabashaija, following a series of tweets, was detained at his home on 28 December 2021 and then held without charge for 14 days at an unknown facility. Using legislation, such as the Computer Misuse Act, to stifle freedom of expression is very worrying. We welcome the decisions of the Chief Magistrate's Court and the High Court in relation to Rukirabashaija's release and habeas corpus. We note, however, that Rukirabashaija was subsequently charged and placed on remand.

We urge the Government of Uganda to ensure that the rule of law is upheld as a vital component of democracy. Rukirabashaija must be afforded all of his rights under the Constitution of Uganda, including access to legal representation. Our High Commission in Kampala issued a tweet on 7 January publicly stating our concern

over Rukirabashija's continued detention. The High Commission has also set out our concerns over his detention with the Government of Uganda, Uganda's human rights institutions and the security services. We have urged all to ensure that Uganda honours its constitutional commitments and international human rights law.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Air Pollution

Geraint Davies: [\[98181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on prioritising the improvement of air quality.

Maggie Throup:

We have discussions with colleagues across Government, including the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on air quality and ensure that related policy development and implementation focuses on health impacts and outcomes.

■ Air Pollution: Health Hazards

Geraint Davies: [\[98194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the Health Effects Institute's study, Global Burden of Disease from Major Air Pollution Sources (GBD MAPS): A Global Approach, published on 15 December 2021.

Maggie Throup:

Poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to public health in the United Kingdom, as long-term exposure to air pollution can cause chronic conditions such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and lung cancer, leading to reduced life expectancy. The study highlights the health burden associated with air pollution and we will assess its findings as evidence emerges.

The UK Health Security Agency leads a national programme to develop and share the evidence base on the health effects of air quality, to support the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in delivering its Clean Air Strategy to reduce people's exposure to air pollution and the associated health burden.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

John Redwood: [\[96742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the potential increase in covid-19 cases of all variants in England over the next month.

Maggie Throup:

The University of Warwick and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine have undertaken modelling of the estimated levels of all variants in England in the

next month. This predicts that cases of COVID-19 will decrease throughout January, to a level similar to that seen in November 2021.

Omicron is the dominant COVID-19 variant in the United Kingdom. For those cases which have the relevant genetic test, 93% are consistent with the Omicron variant. With no new variants currently circulated widely elsewhere in the world, the risk of a new variant becoming dominant in the next month is very low.

■ Coronavirus: Drugs

Vicky Foxcroft:

[102718]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance has been published for clinicians regarding covid-19 anti-viral treatment for clinically extremely vulnerable people.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 17 January 2022]: From the 16 December 2021, the highest risk patients in the United Kingdom can access molnupiravir, an antiviral treatment, as well as monoclonal antibody treatments from COVID Medicines Delivery Units. Patients are assessed by clinicians and offered antiviral or antibody treatments if eligible. Clinical guidance was published on 16 and 24 December 2021 for patients at the highest risk of progression to severe COVID-19 including hospitalisation and death to access to these new treatments. The clinical access policy is available at the following links:

<https://www.cas.mhra.gov.uk/ViewandAcknowledgment/ViewAlert.aspx?AlertID=103184>

<https://www.cas.mhra.gov.uk/ViewandAcknowledgment/ViewAlert.aspx?AlertID=103186>

In addition, oral antiviral treatments are available through the PANORAMIC national study, run by the University of Oxford. This study is open to clinically eligible individuals in the UK. Information on eligibility for the study is available at the following link:

<https://www.panoramictrial.org/>

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Anna McMorrin:

[102751]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to refund people who have paid for PCR tests but who have not received results from (a) Test n Go and (b) 1010 Labs; and if he will take steps to remove those companies from the Government's recommendations on GOV.UK.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 17 January 2022]: Consumers requiring a refund from a private test provider should contact the provider in the first instance. The Government does not endorse, recommend or approve any private test provider. Those on the GOV.UK list

have demonstrated compliance with the Government's minimum standards and may be removed on a precautionary basis pending investigation if they breach these standards.

For reasons of commercial sensitivity, we are unable to release information which would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any entity. To list the names of companies that have been subject to corrective measures and the subsequent actions undertaken could undermine confidence in those providers and prejudice their commercial interests.

Rachel Hopkins: [\[102804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of lateral flow covid-19 tests in (a) Luton South constituency, (b) the East of England and (c) England.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 18 January 2022]: In December 2021, we delivered approximately 280 million lateral flow device (LFD) tests and we have now procured new stocks and increased delivery capacity. We expect to deliver 90 million LFD tests a week in the United Kingdom, including seven million tests a day through GOV.UK. In England, this includes approximately 12 million tests per week through pharmacies. We expect therefore that there is sufficient capacity to provide tests for everyone, who requires it including those in Luton South and the East of England.

John Redwood: [\[96746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to expand UK-based capacity to produce covid-19 testing kits.

Maggie Throup:

In October 2020, the Government commissioned work to support the United Kingdom's diagnostic industry, to secure a lateral flow antigen test and increase domestic production capacity. The UK Make programme delivered two clinically validated and regulatory approved UK lateral flow antigen tests and provided investment in capital equipment and facilities expansion at three UK manufacturing companies. Over 100 million tests were produced for deployment by the UK Health Security Agency and production capacity of lateral flow antigen test increased by 3,500%. The first UK-made self-test lateral flow device is currently due to be deployed in January 2022. The UK Make programme has also increased capacity and resilience for current and future public health challenges.

Navendu Mishra: [\[99084\]](#)

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 (a) Stockport constituency, (b) Greater Manchester and (c) across England.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 11 January 2022]: The UK Health Security Agency has increased the supply of lateral flow device tests and its distribution capability. From 10 January

2022, we expect to deliver approximately seven million tests a day through GOV.UK and 90 million tests a week across the United Kingdom through all delivery channels.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[101695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of adults were offered a covid-19 booster vaccine by the target date of 31 December 2021.

Maggie Throup:

Every eligible adult in England aged 18 years old and over was offered a COVID-19 booster vaccination by 31 December 2021.

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[101696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to provide additional covid-19 vaccination sites.

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[102795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to provide additional covid-19 vaccination sites.

Maggie Throup:

There are now hundreds of walk-in sites and general practitioners and pharmacies have been asked to increase their vaccination services. Vaccination sites have been asked to operate 12 hours a day, seven days a week wherever possible, with some sites extending to 24-hour operation. Additional 'pop-up' sites will also be opening in local areas in convenient locations for communities.

Jim Shannon: [\[101717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish an updated covid-19 vaccine delivery plan.

Maggie Throup:

There are no current plans to publish an updated COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Plan.

As of 12 January 2022, over 83% of those aged 12 years old and over in the United Kingdom have received two doses of the vaccine, and over 90% have received one dose. Over 365 million people have received a booster or third primary dose. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has advised that there is no immediate need to introduce a second booster or fourth dose to the most vulnerable. The timing and need for any potential further booster doses will be reviewed.

■ **Dental Services**

Sir Robert Goodwill: [\[905093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to NHS dentists.

Maria Caulfield:

We are working with the National Health Service, Health Education England and the British Dental Association to tackle the challenges in access, both as a result of the pandemic and longer term. Whilst the impacts of the pandemic continue, practices are prioritising patients based on clinical need and a new activity threshold has been set at 85% to safely increase access. Current work on system reform and improving training for dentistry professionals also seeks to improve access for patients.

■ Dental Services: Coronavirus**Rachael Maskell:**[\[102699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the on-going need for fallow periods in between patients in dental services to prevent covid-19 transmission.

Maria Caulfield:

Fallow periods, or clinical 'downtime', were introduced to reduce the potential risk of transmission associated with aerosol generating procedures (AGPs). The need for downtime following AGPs is regularly reviewed and was updated in the latest revision of the infection prevention and control dental appendix, published in November 2021.

Post-AGP downtime is no longer recommended for all patients. It is required for those patients and procedures most likely to be at risk of spreading infection, such as patients with respiratory disease who are undergoing AGPs. Guidance has also been provided on mitigations to further reduce the length of fallow time recommended.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**Justin Madders:**[\[81031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to Question 48263 on Travel: Coronavirus, tabled on 15 September 2021 by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston.

Edward Argar:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer to Question [48263](#).

■ Health Services: Coronavirus**Dr Kieran Mullan:**[\[102798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to maximise NHS capacity and help increase the NHS's resilience during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

The National Health Service is ensuring that all medically fit patients are discharged to increase bed capacity, using non-acute beds in local systems and the independent sector, and expanding the use of 'virtual wards' to care for patients safely at home.

Nightingale hubs are also under construction to deliver up to an additional 4,000 beds, should they be needed.

■ Health Services: Fines

Rachael Maskell: [\[102700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will extend the suspension of waiting time fines in the NHS in the context of rising covid-19 infection levels.

Edward Argar:

There are no longer national sanctions under the NHS Standard Contract, such as fines for breaching national waiting times standards.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[102800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the discharge of patients from hospital during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

We have provided £3.3 billion to the National Health Service to facilitate timely hospital discharges during the pandemic, including £478 million for winter 2021/22. We have established a national discharge taskforce and systems are also using non-acute beds locally, including in hospices, community beds and the independent sector. To recruit and retain staff to support the discharge of patients, we are providing £462.5 million via local authorities for care providers to increase existing care support.

■ NHS: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell: [\[102690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the compatibility of mandatory covid-19 vaccinations with the NHS constitution's principle of healthcare delivered by consent.

Edward Argar:

Health and care workers retain the right to accept or refuse vaccination. A Care Quality Commission (CQC) registered person would be prohibited from employing or otherwise engaging a worker unvaccinated against COVID-19, in roles that have direct contact with patients as part of the provision of CQC-regulated activities, unless an exception, including medical exemptions, apply.

■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges

Caroline Lucas: [\[105458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 28 October 2021 to Question 58359 on Prescriptions: Fees and Charges, by what date the

Government plans to publish its response to the Aligning the upper age for NHS prescription charge exemptions with the State Pension age consultation.

Caroline Lucas: [\[105459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 28 October 2021 to Question 58359, if he will make it his policy to abolish prescription charges in England; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

The consultation closed on 3 September 2021. No decisions on the proposals have yet been made and the Government's response will be published in due course. We have no plans to abolish prescription charges in England. Approximately 89% of prescriptions are already dispensed free of charge and arrangements are in place to help those most in need.

■ Public Health: Finance

Andrew Gwynne: [\[102565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what date the local authority public health grant allocations for 2022-23 will be publicly released.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[102566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact on local authorities of the delay in notifying those bodies of their public health grant allocations for 2022-23.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[102567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the definition of real terms protection is in regards to local authority public health funding for 2022-23.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 17 January 2022]: No assessment has been made. We understand that Local Authorities need certainty to plan, and local authority public health grant allocations for 2022/23 will be confirmed shortly. The public health grant for 2022/23 will be protected in real-terms, taking into account the inflation forecast set out by the Office for Budget Responsibility in October 2021.

■ Strokes: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell: [\[81056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the additional costs incurred as a result of long term disability caused by stroke during the covid-19 pandemic.

Maria Caulfield:

No assessment has been made. The NHS Long Term Plan committed to make stroke rehabilitation more integrated, intensive and more frequently delivered out of hospital.

We are investing in the improvement of community-based stroke rehabilitation services to reduce cost associated with the impact of stroke

■ **Surgery: Waiting Lists**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[102694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his latest estimate is of the number of people who will be waiting for surgical proceedings at the peak of the elective surgical NHS waiting list during the covid-19 outbreak; and when he anticipates that peak will be.

Edward Argar:

No formal estimate has been made.

■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

Steve McCabe:

[\[92806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the guidelines in place to ensure that travel PCR test providers meet the timeframes advertised on their websites in respect of the (a) delivery of and (b) processing of those tests.

Maggie Throup:

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel and Operator Liability) (England) Regulations 2021 and The Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010 provide the legal framework for the minimum standards required from private testing providers. This includes meeting the required timetable for testing. For polymerase chain reaction testing, this states that the maximum time for providers to return the test result to the consumer is 48 hours from receipt of the sample at the laboratory. A provider may be removed from GOV.UK on a precautionary basis pending investigation if it is believed to be risking public safety and not meeting the minimum standards. Local Trading Standards are responsible for formal proceedings.

■ **Travel: Quarantine**

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[93727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing financial compensation to UK citizens who were required to quarantine in hotels for the period starting at 4:00am on 28 November 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 5 January 2022]: We have no plans to make this assessment. There are no refunds or financial compensation available for guests who completed their quarantine period and had checked out of the managed quarantine hotel on or before 4am on 15 December. From 4pm on 15 December, guests with a negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test result and those who had not yet taken a PCR test were able to depart the quarantine hotel. In England, guests who were released

early from managed quarantine are entitled to a refund for the unused part of their stay.

HOME OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Dan Jarvis:

[\[98301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of providing free PCR tests for Afghan nationals who qualify for (a) Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (b) Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme when travelling to the UK from a third country.

Kevin Foster:

Afghan nationals who qualify under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) or Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) who arrive from third countries are provided with PCR tests as part of the arrivals package and do not pay for these tests.

■ Catalytic Converters: Theft

Seema Malhotra:

[\[104334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with (a) SMMT and (b) other major motor manufacturers on the issue of catalytic converter theft.

Seema Malhotra:

[\[104336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many catalytic converter thefts have occurred in each local authority in each of the last 12 months.

Kit Malthouse:

The Office for National Statistics publish estimates, sourced from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, on catalytic converter theft. However, being based on a sample survey it is not possible to produce reliable estimates at local authority level.

The Government is committed to tackling the theft of catalytic converters and is working closely with police and motor manufacturers through the National Vehicle Crime Working Group to bear down on this crime. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) is represented on the National Vehicle Crime Working Group.

■ Fraud: Internet

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[100740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle online fraud.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 18 January 2022]: Frauds that are committed online are pernicious crimes. They can cause terrible financial and emotional harm to victims. The Government has been working with partners in the public and private sectors to keep the public safe and bring these fraudsters to justice.

DCMS are leading ground-breaking work on the Online Safety Bill. The Bill will require regulated companies to take action to tackle user-generated fraud on their platforms. This will impact some of the most harmful online fraud types such as investment and romance scams. The Joint Committee recently published their report on the Bill and we are scrutinising this closely to make sure we comprehensively address their recommendations. DCMS are also leading work through the Online Advertising Programme that will consider, amongst other things, the role online advertising plays in enabling online fraud.

We have also been working closely alongside the National Cyber Security Centre who launched their Suspicious Email Reporting Service last year. This has already led to over 8.1 million reports received and the removal of over 67,000 scams and 124,000 harmful websites, since its inception in April 2020.

However, Government and the public sector cannot tackle online fraud alone. That is why, on the 21 October 2021, the Joint Fraud Taskforce was relaunched under my [Security Minister] chairmanship. The JFT brings together leaders from across the Government, private sector, regulators, law enforcement and victim groups to encourage collaboration to keep the public safe from these crimes. Alongside the relaunch, we published voluntary agreement with the retail banking, telecommunications and accountancy sectors outlining innovative measures to reduce fraud facilitated through these industries (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/joint-fraud-taskforce>). The Online Fraud Steering Group (OFSG) is a public-private group focused on reducing the threat from online fraud in the UK. It reports into the Joint Fraud Taskforce and is co-chaired by the National Economic Crime Centre (NECC), UK Finance and techUK.

We continue to encourage the public to report fraud to Action fraud and to forward any suspicious emails to report@phishing.gov.uk and suspicious texts to 7726, free of charge.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan**Stuart C McDonald:****[100570]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the her Department is taking to identify new asylum applications from Afghan nationals that meet the criteria for the Afghan Citizenship Resettlement Scheme or the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 13 January 2022]: The Government is providing safe and legal routes for people from Afghanistan through i) the Afghan Relocations and Assistance

Policy (ARAP) scheme, for employees of the Government, and others who have worked with or alongside the Government, in exceptional circumstances; and ii) the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), which will help up to 20,000 women, children and others who are vulnerable or at risk.

Resettlement routes operate separately to the UK's in-country asylum system.

Further information about the eligibility criteria can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

Caroline Lucas: **[101688]**

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, by what date (a) Chevening alumni and (b) British Council and GardaWorld contractors will be notified about their applications to the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme and receive information about arrangements for safe passage.

Victoria Atkins:

As the Minister for Afghan Resettlement set out on 6 January, the FCDO will shortly be contacting those individuals from these cohorts who are eligible to be considered, in order to set out next steps.

Charlotte Nichols: **[101850]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether (a) her Department will assist people referred by hon. Members' offices to apply to the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme or (b) other referral routes should be used.

Victoria Atkins:

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

There will not be an application process for the ACRS. Instead, eligible people will be prioritised and referred for resettlement through one of three pathways. More detail can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>.

Rachael Maskell: **[104358]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he has taken to ensure that the Warm Welcome initiative continues for refugees who remain in bridging hotels.

Rachael Maskell: **[104359]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason Afghan refugees who have given birth have been returned to a bridging hotel rather than rehomed.

Rachael Maskell: [104360]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to identify accommodation for Afghan refugees.

Rachael Maskell: [104361]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of moving people from bridging hotels into short term residential accommodation.

Rachael Maskell: [104362]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with stakeholders on converting void and disused properties into accommodation for Afghan refugees currently in bridging hotels.

Rachael Maskell: [104363]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has a timetable for rehousing people currently in bridging hotels.

Rachael Maskell: [104364]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with NHS property services on repurposing vacant NHS property to home Afghan refugees, including if it needs to be retrofitted.

Victoria Atkins:

[Operation Warm Welcome](#) is a significant cross-government effort, working with local authorities, NGOs and the commercial sector, and will continue over the coming months to ensure those evacuated from Afghanistan can settle permanently, contribute to their communities and rebuild their lives here in the UK. The UK Government will continue to work with our international partners and use every lever at our disposal to fulfil our moral obligations, and we will provide a warm welcome to those who have fled persecution.

We are engaging with Local Authorities and housing organisations to explore options to meet the need for housing. We are working closely with Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities and other stakeholders to identify a range of alternative accommodation options to minimise the use of hotels and enable people to get into accommodation which enables them to settle into their new lives in the UK as quickly as possible.

DLUHC have created a new Housing Portal to make it easier for councils to assess the suitability of properties prior to contacting landlords. Offers of property are triaged by DLUHC and sent directly to councils. We are also looking at ways to make more suitable homes available in the private rental sector by engaging with landlords, letting agencies and industry bodies to promote the housing portal and encourage participation in the resettlement programme. We are also working with the Estate Agent Rightmove to identify potential properties available in the private rental sector.

There is a huge effort underway to get families into permanent homes as soon as we can so they can settle and rebuild their lives, and to ensure those still temporarily accommodated in hotels have access to healthcare, education, any essential items they need as well as employment opportunities or Universal Credit.

The length of time that a family will remain in bridging hotels is dependent on a number of factors including the availability of appropriate housing. We expect that whilst the hotel estate will reduce, there will be an ongoing need to provide temporary housing in hotels for a small number of families for several months. Where possible we prioritise matching properties to certain categories including those that are pregnant and have given birth.

As of the (6 January 2022), the latest available data shows there are over 12,000 people in around 80 bridging hotels. While work is ongoing to resettle families permanently as quickly as possible, they are receiving the necessary support required to integrate into society.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ House of Commons: Dismissal

Mrs Maria Miller: [\[101660\]](#)

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 as part of employment severance agreements.

Sir Charles Walker:

[Holding answer 14 January 2022]: The House of Commons does not include a non-disclosure clause as standard in severance (settlement) agreements with employees. The House hasn't included them as standard since 2015, and has not used any since 2018, but there is not a blanket policy in place preventing the House from using one in appropriate circumstances.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Shipping: Exports

Ruth Jones: [\[102759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans the Maritime Capability Campaign Office has to engage with the UK's maritime industry to set priorities and support maritime businesses to export.

Mike Freer:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) is developing ambitious plans to support exports and investment in the Maritime sector as part of the upcoming National Shipbuilding Strategy Refresh. We will be able to provide more detail on

these plans following publication of the Refresh. DIT is committed to the maritime sector and works closely with it on a wide range of export issues and opportunities.

■ **Trade: Forests**

Chris Grayling:

[\[101651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent discussions she has had with the World Trade Organisation on the level of international tariffs on forest risk products.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Secretary of State for International Trade has had no discussions at the World Trade Organisation on the level of international tariffs on forest risk commodities.

The Department continues to support the Government's ongoing work to promote the sustainable trade in forest risk commodities, and is considering the role of the WTO and other fora in this effort.

JUSTICE

■ **Judges: Training**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[101769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent steps he has taken to ensure that judges receive training in restorative justice.

James Cartlidge:

To preserve the independence of the judiciary, the Lord Chief Justice (LCJ), the Senior President of the Tribunals, and the Chief Coroner have statutory responsibility for judicial training, under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007, and Coroners and Justice Act 2009 respectively. These responsibilities are exercised through the Judicial College. The judiciary and professional staff in the Judicial College are responsible for the design, content, and delivery of judicial training.

The Judicial College uses sentencing exercises as part of both induction and continuation training. One of the topics covered in those exercises is restorative justice.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Consultants**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[101601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department has held (a) any financial or consultancy contracts and (b) meetings with representatives of (i) Clifford Chance LLP, (ii) FTI Consulting and (iii) Fenchurch Advisory Partners in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

James Cartlidge:

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.

■ Offences against Children**Jim Shannon:****[101727]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to support victims of child sexual exploitation.

Tom Pursglove:

I responded to a substantive question from Robbie Moore MP on this issue, on 14 December 2021 (904746).

As I highlighted then, getting the right support at the right time is crucial for all victims, particularly children and young people.

We are currently consulting on a Victims' Bill, to make tangible improvements for all victims. This will include reviewing what more can be done to strengthen victim advocate roles, including those supporting children and young people. We will be engaging directly with young people, and the professionals that work to support them to learn more throughout the consultation period. I will also be holding parliamentary drop-in sessions during the consultation period and would welcome your input.

The cross-Government Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy sets out our commitment to ensuring access to high quality support for all victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, including child sexual exploitation, to ensure children and young people are receiving the support they need. In 2021/22, as part of the overall £151 million of funding for victim and witness support services, the Ministry of Justice is providing over £11.2 million specifically for services supporting victims and survivors of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA).

■ Offenders: Rehabilitation**Rachael Maskell:****[101770]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he has taken to prioritise the rehabilitation of criminal offenders.

Kit Malthouse:

This Government is committed to reducing crime and protecting the public by tackling reoffending. We are doing this by tackling the causes of reoffending, whilst strengthening the supervision and monitoring of offenders in the community.

As set out in our [Prisons Strategy White Paper](#), we are building on the investment made in 2021 by spending £200 million a year by 2024-25 to ensure prison leavers have a strong foundation for rehabilitation. We aim to do this by providing temporary accommodation for prison leavers through our new Community Accommodation

Service and transforming how we get offenders into work, including introducing opportunities for work on Release on Temporary Licence and on release.

Our reforms to the Probation Service, supported by additional annual funding of £155 million, will help reduce reoffending through robust supervision, tougher community sentences, improved local partnership working and delivery of rehabilitative services. We have invested in recruiting an additional 2500 probation officers by 2022. We are also investing £183m into the expansion of electronic monitoring over the next three years to help deter further offending and support probation supervision, and £195m in Commissioned Rehabilitative Services to deliver vital rehabilitative services and address issues such as access to mental health services.

■ Prisoners: Rehabilitation

Rachael Maskell:

[\[101771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to encourage prisons to focus on delivering prisoner rehabilitation.

Kit Malthouse:

We will invest £200m a year by 2024/25 in initiatives to reduce reoffending and improve rehabilitation including supporting prison-leavers into employment, housing and substance misuse treatment.

To ensure prisons focus on delivering prisoner rehabilitation, we will regularly publish key performance indicators, targets, and league tables to increase transparency around prison performance, shining a light on how we can most effectively rehabilitate offenders. The best performing prison Governors will be empowered with greater autonomy to innovate for their own prison populations, while continuing to be assessed against clear outcomes aligned to government priorities.

On employment, we will hold Governors to account for the opportunities and outcomes to participate in work-related activity they achieve for prisoners.

On accommodation, we have set a joint prison and probation performance measure of 90% of offenders released to accommodation within the first 24 hours of their release, and a probation measure of 80% of offenders under probation supervision to be in settled in accommodation three months after commencement of their period of supervision.

We are also committed to ensuring that all offenders have access to high-quality and evidence-based substance misuse treatment. To improve outcomes, we will establish a key performance indicator to monitor all prisons' progress in ensuring that recovery is the focus and share local good practice around the estate.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Levelling Up Fund**

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: [\[101616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when the criteria for the second round of the Levelling Up Fund will be published.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: [\[101618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will allow local authorities adequate time to plan their bids for the Levelling Up Fund round two; and whether the criteria for that round will be the same as for round one.

Neil O'Brien:

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport and investing in cultural and heritage assets. We will open round 2 in Spring 2022 and will share further details in due course.

■ Local Government: Video Conferencing

Peter Aldous: [\[101709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing councils to hold meetings remotely.

Peter Aldous: [\[101710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent representations his Department has received from local government on permitting councils to hold meetings remotely.

Peter Aldous: [\[101711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has plans to permit councils to hold meetings remotely.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Department has been considering the responses to the call for evidence on local authority remote meetings and the Government will respond shortly.

PRIME MINISTER**■ 10 Downing Street**

Caroline Lucas: [\[104311\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, on what date he first learned about the parties in Downing Street that took place on the eve of the funeral of Prince Philip.

Boris Johnson:

I refer the Hon. Member to the Terms of Reference for the Cabinet Office investigation, which have been deposited in the Library of the House. It would not be appropriate to pre-empt that process.

SCOTLAND■ **INTERREG Programme: Scotland****Ian Murray:**[\[103536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the Answer of 10 January 2022 to Question 100496, if his Department will publish a list of all independent Managing Authorities responsible for making payments to organisations supported by Interreg in Scotland.

Mr Alister Jack:

A table is provided which outlines each Managing Authority supporting ongoing Interreg projects in Scotland, organised according to the select Interreg programmes that the UK Government has oversight on.

Managing Authorities (MAs) are responsible for the day-to-day delivery of Interreg, or European Territorial Cohesion, programmes. MAs are normally local or regional authorities based in one of the countries participating in the programme. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has insight on the programmes listed in the first column.

Attachments:

1. [Table - PQ 103536 \[Table - PQ 103536.DOCX\]](#)

TRANSPORT■ **Coronavirus: Ethiopia****Tim Loughton:**[\[104293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he has plans to alter the vaccine recognition approval status for Ethiopia.

Robert Courts:

The Government is taking a phased approach to the rollout of our inbound vaccination programme and will continue to work with international partners to expand the policy to more countries and territories where it is safe to do so. Vaccine certification between countries and territories varies considerably and the government has published minimum criteria on gov.uk that both digital and paper certificates must meet.

■ **Department for Transport: Staff**

Louise Haigh: [\[101791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the (a) directorates within his Department as at 1 December 2021 and (b) staffing levels in terms of (i) full-term equivalent and (ii) total headcount in each of those directorates.

Andrew Stephenson:

The following data is from the 30th of November 2021, rather than the 1st of December 2021 information, which is the most recent data available of Payroll Staff.

DG NAME	HEADCOUNT	FTE
Aviation Maritime International and Security	1004	983.9
Corporate Delivery Group	720	705.04
High Speed Rail	161	159.98
Rail Infrastructure Group	167	166.04
Rail Strategy and Services Group	660	648.9
Roads, Places and Environments	951	908.89
Grand Total	3663	3572.75

■ **Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency: North Wales**

Dr James Davies: [\[102701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps he has taken to help increase (a) recruitment and (b) retention of staff within the DVSA in North Wales.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is continuing with its campaigns recruiting front line operational roles across its Driver, Vehicle and Enforcement services. The DVSA monitors retention across all roles and takes action when required. There are currently no concerns regarding the retention of staff in North Wales.

There is a national recruitment campaign aimed at recruiting driving examiners across Great Britain to further increase availability of driving test appointments. This has identified four successful candidates to fill the current vacancies in North Wales.

The DVSA will also shortly launch a further campaign aimed specifically at candidates that speak Welsh who may wish to join the agency as driving examiners.

■ Driving Licences: Applications

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[102549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps is he taking to help mitigate potential delays in processing driving licence applications and renewals, specifically those involving medical checks.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[102550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps is he has taken to help reduce waiting times for people awaiting for a renewal decision on their driving licence.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[102551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with officials at the DVLA to help ensure that people with mitigating medical conditions receive decisions on driving licence renewal decisions on time.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[102552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on provision of support for people who cannot take up employment while awaiting outcomes from the DVLA on driving licence applications and renewals.

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. To help reduce waiting times for paper applications, including where a medical condition must be investigated, the DVLA has introduced additional online services, recruited more staff, increased overtime working and has secured extra office space in Swansea and Birmingham.

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](#).

The DVLA recognises the impact on drivers who have to renew their licence more regularly and is working hard to improve the process. Drivers with diabetes, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, a visual impairment, a sleep condition or a heart condition can now renew their licence online.

The DVLA has also recently introduced a simplified licence renewal process for drivers with epilepsy and multiple sclerosis and is piloting this for some mental health conditions. This new renewal process has significantly reduced the need for the DVLA to seek further information from medical professionals and enabled more licensing decisions to be made based on the information provided by the driver. The DVLA is looking at adding more medical conditions to this new process.

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.

Justin Tomlinson: [\[102615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress his Department has made on tackling the delays in processing driving licence applications and renewals.

Justin Tomlinson: [\[102616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps have been taken to speed up the processing of driving licence applications and renewals.

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. 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](#).

■ Hydrogen Fuelling Stations

Matt Western: [\[103642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many hydrogen depots were built for commercial vehicle use in 2021.

Trudy Harrison:

The UK is well placed to lead on hydrogen powered transport, and we have supported 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, two of which were opened in 2021 providing hydrogen for road vehicles, serving a fleet of just over 350 hydrogen vehicles (buses, cars, vans, refuse collection trucks) operating on UK roads. Additional refuelling infrastructure will be included as part of our plans to demonstrate at scale hydrogen fuel cell trucks on UK roads.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Carbon Emissions

Judith Cummins:

[\[101764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether regulations to require all new HGVs to emit zero emissions by 2040 will recognise hydrogen internal combustion engines as a compliant zero-emission technology.

Trudy Harrison:

Following consultation, we announced at COP26 that the UK would become the first country in the world to commit to phasing out new, non-zero emission heavy goods vehicles weighing 26 tonnes and under by 2035, with all new HGVs sold in the UK to be zero emission by 2040. Regulations used to deliver these dates will be technology neutral and the next steps will be set out in Government's response to the phase out dates consultation which will be published shortly.

■ Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties

Karin Smyth:

[\[102672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans the Government has to tackle the rate of Vehicle Excise Duty evasion.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) collects around £7 billion in vehicle excise duty each year. The most recent estimate, published in November 2021, showed that 98.1 per cent of vehicles used on the road are licensed correctly.

The DVLA aims to make vehicle excise duty easy to pay but hard to avoid and keeps its processes for encouraging compliance and delivering a robust enforcement regime under review. The DVLA has a comprehensive package of measures to tackle those who do not pay vehicle excise duty. These range from reminder letters, penalties and court prosecutions through to the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras and the wheel clamping and removal of unlicensed vehicles.

The DVLA also works closely with the police and local authorities to address vehicle excise duty evasion at local levels and to share intelligence to target vehicle keepers who deliberately do not license their vehicles. Police forces and local authorities can also clamp and remove unlicensed vehicles by adopting the DVLA's devolved powers.

■ Railways: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[103653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the long-term impact of the reduced rail timetable currently in place in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Wendy Morton:

The Department has been working closely with rail operators as they mitigate the impact of COVID-19 related staff absences on train services.

The current revised train timetable has been implemented temporarily, and is providing passengers, especially our key workers, with certainty so they can plan their journeys confidently.

In the longer term, the Department will continue working with rail operators to ensure that services meet demand and deliver good value for taxpayers.

■ Transport

Louise Haigh:

[\[104374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will provide details of all the strategies his Department is working on; and what the estimated publication date of each of those strategies is.

Andrew Stephenson:

Work is underway across DfT on a number of strategies which will set out the important role transport will play as we build back better from the Covid-19 pandemic. The major strategies under development in the Department are listed below (including a number of strategies for which other organisations will lead development). Where known, expected and approximate publication dates have been included.

Aviation Strategic Framework - A strategic framework for the Aviation sector over next ten years, focussing on building back better to ensure a successful future for UK Aviation.

Aviation Jet Zero Strategy - A vision for how the aviation sector will reach net zero emissions by 2050.

EV Infrastructure Strategy - Expected to be published soon, and will set out our vision for the continued rollout of a world-leading charging infrastructure network across the UK – one which will enable mass uptake of cleaner vehicles.

Future of Freight - A long-term strategic plan for the freight and logistics sector, co-developed with industry, and expected to be published in Spring 2022.

Future of Transport Rural Strategy – Will set out Government's approach to addressing the impact of new technology, changing demand and evolving business models on rural transportation.

Low Carbon Fuels Strategy - A strategy on the deployment of low carbon fuels across different transport modes in the period up to 2050, to be published by the end of 2022.

Maritime recovery road map - Our plan to support the recovery of the Maritime sector from the impacts of Covid-19, expected to be published in Spring 2022, forming part of our Maritime 2050 strategy (published in January 2019).

National Railways Accessibility Strategy - A commitment in the Williams-Shapps plan for rail, this strategy will consider how to improve inclusion and access for all to our

railways. It is being developed by the Great British Railways transformation team following a commission from DfT.

Road Safety Strategic Framework – Will set out the Government’s plans for increasing the safety of our roads.

Second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy - A second 4-year statutory cycling and walking investment strategy, reflecting the new policies in gear change and the multi-year funding settlement at Spending Review 2021. This is expected to be published in Spring 2022.

Third Road Investment Strategy - Will set out the Government’s aims and proposals for investment in the strategic road network from 2025 to 2030. The final version is expected to be published in 2024.

Whole Industry Strategic Plan for Rail - A 30 year strategy for the future of the rail sector, which is being developed by the Great British Railways transformation team following a commission from DfT.

There is other work ongoing in the Department which may lead to the development of more formal, externally published strategies in future, including on the sharing and use of data across the transport sector and on transport labour market and skills.

TREASURY

■ Bounty Joy

Gareth Thomas:

[\[101608\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when his Department first became aware that Bounty Joy Ltd were not providing information to women they were contacting who had recently given birth on the possible loss of some pension rights in the event that those women did not apply for child benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[101609\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when his Department first became aware that Bounty Joy Ltd were not providing information to women they were contacting who had recently given birth on the possible loss of some pension rights in the event that those women did not apply for child benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Simon Clarke:

HMRC do not have a direct contract with Bounty Joy Ltd.

HMRC’s Customer Communication Services Contract is with Communisis UK Ltd. Communisis have a sub-contractor relationship with Bounty Joy Ltd.

Child Benefit claim forms are included in birth packs handed out to new parents by Bounty representatives on maternity wards. Bounty representatives do not have an official role in explaining Child Benefit eligibility criteria, nor the possible implications of not submitting a claim. This information is, however, included on the front page of the Child Benefit claim form.

Although access to maternity wards for Bounty representatives has been limited throughout the pandemic, Bounty have continued to supply the packs to maternity wards as usual, to be handed to new mothers by hospital staff.

Qualifying Years for State Pension can be accrued in different ways: National Insurance (NI) contributions whilst individuals are working or self-employed; by being credited with NI credits whilst being in receipt of certain benefits (including for Child Benefit); and through making voluntary NI contributions. As an individual's NI record can be filled in a number of ways not all individuals will require the National Insurance credits that come with Child Benefit.

■ **Bounty Joy: Contracts**

Gareth Thomas: [\[101605\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when Bounty Joy Ltd secured the contract to give out child benefit forms to women in maternity wards; how long that contract lasts for; and how much Bounty Joy Ltd receives from (a) his Department, (b) any other Government department and (c) NHS Trusts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Simon Clarke:

HMRC does not have a direct contract with Bounty Joy Limited, however they are a sub-contractor of HMRC's print provider Communis. As such, Bounty Joy Limited do not receive any direct payment from HMRC.

Gareth Thomas: [\[101606\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps (a) his Department and (b) other Government bodies are taking to monitor the contract with Bounty Joy Ltd; and if he will make a statement.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC does not have a direct contract with Bounty Joy Limited, they are a sub-contractor of HMRC's print provider Communis. As such, there are no contract terms to monitor.

Gareth Thomas: [\[101607\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many women who have given birth have also provided personal data to Bounty Joy Ltd in each year of the Bounty Joy Ltd contract with his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC does not have a direct contract with Bounty Joy Limited as they are a subcontractor of HMRC's print provider Communis.

However, any personal data that is completed on the Child Benefit claim form is returned directly to HMRC and would not be provided to Bounty Joy Limited.

■ Child Benefit

Gareth Thomas:

[\[101610\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how his Department informs new mothers of their rights to claim child benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Simon Clarke:

Information about Child Benefit and the Child Benefit claims process is available for all new parents on GOV.UK.

Regular communications activity to encourage take-up is issued throughout the year in a variety of formats including via press release and social media posts, and by working with pregnancy and parenting organisations such as Bounty and Emma's Diary.

In addition to monthly Child Benefit payments, these communications also reference the non-monetary benefits such as National Insurance credits – and provide information about the High Income Child Benefit Charge.

The Child Benefit claim form is included in Bounty Packs which are distributed to all new mothers on maternity wards. Although access to maternity wards for Bounty representatives has been limited throughout the pandemic, Bounty have continued to supply the packs to maternity wards as usual, to be handed to new mothers by hospital staff.

During the pandemic, communications also promoted an easement that temporarily relaxed the policy requirement for Child Benefit claimants to provide a birth registration certificate as part of their claim – as part of additional efforts to ensure new parents were able to overcome pandemic-related disruption and access the support to which they were entitled. This easement ended on 31 October 2021.

We continue to look for effective channels to reach new mothers with information about Child Benefit and the Child Benefit claims process – including via the General Register Office and the Department for Work and Pensions.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[101611\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what changes were made to the Child Benefit Claim Form (CH2) in April 2021; and for what reason those changes were made.

Mr Simon Clarke:

Changes were made to the Child Benefit Claim Form (CH2) in April 2021 to align wording across different versions of the form in response to user feedback from GOV.UK and to ensure consistency of language throughout the CH2. These changes included minor adjustments to drafting to aid clarity and formatting changes to align with other versions of the form.

■ Cost of Living

Stuart Anderson: [\[101837\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support households with the cost of living.

Mr Simon Clarke:

We are taking targeted action to help families with the cost of living, including through freezing fuel and alcohol duties, the energy price cap, the Warm Home Discount and the £500m Household Support Fund to help the most vulnerable families this winter.

In the longer term the best approach to managing the cost of living is to get people into work and help them progress – which we are doing through our Plan for Jobs.

We are also making work pay. We are doing this by reducing the Universal Credit taper rate from 63% to 55% and increasing work allowances by £500 per year, which means that 1.9m households will on average keep around an extra £1,000 on an annual basis, as well as increasing the National Living Wage to £9.50 per hour for workers aged 23 and over, which is expected to benefit over 2 million workers.

■ Deposit Return Schemes

Ruth Jones: [\[101832\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with soft drinks producers on the impact of VAT rules on the roll out of the Deposit Return Scheme.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government supports the environmental aims of deposit return schemes and will continue working to ensure they operate effectively within the VAT rules.

VAT is charged on the supply of most bottled drinks and in such cases, where the price of a drink includes a deposit on the bottle, VAT is due on the whole price. This is in line with the VAT principle that applies to deposits generally. It is also consistent with the rules in some other countries with a deposit return scheme.

Her Majesty's Treasury continues to engage with the industry, including soft drinks producers, to explore the issues around the design and implementation of deposit return schemes.

■ Deposit Return Schemes: VAT

Ruth Jones: [\[101829\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to exempt deposits collected as part of the Deposit Return Scheme from VAT.

Ruth Jones: [\[101830\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of whether VAT is charged on deposits made as part of deposit return schemes in other countries.

Ruth Jones:[\[101831\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue his Department estimates will be raised as a result of charging VAT on deposits in each of the first three years of operation of the proposed Deposit Return Scheme for (a) England, Wales and Northern Ireland and (b) Scotland.

Lucy Frazer:

VAT is charged on the supply of most bottled drinks and in such cases, where the price of a drink includes a deposit on the bottle, VAT is due on the whole price.

This is in line with the VAT principle that applies to deposits generally. It is also consistent with the rules in some other countries with a deposit return scheme.

The Government supports the environmental aims of the deposit return schemes and will continue working to ensure they operate effectively within the VAT rules, including exploring the issues with those involved in designing and implementing such schemes.

■ DMB Solutions: Insolvency**Caroline Lucas:**[\[101692\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 10 January 2021 to Question 94314, on DMB Solutions: VAT, what proportion of the VAT element of the HMRC liquidation claim for DMB solutions Ltd has been recovered from funds obtained by the appointed Insolvency Practitioner; and if he will make a statement.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC, in line with all other creditors, submit their claims in any insolvency event. The appointed Insolvency Practitioner will, as funds and assets are realised, distribute dividends to creditors. Any dividends issued are in relation to total debts rather than individual parts of creditors' claims. Identifying VAT contributions is therefore not possible in any HMRC cases, including DMB Solutions Ltd.

■ Energy: Prices**Lee Anderson:**[\[101839\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent steps he has taken to reduce energy prices.

Helen Whately:

We recognise the recent increase in wholesale global gas prices will be a cause of concern for consumers, businesses, and energy suppliers across the UK.

Consumers have been shielded from price volatility this winter by the Energy Price Cap. The Government is also supporting low income and fuel poor households with their energy bills in a number of ways, including:

- Consulting on expanding The Warm Home Discount, which currently provides eligible households with a £140 discount.

- Winter Fuel Payments and Cold Weather Payments, which help ensure those most vulnerable are better able to heat their homes over the colder months.
- The £500m Household Support Fund, which helps those in greatest need with the cost of essentials over the coming months.
- The Government has allocated over £500 million to help households improve energy efficiency this year through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and the Sustainable Warmth programmes.

The increase in the price of wholesale gas is a global issue. We will continue to keep options to further support households under review. In the longer term, Government will look to reduce our reliance on global gas prices by moving to a cleaner, more resilient energy system and improve energy efficiency to help keep bills down.

■ Energy: VAT

Lee Anderson:

[\[101840\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of reducing VAT on domestic energy in response to rising fuel costs.

Lucy Frazer:

In recognition of the fact that families should not have to bear all the VAT costs they incur to meet their energy needs, the Government already maintains a reduced rate of 5 per cent VAT on the supply of domestic energy, at a cost of £5 billion per year. 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.

■ Environment Protection: Finance

Jo Gideon:

[\[101851\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of local climate bonds in funding local environment projects.

Helen Whately:

The Government considers current funding options for local authorities to pursue environmental projects to be appropriate. Local authorities have full, independent control over their borrowing choices and are free to issue local climate bonds if they wish. It is for local authorities to determine the most appropriate financing mechanism for their projects.

The Government provides accessible, low-cost lending via the Public Works Loan Board which can be used to finance environmental projects, and environmental projects could also be funded via the UK Infrastructure Bank where they meet the bank's mandate.

In addition, the UK Green Financing Programme has raised £16bn to date, which will be used to finance projects that help tackle climate change and other environmental challenges – some of which local authorities may benefit from.

■ Environment Protection: Taxation

Lee Anderson:

[\[101838\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to remove environmental levies on domestic energy in response to increasing energy costs.

Helen Whately:

Environmental and social policy costs represent around 12% of the average dual energy bill, however over the past 10 years their net effect has been to reduce consumer energy bills. Investment in renewables and energy efficiency has reduced UK demand for natural gas by 26% since 2010. This has helped reduce our exposure to global price volatility.

While the majority of these costs represent contractual obligations to fund previous investments in renewables, we need to ensure our green policies are fit for the future, and Government keeps all costs on bills under review.

■ Fraud

Antony Higginbotham:

[\[101854\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the Serious Fraud Office's recommendation on making failure to prevent economic crime a criminal rather than a regulatory offence.

John Glen:

In response to calls that current law on economic crime may require reform, the Government carried out a Call for Evidence in 2017 and published its response in November 2020. This is an extremely complex area of the law and the public consultation unfortunately proved inconclusive.

The Government has therefore asked the Law Commission to undertake an in-depth review of the laws around corporate criminal liability for economic crime and - if considered necessary - make recommendations on proportionate and appropriate options for reform. The Commission is aiming to publish an Options Paper shortly.

It is important that we get this right, and any reforms must be proportionate and evidence-based. We intend to engage with the Law Commission on the findings of the review once it has concluded.

■ Plastics: Packaging

Ruth Jones:

[\[101835\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether revenue generated from the tax on plastic packaging will be used to fund the UK's recycling and collection infrastructure in order to increase the supply of food contact grade recycled material in advance of (a)

deposit return schemes and (b) reforms to extended producer responsibility being introduced.

Helen Whately:

The Plastic Packaging Tax will provide a clear economic incentive to use recycled material in the production of plastic packaging. This will create greater demand for recycled material and, in turn, stimulate increased levels of recycling and collection of plastic waste. As set out at Budget 2018 when the tax was first announced, future revenues raised from the tax will enable investment to address single-use plastics, waste and litter.

Alongside this, the government's commitments in the Resources and Waste Strategy will help to stimulate private investment in reprocessing and recycling infrastructure. The introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers alongside Collection and Packaging Reforms such as Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging and consistency in household and business recycling in England are expected to increase and incentivise appetite for commercial infrastructure investment.

WALES

■ Wales Office: Consultants

Gareth Thomas:

[\[101603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, whether his Department has held (a) any financial or consultancy contracts and (b) meetings with representatives of (i) Clifford Chance LLP, (ii) FTI Consulting and (iii) Fenchurch Advisory Partners in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

David T C Davies:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Wales has not held any financial or consultancy contracts or meetings with representatives of Clifford Chance LLP, FTI Consulting or Fenchurch Advisory Partners in any of the last five years.

■ Wales Office: Staff

Geraint Davies:

[\[104294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the Answer of 17 December 2021 to Question 90819, on Wales Office: Official Hospitality, how many members of staff were working in the departmental building on (a) 5 November 2020 and 1 December 2020 and (b) 16 December 2020 and 22 February 2021.

Simon Hart:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Wales holds only time-limited, office-wide data for the number of staff working in its departmental buildings. The data does not extend back to the dates requested

Our staff follow relevant Covid-19 guidance when working in the office, including on social distancing.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Child Benefit

Gareth Thomas:

[\[101612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department takes to inform new mothers of their rights to claim child benefit; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

DWP does not administer Child Benefit. However, should a new parent raise a Child Benefit query, DWP staff can direct customers to submit a claim with HMRC. This includes signposting to helpful Child Benefit advice and guidance readily available on the Gov.uk website.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[101613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions officials in his Department have had with (a) Ministers and (b) officials in other Government departments on the level of information contained in Bounty Joy Ltd information provided to new mothers on the possible loss of some future pension rights in the event that those women do not apply for child benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

The Government has encouraged families who are responsible for a child under 12 to claim Child Benefit regardless of household income to help them build qualifying years of National Insurance for future State Pension entitlement. The Child Benefit claim form and guidance notes were redesigned in April 2019 to help people understand the importance of claiming Child Benefit whether or not they decide to receive Child Benefit payments.

The Child Benefit claim form is also available online at GOV.UK, through the HMRC helpline and through partners such as Citizen's Advice.

Qualifying Years of National Insurance can be built through a number of ways; National Insurance (NI) contributions whilst working or self-employed; by being credited with NI credits including for Child Benefit; and through making voluntary NI contributions. Additionally, individuals may build up sufficient qualifying years for the full rate of the new State Pension, over an expected working life of 50 years, even if there are some gaps in their NI record. Most individuals under the age of 50 will get the full rate of the new State Pension with 35 qualifying years.

The Department does not believe that there have been any recent discussions on the matter raised.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Surveys**Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[105649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department completed its annual Claimant Service & Experience survey in the 2019-20 financial year.

Mims Davies:

The Customer Experience Survey (CES), which has replaced the previous Claimant Service and Experience Survey (CSES), was started in 2019/20, but due to COVID-19 was suspended halfway through the survey year. This means in the Departmental Annual Report and Accounts, we were unable to provide an overall satisfaction score for 2019/20. The published Annual Report and Accounts can be found here: [DWP annual report and accounts 2020 to 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/104306/dwp-annual-report-and-accounts-2020-to-2021.pdf)

■ Employment and Support Allowance: Derby South**Margaret Beckett:** [\[104299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many constituents in Derby South were affected by the error in ESA payments, following the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman recent investigation.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[104306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to an investigation into the DWP's handling of Ms U's migration to Employment and Support Allowance, published by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman on 13 January 2022, what information her Department holds on the number of the 118,000 claimants who have not received compensation following departmental errors over benefit payments who are resident in (a) West Ham and (b) Newham.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[104375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people in Lewisham Deptford constituency who have been affected by the underpayment of benefits after transitioning from incapacity benefit to employment and support allowance.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[104377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the number of people in Barnsley East constituency who have been affected by the underpayment of benefits after transitioning from incapacity benefit to employment and support allowance.

Chloe Smith:

The Department published an update on the exercise to correct past ESA underpayments on Gov.uk on 8 July 2021. This reported that as of 1 June 2021, of the 600,000 cases checked, 118,000 arrears payments have been made totalling £613 million. This report showed the numbers of cases paid arrears at a national level only as the data was not available at sub-national level at that time. The

Department is investigating the feasibility of providing this analysis at a constituency level.

■ Food Poverty

Rachael Maskell:

[\[101779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the the number of people in receipt of either (a) food bank or (b) other emergency food supplies.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[103597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people unable to afford to cook food from their local foodbanks

David Rutley:

Food banks are independent, charitable organisations and the Department for Work and Pensions does not have any role in their operation. There is no consistent and accurate measure of food bank usage. We take the issue of food security seriously and understand the data limitations in this area, and thus from April 2021 we introduced a set of questions into the Family Resources Survey (FRS) to measure and track food bank usage.

This Government is committed to supporting those on low incomes, and continues to do so through many measures, including through spending over £110 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2021/22 and by further increasing the National Living Wage by 6.6% to £9.50 from April 2022.

Universal Credit recipients in work can now benefit from a reduction in the Universal Credit taper rate from 63% to 55%, while eligible in-work claimants will also benefit from changes to the Work Allowance. These measures represent an effective tax cut for those on low incomes of around £2.2 billion in 2022-23, and will benefit almost two million of the lowest paid workers by £1000 a year on average.

We recognise that some people may require extra support over the winter, which is why vulnerable households across the country are now able to access a new £500 million support fund to help them with essentials. The Household Support Fund provides £421 million to help vulnerable people in England with the cost of food, utilities and wider essentials. The Barnett Formula applies in the usual way, with the devolved administrations receiving almost £80 million.

To support low income families further we have increased the value of Healthy Start Food Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25, helping eligible low income households buy basic foods like milk, fruit and vitamins, and we are also investing over £200m a year from 2022 to continue our Holiday Activities and Food programme which is already providing enriching activities and healthy meals to children in all English Local Authorities.

■ Fuel Poverty

Rachael Maskell: [\[101777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of rising energy costs on people who claim (a) universal credit or (b) other legacy benefits.

Rachael Maskell: [\[101778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made additional financial support available for claimants of (a) universal credit and (b) other legacy benefits in response to the increase in energy costs.

David Rutley:

DWP administers the Cold Weather Payment scheme, which provides £25 extra a week to vulnerable people in receipt of certain income-related benefits, when the average temperature has been recorded, or is forecast to be, 0 degrees Celsius or below over 7 consecutive days at the weather station linked to an eligible person's postcode.

Some customers in receipt of Universal Credit may be entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment if they or their partner reached state pension age on or before 26 September 2021.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy administers the Warm Home Discount Scheme for low income and vulnerable customers. It gives direct assistance with their energy costs. Energy suppliers provide rebates on energy bills currently worth £140 per household each winter. This year (2021/22), the scheme will be worth £354 million.

The Energy Price Cap will continue to protect consumers, ensuring they pay a fair price for their energy this winter.

Further detail on all 3 schemes can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment>

<https://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment>

<https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme>

We recognise that some people require extra support over the winter, through the final stages of recovery, which is why vulnerable households across the country are now able to access a new £500 million support fund to help them with essentials. The Household Support Fund is providing £421 million to help vulnerable people in England. The Barnett Formula applies in the usual way, with the devolved administrations receiving almost £80 million.

Rachael Maskell: [\[103594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people who are unable to adequately heat their homes as a result of poverty (a) nationally and (b) in York.

David Rutley:

National Statistics on the number and percentage of people in poverty are published annually in the “Households Below Average Income” publication. This can be found at:

[Households below average income: for financial years ending 1995 to 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2020).

Data for Figures on material deprivation can be found in tables 4_8db_BHC and 48db_AHC in the children_hbai_detailed_breakdown file and population figures can be found in table 3_1ts in the population-hbai-timeseries-1994-95-2019-20-tables file. Data for York is unavailable due to insufficient sample size.

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■ Kickstart Scheme

Rachael Maskell:

[\[101775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people who were part of the Kickstart scheme have (a) remained employed since the start of that scheme and (b) have lost their job at (i) any time or (ii) at the end of that scheme, to date.

Mims Davies:

As of 10th January 2022, over 122,000 Kickstart jobs have been started by young people.

The Department for Work and Pensions will be monitoring and evaluating the Kickstart scheme throughout its implementation and will continue to evaluate the longer-term outcomes for Kickstart participants after they have completed their six-month job placements. This will include an estimate of the young people that remained employed following the conclusion of the six-month Kickstart job (either with their Kickstart employer or moving into a job with a different employer), as well as the number of young people no longer in employment upon leaving a Kickstart role. We will publish the findings of the evaluation once complete.

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.

David Linden:

[\[104397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications have been made to the Kickstart scheme as of 14 January 2022; and of those applications how many (a) have been accepted, (b) have been refused due to suspected fraud, (c) have been refused for another reason and (d) are still awaiting a decision.

Mims Davies:

As of the 14th January 2022, the number of applications received from gateways (on behalf of employers) and directly from individual employers to the Kickstart Scheme was 65,000. Of these, 31,000 applications were approved and 32,000 were rejected. The number of approved and rejected applications do not sum to the total amount of applications received as some were withdrawn prior to a decision being made. No applications are awaiting a decision. We are unable to disclose details regarding refused applications due to suspected fraud. If cases are under investigation, releasing any information could impede that.

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.

Alison McGovern:

[\[105503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Kickstart places have been taken up by residents in each parliamentary constituency.

Mims Davies:

I refer the Honourable Member to [DEP2021-0996](#) for a breakdown of Kickstart jobs by each parliamentary constituency.

■ Pensioners: Fuel Poverty

Rachael Maskell:

[\[101776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact of the rise in the cost of energy on people in receipt of their pension.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[103593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential need to increase winter fuel payment.

Guy Opperman:

The Social Security (Up-rating of Benefits) Act 2021 introduced a double lock and allowed the Government to increase pensions by the higher of inflation or 2.5%. From April 2022 state pensions will be increased by 3.1% and this represents an additional £4bn spend on pensioner benefits in 2022/23.

Pension Credit also provides invaluable financial support for vulnerable pensioners. Around 1.4 million eligible pensioners across Great Britain receive some £5bn in Pension Credit, which tops up their retirement income and is a passport to other financial help such as support with housing costs, council tax, heating bills and a free TV licence for those over 75.

Local Authorities in England have discretion to design their own bespoke local schemes within the overall parameters of the Household Support Fund, with support primarily focused on food, energy & water bills and wider essentials. Up to 50% of the Fund is available for councils to spend on households without children, including those of State Pension age.

Other support for pensioners includes Winter Fuel Payments which continue to be payable to customers of State Pension age. We pay £200 to households with a customer aged between 66 and 79 and £300 to a household with someone aged 80 or over. We pay over 11 million winter fuel payments annually at a cost of £2bn which is a significant contribution to winter fuel bills.

Cold Weather Payments are also available and help vulnerable people in receipt of certain income-related benefits to meet additional heating costs, during periods of

unseasonably cold weather between 1 November and 31 March. This includes older people in receipt of Pension Credit.

The Warm Home Discount Scheme provides those in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit a discount of £140 on their energy bill providing their supplier is part of the scheme.

There are now 200 thousand fewer pensioners in absolute poverty (both before and after housing costs) than in 2009/10.

■ Poverty

Rachael Maskell: [\[101780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to prevent people from falling into (a) food and (b) fuel poverty.

Rachael Maskell: [\[103596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking through the welfare system to tackle (a) food and (b) fuel poverty.

David Rutley:

This Government is wholly committed to supporting low-income families, including through spending over £110 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2021/22 and by increasing the National Living Wage by 6.6% to £9.50 from April 2022.

With the success of the vaccine rollout and record job vacancies, our focus now is on continuing to support people into and to progress in work. Our multi-billion-pound Plan for Jobs, which has recently been expanded by £500 million, will help people across the UK to find work and to boost their wages and prospects.

In addition, Universal Credit recipients in work are now benefitting from a reduction in the Universal Credit taper rate from 63% to 55%, while eligible in-work claimants can also benefit from changes to the Work Allowance. These measures represent, for the lowest paid in society, an effective tax cut of around £2.2 Billion in 2022-23, and are now benefitting almost two million of the lowest paid workers by £1000 a year on average.

We recognise that some people require extra support over the winter, which is why vulnerable households across the country can access a new £500 million support fund to help them with essentials. The Household Support Fund provides £421 million to help vulnerable people in England with the cost of food, utilities and wider essentials. The Barnett Formula applies in the usual way, with the devolved administrations receiving almost £80 million.

To support low income families further we have increased the value of Healthy Start Food Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25, helping eligible low income households buy basic foods like milk, fruit and vitamins, and we are also investing over £200m a year from 2022 to continue our Holiday Activities and Food programme which is already

providing enriching activities and healthy meals to children in all English Local Authorities.

DWP administers the Cold Weather Payment scheme, which provides £25 extra a week to vulnerable people in receipt of certain income-related benefits, when the average temperature has been recorded, or is forecast to be, 0 degrees Celsius or below over 7 consecutive days at the weather station linked to an eligible person's postcode.

Some customers in receipt of Universal Credit may be entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment if they or their partner reached state pension age on or before 26 September 2021.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy administers the Warm Home Discount Scheme for low income and vulnerable customers. It gives direct assistance with their energy costs. Energy suppliers provide rebates on energy bills currently worth £140 per household each winter. This year (2021/22), the scheme will be worth £354 million.

The Energy Price Cap will continue to protect consumers, ensuring they pay a fair price for their energy this winter.

Further detail on all three schemes can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment>

<https://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment>

<https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme>

Rachael Maskell:

[103603]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to help ensure local authorities support people out of (a) food and (b) fuel poverty this winter.

David Rutley:

This Government is committed to supporting those on low incomes, and continues to do so through many measures, including through spending over £110 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2021/22 and by further increasing the National Living Wage by 6.6% to £9.50 from April 2022.

We recognise that some people require extra support over the winter, which is why vulnerable households across the country can access a new £500 million support fund to help them with essentials. The Household Support Fund provides £421 million to help vulnerable people in England with the cost of food, utilities and wider essentials. The Barnett Formula applies in the usual way, with the devolved administrations receiving almost £80 million.

Local Authorities in England have the discretion to use the Household Support Fund to design bespoke schemes that best meet local need within the scheme guidance which sets out that the fund should primarily be used to provide support to vulnerable households with food, energy and water costs. This includes any form of fuel that is used for the purpose of domestic heating, cooking or lighting and support with water

for drinking, washing, cooking, sewerage and sanitary purposes. The Household Support Fund can also be used to provide support with essentials linked to these items.

To support low income families further we have increased the value of Healthy Start Food Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25, helping eligible low income households buy basic foods like milk, fruit and vitamins. We are also investing over £200m a year for the next three years in our Holiday Activities and Food programme, which will continue to provide healthy meals, enriching activities and free childcare places to children from low-income families, in every local authority in England, providing them with a wide range of benefits to their health, wellbeing and learning.

■ Security: Industry

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[101631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that employers within the security industry follow health and safety legislation sufficiently.

Chloe Smith:

Health and Safety legislation applies to the security industry in the same way it does to other sectors of British industry. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or local authority are the enforcement authority dependent upon the nature of the premises concerned. Several approaches are used ensure compliance with the law:

1. Engagement - HSE liaises with a wide range of stakeholders at a strategic level, which supports a two-way flow of information. Specific examples of stakeholder groups in which security issues have a relatively high profile are the [Hospitality Industry Liaison Forum](#) and the [Joint Advisory Committee for Entertainment](#), both of which are chaired by HSE.
2. Advice - HSE publishes specific [guidance](#) for employers on the safety of security workers, and on work-related [violence and aggression](#).
3. Information - HSE provides links on its website to stakeholder produced guidance, such as that provided by the [Security Industry Authority](#).
4. Regulation - Enforcing authorities have the power to inspect workplaces and investigate incidents and complaints. Security is a cross-cutting issue that has relevance in a wide range of industry sectors. As such, the enforcing authorities can interact with security staff and their employers, when carrying out interventions with other associated businesses.

■ Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses

Jessica Morden: [\[104304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, further to her Department's announcement on 8 July 2021 that it would scrap the six-month rule for access to benefits under the Special Rules for Terminal Illness, if the Government will bring forward

legislative proposals to implement this change for the Personal Independence Payment and Attendance Allowance in the next Queen's Speech.

Jessica Morden:

[\[104305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Written Statement of 8 July 2021, HCWS166 on Disability Benefits, whether the Government plans to bring forward legislative proposals to implement the replacement of the current 6-month rule for access to benefits under the special rules for terminal illness with a 12-month, end of life approach, for the personal independence payment and attendance allowance in the next Queen's Speech.

Chloe Smith:

The Department is committed to supporting people nearing the end of their lives. We plan to amend legislation to implement changes to the Special Rules for Terminal Illness across five DWP benefits, beginning with Universal Credit alongside Employment and Support Allowance this year. This will be followed by Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment when Parliamentary time allows.

■ **Statutory Sick Pay: Self-employed**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[101690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to extend statutory sick pay to self-employed taxpayers.

Chloe Smith:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the Question [UIN99076](#).

■ **Unemployment**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[101774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to offer (a) training and (b) apprenticeship opportunities to people classified as not in education, employment or training.

Mims Davies:

In Jobcentres, Work Coaches work with benefit claimants including those who are NEET. They are supported into a broad spectrum of skills support if they lack the capabilities employers require. Work Coaches signpost people to apprenticeships as a first step in a career and will be actively participating in National Apprenticeship Week.

For young people who are NEET, the DWP Youth Offer provides 16 – 24 year olds on the UC intensive regime Work Coach support and signposting to a range of skills opportunities, including vocational and basic skills training, careers counselling, traineeships and apprenticeship vacancies. This is delivered through the Youth Employment Programme, Youth Employability Coaches and our 150+ Youth Hubs

open across Great Britain. Some Youth Hubs will offer a drop-in facility where NEET young people who do not have a UC claim will be able to access support.

■ **Universal Credit: Self-employed**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[101691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of replacing the Universal Credit Minimum Income Floor for creative freelancers with an alternative policy that is tailored for workforces with unpredictable incomes.

Mims Davies:

The Minimum Income Floor aims to encourage individuals to increase their earnings through developing their self-employment. It also helps deter under declaration of earnings and as such provides fairness to the taxpayer.

In Universal Credit no sector is treated more, or less favourably than another and all claimants have the same rights and obligations. We are aware that for many who are self-employed, particularly those with seasonal businesses, earnings often fluctuate from month to month, and they need to budget and plan for this. Self-employed Universal Credit claimants are no different in this regard. UC seeks to assist viable self-employment, and support people in self-employment, where this is the best route for them to become financially self-sufficient .

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Fuels: Prices

Louise Haigh:

[\[99352\]](#)

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

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 17 January 2022. The correct answer should have been:

Greg Hands:

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

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Chemicals: Regulation

Ruth Jones:

[\[98519\]](#)

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

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>(opens in a new tab)). 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.

Ruth Jones:

[98520]

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

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 14 January 2022. The correct answer should have been:

Jo Churchill:

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This approach makes no practical change to helpful consumer information.

HOME OFFICE■ **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.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 18 January 2022. The correct answer should have been:

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. **New plan for immigration: legal migration and border control strategy statement (accessible web version) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**

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.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Publication of the Veterans' Strategy Action Plan 2022-2024**

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Steve Barclay): [\[HCWS543\]](#)

The Government has today published the Veterans' Strategy Action Plan 2022-24, setting out how we will continue to empower, support and champion our veteran community. Just as the Armed Forces have stood by our country in its times of need, the nation will continue to fulfil its duty by supporting our veterans in their civilian lives.

The Plan will deliver for veterans across three key areas. We will better understand our veteran community, making sure we have the information we need to inform policy and service design. We will transform services and support for veterans, building on progress already made to ensure we are meeting veterans' needs. We will celebrate our veterans and their contribution to society, so that all veterans feel their service is valued by the nation.

The Action Plan contains over 60 commitments, which together will provide a step change in provision. For most Service leavers, the successful transition into employment is the foundation of positive life outcomes. We will be doing more to champion the unique skill set of veterans to employers through a bespoke campaign and a new private sector employers advisory group. We will continue to support veterans to gain quality employment, with the roll out of the Great Place to Work for Veterans scheme, which guarantees interviews for veterans in the Civil Service. We are launching 'Advance into Justice' which will fast track veterans into prison officer roles. We will improve the Enhanced Learning Credit Scheme to make it easier for veterans to access a wider range of academic and vocational opportunities to support their development of a chosen career post-Service.

We will also invest in making better use of data than ever before, as well as digital programmes, including a £44 million digital transformation package. Compensation and pension services will be radically improved, with a new digital portal that will enable veterans to apply and track progress online. This will help the 1.2 million pensions members and 30,000 annual compensation claimants access services more quickly and easily.

We want to ensure all veterans feel their service is valued. Regrettably, some people have historically been excluded from serving their country. The government is determined to take bold steps to begin looking at how we can redress these past wrongs, and we will commission an independent review into the impact that the pre-2000 ban on Homosexuality in the Armed Forces has had on LGBT veterans today.

A further £18 million will be invested in health and wellbeing support for veterans. To bring improvements to mental health services, NHS England will bring the three services

offered under Op COURAGE into one long-term integrated service, making access easier for veterans and their families. The Veteran Trauma Network will be further developed to create an integrated plan to support the physical health of veterans. 'Veteran Aware' accreditation will continue to be rolled out across England – meaning more NHS trusts and GP practices than ever before will become veteran-friendly accredited.

The Office for Veterans' Affairs will work across government and beyond to make sure the Action Plan commitments are monitored and delivered. In 2024, the government will develop a Veterans' Strategy refresh, setting out how far we have come and what remains to be done to deliver on our policy ambition by 2028 to make the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran.

DEFENCE

■ UK Armed Forces Families Strategy 2022-2032

Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Leo Docherty):

[\[HCWS542\]](#)

The Ministry of Defence (MOD)'s UK Armed Forces Families Strategy 2022-32 on making the recognition and care of Armed Forces families a national priority has today been Laid before the House.

The strategy addresses the challenges armed forces families face with mobility, deployment and separation and the implications this has for accessing good quality healthcare, education, and accommodation. It also notes the evolving nature of family life and the pressures this can place on childcare and managing the career of the partner or spouse alongside that of the Service person.

The strategy will be supported by an action plan that includes the commitments made in the government's response to Andrew Selous MP's *Living in Our Shoes* report. The strategy and action plan will be delivered in partnership with the devolved administrations, the charitable and private sectors.

The delivery of improved support is already underway. For example, the MOD is working with the Department for Education and local authorities to lessen the impact of mobility on service children's educational attainment. Informed by consultation with families, we are also working with the Department for Health and Social Care and healthcare providers across the UK to improve understanding of the health needs of armed forces families. To advocate for the skills and experiences of partners and spouses we are collaborating with the Department for Work and Pensions and charities to ensure that are recognised and valued by employers. And next year sees full roll out of the wraparound childcare programme.

But this is only the beginning. The Government and its partners value the role of all families in the Regular and Reserve forces and recognise their integral role in providing support to serving personnel based in the UK and overseas. Therefore, we are committed both to putting them at the heart of the Defence community and to helping them thrive in wider society. Together, under the principles of this strategy, we will continually review our policies to better support them, empower them and improve their lived experience.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Public consultations for improving the UK's cyber resilience**

Minister for Media, Data, and Digital Infrastructure (Julia Lopez): [\[HCWS544\]](#)

Today, my department has launched two consultations seeking public views on our proposals to improve the UK's cyber resilience.

The UK, as one of the leading digital nations, has accelerated its adoption of digital technologies. These technologies have rapidly become integral to the functioning of our economy and form an important part of our critical national infrastructure. In order to ensure our continued prosperity, it is vital that cyber security is a fundamental part of our country's digital transformation journey.

Cyber security incidents are increasing in frequency and sophistication, with the potential to cause severe damage to critical national infrastructure and the economy. Over the course of the last year, the National Cyber Security Centre has faced an unprecedented increase in the volume of cyber security incidents to which it has had to respond. In addition, there have been a number of high-profile cyber incidents within the last year, both domestically and abroad, which have highlighted the increasing sophistication of threats to the UK's cyber resilience. The faster paced digitisation of the UK's economy means that these attacks will have an even greater impact on British businesses and consumers.

Incidents such as the SolarWinds supply chain compromise in December 2020 and the ransomware attack on the Colonial Pipeline in May 2020 demonstrated how such cyber attacks can impact critical services and national infrastructure. At the same time, they have also highlighted the increased need for a sustained supply of diverse and skilled individuals into the cyber workforce to make systems more resilient against cyber threats like these.

Today's consultations are aimed at addressing these challenges. They are divided into three distinct pillars, which are discussed over two separate consultations, given the nature and audience of the differing pillars.

The first consultation covers pillars one and two, and applies to the whole of the United Kingdom. Changes proposed here affect the Network and Information Systems (NIS) Regulations 2018. This is a key piece of cyber security legislation which establishes legal measures to strengthen the overall level of security (both cyber and physical resilience) of network and information systems that are critical for the provision of essential UK services, such as transport, energy, water, digital infrastructure, and health, as well as key digital services.

Proposals in pillar one seek to bring additional critical providers of digital services under the NIS Regulations. The proposals also establish a new risk-based and proportionate supervisory framework for all digital service providers in scope of NIS. Combined, these proposed measures will strengthen the oversight of providers who frequently have privileged access and provide critical support to essential UK services, and ensure that these businesses have adequate cybersecurity protections in place.

The proposals in the second pillar seek to future-proof the NIS Regulations, by allowing changes to be implemented so the UK can adapt to evolving threats and technological developments. The government proposes powers to allow important updates to the NIS framework to be made in the future, either to respond to changing threats or technology or to cover other areas as necessary, as well as provisions to secure the most critical organisations on which essential services depend. The government would also propose to make changes to the current cost recovery system and the incident reporting framework under NIS. Measures proposed in both of these pillars seek to address some of the supply chain cyber security issues which we have experienced, and which, given the nature of the digital economy, are here to stay.

The second consultation covers the third pillar. Its audience is different from the first two pillars and its proposals are limited to England only. It proposes a set of additional approaches the government can provide in quality-assuring the cyber profession. This includes exploring both legislative and non-legislative options. The government will look to the UK Cyber Security Council to be the professional authority to ensure efforts to supply the cyber workforce with diverse and high quality individuals is done consistently and sustainably. The role of the Council will involve developing professional standards and a career pathways framework, bringing together the existing qualification and certification market under a coherent structure. The consultation seeks to gather views on embedding a legislative underpinning for the cyber profession as well as non-legislative measures including a potential role for government procurement requirements that explores the extent to which a similar demonstration of competence should be required for specific government functions.

Copies of the consultation on [proposals for legislation to improve the UK's cyber resilience](#) and [embedding standards and pathways across the cyber profession by 2025](#) can be found on the government website.

Sharing views will help improve the UK's cyber security regulations. By strengthening the oversight of critical digital suppliers, existing cyber regulation, and improving the UK's cyber security profession, we can solidify the UK's position as a democratic and responsible cyber power and protect our essential services (such as the NHS, transport services, digital services and energy supplies). This will, ultimately, defend the interests, livelihoods, and economic prosperity of our people and businesses.

■ **Reporting Contingent Liabilities in relation to a Government Guarantee to back a borrowing facility for Historic Royal Palaces**

Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Civil Society (Nigel Huddleston):
[\[HCWS541\]](#)

The Departmental Minute laid today is in respect of an extension to the period whereby Government acts as a guarantor on behalf of Historic Royal Palaces (Historic Royal Palaces) for a borrowing facility of up to £4 million to meet short-term cash flow requirements.

The renewed guarantee will be available until 19 January 2027 and Historic Royal Palaces will only enter into borrowing facilities at such times and within such monetary limits as the Department shall agree.

The guarantee provides a safeguard protecting Historic Royal Palaces' business from a sudden and serious decline in economic conditions affecting Historic Royal Palaces' admissions income, if such an event should occur, until the savings from their planned rationalisation measures could come through. It would only be used in extreme circumstances. Until the expiration of the previous renewal in September 2021, the guarantee had been in place since 2002 and prior to Spring 2020 had not been called upon.

Historic Royal Palaces is a charity established by Royal Charter. By virtue of a contract entered into on 1 April 1998, it carries out the functions of the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport under Section 21 of the Crown Lands Act 1851 of managing the unoccupied Royal Palaces.

A copy of the Departmental Minute will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Covid-19 Update

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Sajid Javid):

[\[HCWS545\]](#)

Departmental Contingent Liability Notification (deployment of the novel oral antiviral drug PF-07321332+ritonavir)

I am making this statement for the benefit of Honourable and Right Honourable members to bring to their attention a contingent liability the Government has agreed to relating to the two contracts signed between Her Majesty's Government (HMG) and the medicine supplier Pfizer for the COVID-19 antiviral drug PF-07321332+ritonavir (co-packaged and marketed as Paxlovid).

On 20 October 2021, the Government announced the procurement of two novel oral antivirals to treat UK COVID-19 patients. One of these was PF-07321332+ritonavir, of which the Government purchased 250,000 patient courses.

On 22 December, during recess, the UK Government procured an additional 4.25 million antivirals to treat COVID-19. This included a further 2.5 million patient courses of PF-07321332+ritonavir.

Antivirals including PF-07321332+ritonavir will support the community-based treatment and recovery of those at highest risk of hospitalisation and death who test positive for the virus. We do not anticipate a reduction in effectiveness of antivirals against the Omicron variant compared to Delta.

On 31 December 2021, PF-07321332+ritonavir was granted a conditional marketing authorisation by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and a temporary Regulation 174 authorisation for Northern Ireland to ensure access to supply

across the UK. This was after PF-07321332+ritonavir (Paxlovid) was found to be safe and effective at reducing the risk of hospitalisation and death in people with mild to moderate COVID-19 infection who are at an increased risk of developing severe disease.

I am now updating the House on the contingent liability HMG has taken on in relation to antiviral supply via this statement and a Departmental Minute which has been laid.

Even if vaccination and revaccination against new variants is largely effective, they are not enough to protect vulnerable cohorts of patients including the immunocompromised and those who cannot have a vaccine or fail to mount a sufficient immune response. Antivirals add another layer of resilience and flexibility to the UK's fight against COVID-19. To continue obtaining the benefits of improved health outcomes such as reducing deaths, hospitalisations, severe disease, and its complications, a programme of investment in antivirals is required.

Given the exceptional circumstances we remain in, rapid purchase of these antivirals, while they remained available, was vital. Willingness to accept a contingent liability with respect to antiviral suppliers has helped to secure access to antivirals, with the expected benefits to public health and the economy alike, much sooner than could have been the case otherwise.

Whilst we have been required to work at pace to gain access to these emerging viable antivirals in a highly competitive global market, we have, of course, continued to have due regard for the fundamentals of protecting the taxpayer and ensuring appropriate standards of public administration are followed.

Even though PF-07321332+ritonavir has been developed at pace, the process of approval for this drug has included a full assessment of data and clinical trial results by the MHRA. This is used to assess the safety, quality and efficacy of the treatment before issuing a licence.

I will update the House in a similar manner regarding the deployment of PF-07321332+ritonavir into the community and the wider rollout of molnupiravir.