



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 20 January 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:31 P.M., 20 January 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Automotive Transformation Fund

Judith Cummins:

[101763]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether manufacturers of hydrogen internal combustion engines are eligible to receive grants for large scale industrialisation from the Automotive Transformation Fund.

Lee Rowley:

The Automotive Transformation Fund (ATF) supports late-stage R&D and capital investments across strategically important parts of the electric vehicle supply chain. Securing battery cell manufacturing (gigafactories) is a priority, with targeted investment in battery materials, motors, drives, power electronics and hydrogen fuel cells and storage also required. Information about open funding competitions and further detail on scope and eligibility can be found on the IFS portal: <https://apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition/search>.

As part of the Net Zero Strategy, the Government announced a further £350m to be delivered through the ATF over the next three years to support development of an internationally competitive electric vehicle supply chain here in the UK. This is additional to the £500m announced as part of my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan.

The funding for ATF is part of the up to £1 billion committed by the Government to ensure that the UK takes advantage of this once in a generation opportunity.

■ Batteries

Valerie Vaz:

[105498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on battery energy storage systems of the fire at the Victoria Big Battery project in Australia on 30 July 2021.

Greg Hands:

The Government is aware of the incident in Australia. The Department will continue to work with the industry-led electricity storage health and safety governance group to analyse incidents around the world and derive conclusions, as soon as these become available.

■ Business Innovation Forum

Valerie Vaz:

[105496]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the membership is of the Business Innovation Forum; and when it will meet.

George Freeman:

As announced in the Innovation Strategy, in early 2022 we are establishing a Business Innovation Forum to galvanise action from the business community, drive implementation and to hold government to account on delivery.

The Forum will include representatives from the UK's largest R&D intensive businesses, smaller innovative businesses, and experts on innovation more broadly.

The Forum will meet at least quarterly, with the first meeting expected to take place soon. The full attendee list will be confirmed and published online in due course.

Valerie Vaz:[\[105497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what powers the Business Innovation Forum will have to scrutinise the implementation of the Innovation Strategy.

George Freeman:

As announced in the Innovation Strategy, in early 2022 we are establishing a Business Innovation Forum to galvanise action from the business community, drive implementation and to hold government to account on delivery.

The Forum will support the Government in the implementation of the 'UK Innovation Strategy', galvanising action from the business community and reviewing progress against actions set out in the UK innovation Strategy.

I will attend each Forum meeting to receive members' views directly

■ Business: Closures**Seema Malhotra:**[\[105537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of business deaths.

Paul Scully:

In a dynamic and competitive economy, a proportion of businesses will cease trading each year for a range of reasons.

Since the start of Covid, business deaths have averaged around 490,000 per year over 2020/21 down from a yearly average of 500,000 in the period 2016-19.

This Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses in the form of grants, the furlough scheme, and the Covid loan schemes, which provided a lifeline to 1.6 million businesses across the UK – facilitating nearly £80 billion of finance to help them survive the pandemic.

■ Central Government: Staff**Andy McDonald:**[\[105562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many front-line enforcement officers there were in the (a) HMRC National Minimum Wage

Enforcement Team, (b) Health and Safety Executive and (c) Gangmaster Labour Abuse Authority in 2020-21.

Paul Scully:

In 2020-21 HMRC National Minimum Wage Enforcement Team had 420 full time equivalents at year end.

The Health and Safety Executive does not distinguish between 'front line' and non 'front line' enforcement roles. However, for the year 2020-21 HSE employed 953 warrant-holding staff in all grades and roles, including trainees, managers and specialists.

As of March 2021, the Gangmaster and Labour Abuse Authority had 63 frontline officers.

■ **Company Investigations and Inspections**

Andy McDonald:

[\[105561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many workplace (a) inspections and (b) investigations were carried out by the (i) Employment Standards Agency Inspectorate, (ii) HMRC National Minimum Wage Enforcement Team, (iii) Health and Safety Executive and (iv) the Gangmaster Labour Abuse Authority for the yearly reporting period 2020-21.

Paul Scully:

In the yearly reporting period 2020-21, the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate closed 177 inspections and 1,800 investigations (complaint-based cases).

The HMRC National Minimum Wage Enforcement Team closed 2,740 cases.

The Health and Safety Executive carried out 14,880 inspections and 14,426 investigations (8,026 of which were workplace concerns raised by employees, members of the public or others; 6,189 were non-fatal accidents; 211 were fatalities). HSE also conducted over 182,700 spot checks to ensure workplace premises were Covid-secure.

The Gangmaster and Labour Abuse Authority carried out a total of 221 inspections (157 application inspections and 64 compliance inspections). The GLAA conducted 476 investigations in total, 380 of these were led by the GLAA and the remaining 96 were led by other agencies and supported by the GLAA.

■ **Electricity: Prices**

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[105469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to review the levels of remuneration received by those producing electricity in their homes and businesses which is then fed into the grid in response to the large increases in electricity prices being charged by suppliers.

Greg Hands:

The Smart Export Guarantee, introduced in 2020, is a cost-reflective and market led mechanism, helping to level the playing field for small-scale low-carbon generation whilst supporting the transition to a smart and flexible energy system. It provides a route to market for any excess energy exported to the grid following closure of the Feed-in Tariffs scheme.

In order to enable the Smart Export Guarantee to be market based and encourage innovation, one of the key features is to allow suppliers to set both the tariff levels and structure. These tariffs are not directly linked to the wholesale price, or the increase in the retail price of electricity. The Department believes the market has responded positively to the Smart Export Guarantee in its first year, but will review again for signs of price competitiveness and innovation following Ofgem's annual report in the Autumn.

Energy Company Obligation**Conor McGinn:****[105607]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of the prospective removal of the Energy Company Obligation scheme on levels of (a) fuel poverty and (b) domestic energy efficiency in (i) St Helens North constituency, (ii) the North West and (iii) England.

Greg Hands:

The Government keeps all costs on bills under review; We consulted on extending ECO from 2022-26 and expanding it to £1bn per year, supporting low income and vulnerable households across Great Britain. We will issue a response to the ECO4 consultation in due course.

Energy: Meters**Mr Alistair Carmichael:****[105389]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many households in (a) Orkney and (b) Shetland have had smart meters installed.

Greg Hands:

The Government's official statistics on the rollout of smart meters are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/smart-meters-statistics>. These statistics are based on data from energy suppliers provided at Great Britain-level only.

Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[105390]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help improve access to smart meters in areas with low take-up.

Greg Hands:

The Government wants to ensure that households and small businesses in Great Britain can benefit from smart metering and has required energy suppliers to establish Smart Energy GB, which is responsible for consumer engagement. Smart

Energy GB has objectives to drive consumer take-up and assist consumers who may face additional barriers in accessing smart metering.

■ Energy: Prices

Jim Shannon:

[\[102626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the increases in electricity and gas prices on consumers; and what steps he is taking to help protect consumers potentially at financial risk due to energy price increases.

Greg Hands:

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

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

■ Fuels: Prices

Louise Haigh:

[\[105635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what meetings he has had with petrol retailers on fuel prices from 25 October 2021 to 17 January 2022.

Greg Hands:

The Department's officials are in regular contact with the fuel supply industry, including those within retail operations, to discuss a range of issues. The department also monitors changes in fuel prices. The Government has subsequently kept fuel duty frozen for 12 successive years, recognising that fuel is a major cost for households and businesses.

■ Hydrogen: Infrastructure

Alan Brown:

[\[102682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a shared network infrastructure to support a liquid UK hydrogen market.

Greg Hands:

The Government recognises that network infrastructure will provide the link between production and demand, and is essential to the development of the hydrogen economy. Further work is needed to determine what the optimal hydrogen network looks like, and this will cover both pipeline and non-pipeline distribution. In the UK Hydrogen Strategy, the Government sets out a commitment to undertake a review of systemic hydrogen network requirements in the 2020s. This review is underway, and the Government has committed to provide an update on systemic hydrogen network requirements early this year.

■ Light Goods Vehicles: Shortages**Jim McMahon:**[\[104376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of supply shortages in the used light goods vehicle market on inflation; and if he will publish projections of that impact for the next two years.

Lee Rowley:

[Holding answer 19 January 2022]: The independent Office for Budget Responsibility set out its forecasts for inflation in the October 2021 Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

■ Minimum Wage: Non-payment**Andy McDonald:**[\[105560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the number of prosecutions for non-payment of the national minimum wage by region in Financial Year (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Paul Scully:

This Government takes the enforcement of the minimum wage seriously. Paying the minimum wage is not optional, it's the law.

Our priority has always been to ensure that workers receive the money they are owed as quickly as possible. It is for this reason, in the vast majority of cases, HMRC pursue civil enforcement. However, for the most egregious breaches of National Minimum Wage law, where employers are persistently non-compliant, or refuse to cooperate with HMRC, criminal prosecution may take place.

The Government published prosecution numbers for non-payment of the NMW by area in the 2019-20 Enforcement and Compliance report which can be found in Table 12 here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964238/nmw-e-c-report-tables-2019-2020.xlsx.

The figures for 2020-21 will be published in due course.

■ Northern Powergrid: Storms**Mr Kevan Jones:****[105377]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many compensation payments (a) have been and (b) are yet to be processed by Northern Powergrid in relation to Storm Arwen and Storm Barra.

Greg Hands:

Under Ofgem's rules, Northern Power Grid must compensate customers for the inconvenience caused by loss of supply if the level of required service is not met.

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to Ofgem and network operators, including Northern Powergrid, on the 6th December 2021, setting out his expectations that Distribution Network Operators make every effort to deliver compensation to affected customers swiftly and without delay, considering the burden making a detailed application might place on impacted customers, and in line with the Guaranteed Standards expectations.

Northern Powergrid had paid a significant proportion of compensation cases by Christmas 2021. Any cases remaining unpaid to this date are still under investigation or in progress as required by Ofgem's regulation.

■ Plastics: Manufacturing Industries**Chi Onwurah:****[100538]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of plastics consumed in the UK which are manufactured in the UK.

Lee Rowley:

We estimate that between 30% to 55% of plastics consumed in the UK are produced in the UK. This range depends on whether plastic imports to the UK are consumed domestically or are re-exported, however the Department does not hold this exact data.

■ Small Businesses: Greenhouse Gas Emissions**Seema Malhotra:****[105536]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to encourage SMEs to join the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's Race for Net Zero.

Greg Hands:

In May 2021, ahead of COP26 the Government launched the Together for Our Planet Business Climate Leaders campaign. The aim of the campaign is to encourage as many small businesses as possible to join the "Race to Zero" by making the SME Climate Commitment on the SME Climate Hub. To date, 2,670 UK small businesses have made the SME Climate Hub, constituting around 80% of global signups.

The Government has also run several initiatives in conjunction with trade associations, local authorities, businesses such as BT, NatWest and Royal Mail. For example, the “Heroes of Net Zero Competition” invited all British businesses with less than 50 employees, who had joined the Race to Zero, to share their innovative green actions. As part of the campaign, a new UK Business Climate Hub has been developed to provide guidance on how to reduce emissions, including sector-specific advice.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme

Grahame Morris:

[102591]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will require all utility companies to provide the Warm Homes Discount to both the (a) core group and (b) broader group.

Greg Hands:

Currently, energy suppliers with over 150,000 domestic customer accounts are obligated to deliver the Warm Home Discount Core Group, and those with over 250,000 are obligated to deliver both the Core and Broader Groups. These thresholds are in place following a consultation in 2020, and are set out in Regulations. Energy suppliers below these thresholds are able to voluntarily participate in the delivery of rebates.

The Government [consulted last summer](#) on the future of the scheme, which included proposals to reduce the energy supplier participation thresholds to 50,000 domestic customer accounts in 2022/23, and 1,000 domestic customer accounts from 2023/24 onwards. These balances are increasing access to the scheme, while ensuring costs are not prohibitive for new market entrants. The Government has also proposed to reform the scheme and replace the Broader Group in order to better target households in fuel poverty. The Government will be publishing its response to the consultation in Spring 2022.

Grahame Morris:

[102592]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will commission a public information campaign to raise awareness of the Warm Homes Discount Scheme.

Greg Hands:

In the 2021/22 scheme year, all low-income pensioners who are potentially eligible for a rebate under the Warm Home Discount Core Group will have received a letter from the Government by mid-December 2021. Most will receive the rebate automatically; in 2020/21, around 95% of Core Group recipients received their rebates automatically. In addition, the Warm Home Discount website is widely signposted and used by consumer groups, charities, and energy comparison websites to maximise uptake.

Energy suppliers are responsible for administering their Broader Group rebates, including setting their eligibility criteria and providing the rebates to eligible

households. Suppliers make their customers aware of the scheme and are usually over-subscribed with applications.

Last summer, the Government [consulted](#) on extending, expanding, and reforming the scheme such that from winter 2022/23 the vast majority of all Warm Home Discount rebates would be provided automatically.

Grahame Morris: [\[102593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will standardise the eligibility criteria for the Warm Homes Discount.

Greg Hands:

The Government [consulted last summer](#) on the future of the Warm Home Discount scheme. While the Core Group of low-income pensioners would be maintained, the Government has proposed to replace the Broader Group and instead identify households on low incomes with the highest energy costs through data matching. Eligibility would be the same across all participating energy suppliers and this would enable most rebates to be provided automatically without customers having to apply, including working-age households for the first time.

The Government will be publishing its response to the consultation in Spring 2022, with the reforms coming into force from the 2022/23 scheme year.

Grahame Morris: [\[102594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will remove the limits on the number of Warm Home Discounts a supplier can issue.

Greg Hands:

The Government sets the overall spending target for each Warm Home Discount scheme year. For 2021/22, the spending target is £354 million, and around 2.2 million households will receive a rebate worth £140. However, the Warm Home Discount is not funded by the Government – it is paid for by energy suppliers, who generally recoup the costs from customers' energy bills. This is currently estimated to be around £14 per customer bill.

Having a spending target is therefore necessary to balance providing significant numbers of rebates to as many households as possible, while minimising the impact on consumers' bills. Energy suppliers can also support their customers through other means, such as through Industry Initiatives under the Warm Home Discount, or measures outside of the scheme.

■ Wood-burning Stoves: Regulation

Geraint Davies: [\[105333\]](#)

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

Greg Hands:

The Department has no record of any media queries related to EcoDesign regulations in December 2021.

CABINET OFFICE■ **10 Downing Street****Angela Rayner:**[\[90429\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Oral contribution of the Prime Minister of 8 December, Official report, column 372, and the Oral contribution of The Paymaster General of 9 December 2021, Official Report, who gave the repeated assurances to the Prime Minister referred to in those answers.

Michael Ellis:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer to her question of 13 January 2022, [PQ 103561](#).

■ **Government Departments: Coronavirus****Daisy Cooper:**[\[105742\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what communication there has been between the Government and the Metropolitan Police, relating to the decision by the Metropolitan Police not to investigate allegations against (a) Number 10 Downing Street and (b) other Government Departments of breaking lockdown regulations while the civil service investigation into that matter, chaired by Sue Gray, is completed.

Michael Ellis:

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

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

■ **Government Departments: Procurement****Chi Onwurah:**[\[105512\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 14 January 2022 to Question 101713, what estimate he has made of the cost implications of being locked into one supplier when determining value for money; whether his Department has made an assessment of the social and security value of supporting UK suppliers; and whether his Department is responsible for the economic and social impacts of individual Government Department outsourcing decisions.

Michael Ellis:

Each Buying Authority has their own commercial spend controls that apply to their contracts with suppliers. Value-for-money and cost implications will vary on a case-by-case basis and it is down to each department to determine what these are in their respective circumstances. The Technology Code of Practice ensures that departments have multiple options available with a range of suppliers.

The driving principle behind public procurement policy is to award contracts on the basis of value for money. That means the optimum combination of cost and quality over the lifetime of the project, not just price alone. The best way to test for and to demonstrate this principle is via an open competition, as is required in most cases by public procurement legislation.

The government wants UK businesses to be successful in bidding for UK public contracts. That is why this government is committed to the procurement reform bill which will provide simpler, less bureaucratic processes for our businesses and better commercial outcomes for our public bodies - all while continuing to comply with our international commitments.

Through our new approach to extend the use of the Social Value Act, effective from 1 January 2021, additional social benefits can be taken into account in the delivery of contracts in a streamlined and standardised way, using policy outcomes aligned to this government's priorities. From creating jobs and skills, building diverse supply chains and working towards Net Zero, embedding social value in procurement can help us to invest in our communities.

In addition to training commercial staff and making detailed guidance available to all on gov.uk, Cabinet Office and DCMS are working with supplier representative bodies and other external stakeholders to continue to build awareness.

■ Government Procurement Card**Emily Thornberry:**[\[105427\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether a Government procurement card was used by his staff to make purchases with a value lower than £500 from the Co-Op convenience store at 456-459 Strand on the night of 16 April 2021.

Michael Ellis:

No.

■ Ministers and Senior Civil Servants: Coronavirus**Claire Hanna:**[\[104408\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Government will include investigation of alleged breaches of covid-19 regulations by (a) Ministers and (b) senior civil servants in the terms of reference to the public inquiry into the Government's handling of the covid-19 outbreak due to commence in spring 2022.

Michael Ellis:

The Prime Minister has appointed the Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett DBE to chair the public inquiry into Covid-19. The inquiry will be established on a statutory basis, with formal powers, and will begin its work in spring 2022.

Draft terms of reference will be published in due course, following consultation with Baroness Hallett and ministers from the devolved administrations. As set out in the Prime Minister's statement on 15 December, Baroness Hallett will then lead a process of public consultation, including with bereaved families and other affected groups, before the terms of reference are finalised.

■ Prime Minister: Coronavirus**Claire Hanna:**[\[104407\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Government will make it its policy to publish in full the report of investigation led by Sue Gray into allegations of breaches of covid-19 regulations by the Prime Minister's Office.

Michael Ellis:

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

The Terms of Reference set out that the findings of the investigations will be made public.

■ Senior Civil Servants: Equality**Rachel Hopkins:**[\[103704\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent steps his Department has taken to increase Black, Asian, and minority ethnic representation in senior civil service roles.

Rachel Hopkins:[\[103707\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department has taken to improve the representation of people from low socio-economic backgrounds in senior civil servant roles; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Hopkins:[\[103708\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to improve the representation of (a) women and (b) ethnic minorities from low socio-economic backgrounds in senior civil service roles.

Michael Ellis:

The Cabinet Office supports a number of Civil Service initiatives aimed at supporting colleagues to reach the Senior Civil Service from a diverse range of backgrounds including the Civil Service Fast Stream, Future Leaders Scheme and Senior Leaders Scheme. In addition, the Cabinet Office runs an internal Senior Sponsorship Scheme

- a bespoke progression offer for the G6/7 talent pipeline, including SCS application support and SCS sponsorship.

The 2021 cohort of the Future Leaders Scheme had nearly a quarter of delegates from a lower socio economic background, over a fifth were from an ethnic minority background and more than half of successful candidates for the FLS were women. The 2020 Sponsorship Scheme was entirely made of ethnic minority colleagues. Over a third of the 2022 Sponsorship Scheme cohort identify as being from a lower socio-economic background.

Rachel Hopkins:

[103706]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what resources the Government has allocated to increasing diversity in senior civil service roles.

Michael Ellis:

The Declaration on Government Reform commits the Government to drawing on talent from all backgrounds. There are a number of initiatives aimed at supporting colleagues to reach the Senior Civil Service from a diverse range of backgrounds including the Civil Service Fast Stream, Future Leaders Scheme and Senior Leaders Scheme.

As an example of representation, the proportion of ethnic minority civil servants has risen from 9.2% in 2011 to 14.3% in 2021 (up from 13.2% in 2020). This exceeds 13.6%, the proportion of the UK's economically active population who are from an ethnic minority. Since 2011, the proportion of civil servants with a declared disability has increased across all grades and is now 13.6%.

The positive increase in representation has been a steady incremental change over the last four years, underpinned by a programme of work including:

- interventions to support internal career progression to SCS,
- accelerating work on the external SCS talent pool - by creating a Task and Finish group to oversee development of the pool and improve representation of disabled and ethnic minority senior leaders,
- mandated sponsorship of ethnic minority talent by Civil Service Senior Leadership,
- a bespoke career progression offer for the G6/7 talent pipeline, including SCS application support, mentoring and sponsorship,
- greater promotion of internal talent schemes such as the Future Leaders Scheme and Senior Leaders Scheme, supporting events organised by participants and
- regular engagement with cross-Government Employee Networks to promote talent development at all levels.

Representation is increasing and whilst this trend is positive, we remain committed to improving representation across the broadest range of diversity as outlined in the Declaration on Government Reform across our workforce and in particular at our most senior grades. To build on the progress made over recent years and target

where improvement is still needed, the Government will take a holistic approach to SCS recruitment to identify and remove barriers to underrepresented groups entering and progressing in the SCS.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces: Veterans

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[105570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence People and Veterans, of 13 December 2021, Official Report, column 814, on what date he plans to publish the Service Justice Statistics in his Department's Spring 2022 bulletin.

Leo Docherty:

The official statistics for Sexual Offences in the Service Justice System will be published on 31 March 2022. This year, the statistics will include the offences of murder and manslaughter, and from 2023 will include information about domestic abuse and child sexual abuse.

■ Colchester: Firing Ranges

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[105571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what date he plans to move of firing operations from Middlewick Ranges to Fingringhoe; what assessment he has made of benefits of the firing range moving; and whether any job losses will occur as a result of the move.

Jeremy Quin:

Initial groundworks for the enhanced range facilities at Fingringhoe began in November 2021. The project will provide modern electronically operated targets which reduces the risk of health and safety and training accidents, and provides better training for our Armed Forces. The investment in these modern facilities was continually assessed at each stage of the project since it was announced in 2016. No job losses will occur as a result of the co-location of range facilities at Fingringhoe.

■ Korea: Nuclear Weapons

Jim Shannon:

[\[102631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to assist South Korea with tackling North Korea's development of nuclear and missile technology.

James Heappey:

The UK is committed to securing peace on the Korean peninsula and the dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear and weapons programmes. As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and a responsible member of the international community

we support actions aimed at encouraging North Korea to take concrete steps toward complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation.

The UK frequently works with the Republic of Korea, the United States and other partners towards this end. We are a permanent member of the United Nations Military Armistice Committee and in 2022 are increasing the number of UK personnel within the United Nations Command Korea, including providing the next 3* General Deputy-Commander.

We contribute approximately 20 personnel to the biannual Republic of Korea-led Combined Command Post Training, where the command functions of a multinational response to crises are practiced, and work to improve readiness in the event of a breakdown of Armistice conditions.

The UK also supports the UNSC Resolutions aimed at preventing the proliferation of North Korea's weapons and nuclear programmes, and conducts sanctions enforcement deployments aimed at preventing the illegal supply, sale, transfer or exports of goods by North Korea. During the UK's Carrier Strike Group (CSG-21) deployment to the Indo-Pacific last year, HMS RICHMOND performed a maritime monitoring mission, and in early 2022 HMS TAMAR has conducted a similar mission.

We believe these sanctions, which are not aimed at the North Korean people, are the most effective method of addressing North Korea's weapons and nuclear programmes, and we support efforts made by the Republic of Korea and the US to engage diplomatically.

We urge North Korea to refrain from further provocations. Alongside our allies and partners, the UK is committed to peace on the Korean Peninsula, upholding the rules-based international system and securing an end to North Korea's unlawful activities. We strongly encourage North Korea to return to dialogue.

■ Maritime Patrol Aircraft: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[105385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2022 to Question 100455 on Maritime Patrol Aircraft: Procurement, whether the £5.1bn figure relates to the TDEL costs of the P-8 fleet over a ten-year period.

Jeremy Quin:

The £5.1 billion is in respect of the TDEL estimate for the through life of the Programme out to the Out of Service date which is 2045.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[105386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2022 to Question 100453 on Maritime Patrol Aircraft: Procurement, whether the whole life cost figure includes US-furnished (a) torpedo systems and (b) sonobuoys.

Jeremy Quin:

The whole life cost figure includes initial provision of Mk54 torpedoes and sonobuoys.

■ Military Aid: Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Rachael Maskell:

[\[105623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he expects the embedding of armed forces personnel within Yorkshire Ambulance Service to conclude.

James Heappey:

Defence has provided support through the Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) system to the Yorkshire Ambulance Service since 17 January 2022. This support is expected to end on 31 March 2022.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[105624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces personnel are embedded with Yorkshire Ambulance Service since 18 January 2022; and whether that number is set to increase.

James Heappey:

Defence has provided 112 Armed Forces personnel through the Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) system to support the Yorkshire Ambulance Service since 17 January 2022. This support is expected to end on 31 March 2022. Any changes to the number of personnel deployed will be considered through the MACA process in the normal way.

■ Ministry of Defence: Artificial Intelligence

John Healey:

[\[105350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to publish the defence AI strategy.

Jeremy Quin:

We expect to publish the strategy in spring 2022.

■ Shipbuilding

Paul Girvan:

[\[102754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the refreshed National Shipbuilding Strategy will be published.

Ruth Jones:

[\[102758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the refreshed National Shipbuilding Strategy will be published.

Jeremy Quin:

The National Shipbuilding Strategy Refresh will be published early this year.

■ Veterans UK: Finance

John Healey:

[\[105354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the annual budget for Veterans UK was in each year between 2010 and 2021.

Leo Docherty:

Veterans UK is the public facing name given to Veterans Services provided by Defence Business Services (DBS), an enabling organisation of the Ministry of Defence since 2014 and does not exist as an independent entity.

The annual Budget allocated to the administration of Veterans services for each financial year is detailed in the below table. This includes the administration of Compensation Claims, Welfare Services, Pensions, some support to serving personnel and the running of Ilford Park Polish Home, but excludes the Veterans UK helpline which is included in other DBS budgets and not separately held. Data prior to 2015 is not held.

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL DEL (£MILLION)
2021-22	17.620
2022-21	19.795
2019-20	17.220
2018-19	16.644
2017-18	15.607
2016-17	16.095
2015-16	19.052
2014-15	18.964

1. Control Total is as at the end of the Financial Year
2. Control Total is Near Cash (now known as Total DEL)
3. FY 2021-22's control total is as at AP09

■ Veterans UK: Staff

John Healey:

[\[105353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many staff were working at (a) Veterans UK and (b) its helpline in each year between 2010 and 2021.

Leo Docherty:

Veterans UK is the public facing name given to Veterans Services provided by Defence Business Services (DBS), an enabling organisation of the Ministry of Defence since 2014 and does not exist as an independent entity.

1. The average Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of DBS staff working on the delivery of Veterans services including the administration of compensation claims, welfare services, pensions, some support to serving personnel and the running of Ilford Park Polish Home since 2016 is detailed in the below table, figures prior to this date are not held:

FINANCIAL YEAR	AVERAGE FTE
2016-17	407.8
2017-18	395.8
2018-19	419.8
2019-20	439.8
2020-21	431.8
2021-22	426.7

- (b) The average FTE of all DBS staff working on the Veterans UK helpline since 2015 is detailed in the below table, figures prior to this date are not held:

FINANCIAL YEAR	AVERAGE FTE
2015-16	10.43
2016-17	9.68
2017-18	15.2
2018-19	13.64
2019-20	12.37
2020-21	12.77
2021-22	13.82

■ Veterans UK: Telephone Services

John Healey:

[105351]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many calls the Veterans UK helpline received in each month of 2021.

Leo Docherty:

The below table details the number of calls received by the Veterans UK helpline for each month of 2021. Calls received by the helpline can range from enquires about pension entitlement or compensation claims to welfare support and advice.

2021	CALLS
January	2,910
February	2,476
March	3,535
April	3,276
May	2,824
June	2,539
July	1,834
August	3,284
September	3,642
October	3,120
November	3,227
December	2,282

John Healey:[\[105352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many calls the Veterans UK helpline received in each year between 2010 and 2021.

Leo Docherty:

The below table details the number of call the Veterans UK Helpline received for each financial year since 2015. Data prior to 2015 is not held. The Helpline remained open during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, however customer behaviour changed and a greater number of email enquiries were received. Calls and e-mails received can range from enquires about pension entitlement or compensation claims to welfare support and advice.

FINANCIAL YEAR	CALLS
2015-16	158,375
2016-17	127,464
2017-18	130,225

FINANCIAL YEAR	CALLS
2018-19	128,373
2019-20	111,206
2020-21	31,345
2021-22	53,894

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

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

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[106890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish in full his predecessor's Ministerial diary for 20 May 2020.

Julia Lopez:

Ministers regularly meet with departmental officials and external stakeholders. Details of ministerial meetings with external organisations are published quarterly and can be found on GOV.UK.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Official Hospitality

Caroline Lucas:

[\[102582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will publish the dates and details of any (a) social gatherings for Departmental staff and (b) work gatherings where alcohol and food were consumed that took place at her Department from 23 March 2020 to date.

Julia Lopez:

This information is not collected. For the majority of the period in question, staff were expected to work from home and undertake meetings remotely, wherever possible. Where this was not the case, staff were permitted to be in the office in accordance with the relevant cross-Government Health and Safety guidance at the time.

■ Members: Correspondence

Emily Thornberry:

[\[105418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury of 8 December 2021.

Julia Lopez:

A response was issued on 10 January 2022 under the case reference MC2021/20897.

■ Television Licences: Older People

Justin Madders: [\[104345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate she has made of the number of demand letters for non-payment of the TV Licence fee that have been sent to people who are over 75 years of age.

Julia Lopez:

More than nine in ten over-75s customers have now made arrangements for a free or paid licence, or updated the BBC on a change in their circumstances. The BBC has provided assurances to the government that its letter writing policy has not changed since the over-75s concession was removed.

The Secretary of State has been clear that the BBC must ensure that it supports those affected by its decision on the over-75s concession and we expect them to do so with the utmost sensitivity.

Justin Madders: [\[104346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has had recent discussions with Capita on collecting non-payment of TV Licence fines from people who are over 75.

Julia Lopez:

The Government has not had any recent discussions with Capita on the issue of TV Licencing. Responsibility for collecting and enforcing the Licence Fee is the responsibility of the BBC.

We expect the BBC to ensure that it supports those affected by its decision on the over-75s concession with the utmost sensitivity.

■ Voluntary Work: Young People

Justin Tomlinson: [\[102624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans she has to increase the effectiveness of the National Citizen Service through working alongside (a) trust organisers and (b) local authorities.

Nigel Huddleston:

Following the recent Spending Review, officials are working closely with the National Citizen Service Trust (NCS Trust) and across Whitehall to increase the effectiveness of the funding provided by this government to support young people.

My officials will continue to provide support and oversight to the management team at the NCS Trust, setting ambitious delivery targets and working closely with other Departments to explore new opportunities and align the programme with the changing needs of young people and of the youth sector.

DCMS and the Trust will ensure that the programme is maintaining a strong, diverse supply chain. The Trust works with over 120 network partners nationwide and its programme delivery is highly localised. It aims to strengthen this network of providers

moving forward, focusing its commissioning on localised and place-based delivery, co-creation, and partnership.

NCS Trust works closely with a range of local authorities providing engaging and inspiring initiatives, including:

- **Changemakers:** community action groups that take place in every local authority, offering young people the opportunity to create real, positive change.
- **Skills Booster:** programme that delivers off-the-shelf personal development packages in schools and colleges, available to all local authority youth teams

DCMS and the Trust will continue to focus on the twelve Opportunity Areas and leverage data analytics to enhance opportunities for young people in every local authority area.

The Government will continue to support the National Citizen Service Trust over the next three years, when it is expected to engage with more than 100,000 young people each year.

EDUCATION

■ Arts: Vocational Education

Conor McGinn:

[105608]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with teaching professionals in (a) St Helens North constituency and (b) nationally on the future of RSL vocational qualifications as they relate to school and college performance measures.

Alex Burghart:

There are currently five RSL qualifications included in the 16 to 18 performance tables for 2022 awarding. Of these, one is at level 2 and four are at level 3.

The department is streamlining and improving the quality of the post-16 qualifications system at level 3 and below. We set out our plans for reform of level 3 qualifications in July 2021. We have not pre-judged which subject areas will be funded in future but there are several areas where we see a clear role for qualifications alongside A levels and T Levels. These include performing and creative arts. These must meet new quality criteria to be approved for funding. Full details of the process for adding qualifications to the performance tables, performance points and approach to discounting will be published alongside the funding approval criteria later this year. RSL, like other awarding organisations, will be able to submit qualifications that meet these criteria for approval.

We will shortly set out our proposals for qualifications at level 2 and below.

The north-west regional delivery team are in regular dialogue with St Helen's College and discuss their curriculum and strategy through these channels. As part of the annual strategic conversations they are having with all further education colleges, they pick up any key strategic risks and issues, as well as opportunities and

strengths. These have not yet been held with St Helen's or Carmel College, but both are likely to take place early in 2022. Curriculum, quality, and performance measures will also be part of the annual strategic conversations.

■ Coronavirus: Schools

Rachael Maskell:

[102697]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional steps he will take to tackle covid-19 infection spread in schools and prevent a return to pre-Christmas levels of infection in school age children.

Mr Robin Walker:

COVID-19 continues to be a virus that we learn to live with, and it remains imperative that we reduce the disruption to children and young people's education. My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, announced on 19 January 2022 that the temporary introduction of Plan B is to end. From 27 January, face coverings will no longer be advised for visitors, staff and secondary pupils in classrooms and communal areas. From this date, staff and pupils should follow wider advice on face coverings outside of school, including on transport to and from school.

There are a number of measures that will remain in place.

- Testing remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 within schools and colleges. The department asked secondary schools to provide one on-site test for all pupils upon return.
- Staff and secondary school pupils should continue to test twice weekly at home. Schools are strongly encouraged to ask parents and other visitors to take a lateral flow device (LFD) test before entering the school.
- Young people aged 5 to 18 and fully vaccinated adults who are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 can take an NHS rapid lateral flow test every day for seven days and continue to attend their school or college as normal unless they have a positive test result.
- Every child aged 12 and over is eligible to receive the vaccine. Healthy 12 to 15-year-olds can have a second dose 12 weeks after their first dose. All 16 and 17-year-olds have been offered the booster vaccination, which can be booked through the national booking system. The booster programme was accelerated to offer every adult in England a booster jab by the end of 2021.
- Children aged 5 to 11, who are in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of someone (of any age) who is immunosuppressed, will be offered a primary course of vaccination.
- Frequent and thorough hand cleaning should now be regular practice. Schools should continue to ensure that pupils clean their hands regularly. The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important. Schools should maintain appropriate cleaning regimes.

To improve ventilation, the department has provided CO2 monitors backed by £25 million in government funding. Over 99% of eligible maintained schools, further education colleges, and the majority of nurseries have now received a carbon dioxide monitor with over 353,000 now delivered. The government is also now making available at least 8,000 funded air cleaning units for poorly ventilated teaching spaces where quick fixes to improve ventilation are not possible.

The contingency framework, which can be found here:

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

The department's aim is for schools to deliver face-to-face, high-quality education to all pupils in as normalised an educational environment as is possible.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[105597]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she made of the impact on (a) children aged five to 11 who are clinically extremely vulnerable or who have a close relative who is immunosuppressed and (b) the staff working with those children who are either clinically extremely vulnerable or have a close relative who is immunosuppressed, of allowing children aged five to 11 in families where there is a confirmed covid-19 case to continue attending school; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department will always prioritise the health and welfare of staff, pupils and students.

At the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, shielding was introduced as one of the few ways to support those who, at the time, were considered clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV).

The situation is now very different to when shielding was first introduced. We know a lot more about COVID-19 and what makes someone more or less vulnerable to the virus. The vaccine continues to be successfully rolled out, and other treatments and interventions are becoming available.

We are committed to protecting education, which is why the safety measures are based on the latest scientific advice and strike a balance between managing transmission risk with measures such as regular testing, enhanced ventilation and hygiene, and reducing disruption to face-to-face learning.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) have not advised people to shield since 1 April 2021, and people previously identified as CEV were advised to follow the same guidance as the general population. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do>.

All children and young people previously considered CEV were advised to return to childcare and education provision when shielding paused on 1 April. The decision to include children as part of the CEV group was based on the information that we had

at the time. Now that we have more evidence, the clinical review panel has been able to recommend that all children and young people are no longer considered to be CEV and have been removed from the Shielded Patient List. However, if a child or young person has been advised to isolate or reduce their social contact by their specialist, due to the nature of their medical condition or treatment, they should continue to follow the advice of their specialist.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has advised that children aged 5 to 11 in a clinical risk group, and household contacts of individuals who are immunosuppressed, should be offered 2 10mcg doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, with an interval of 8 weeks between the first and second doses. The NHS is working through updated guidance and will set out how this is going to be operationalised in due course.

Vaccines remain an effective measure against COVID-19. We recommend all school staff take up the offer of a vaccine.

Education providers should continue to ensure good hygiene for everyone, maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, keep spaces well ventilated and follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19. They should continue to conduct risk assessments for their particular circumstances and take appropriate action in line with our guidance, available here:

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

It is important that we reduce the disruption to children and young people's education, particularly given that the direct clinical risks to children are extremely low. The evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, mental and physical health, which is why children should continue to attend their education provision, unless they are symptomatic or test positive for COVID-19. All students and pupils aged 5 and above are strongly advised to take seven daily lateral flow device tests if they are identified by Test and Trace as a close contact of a confirmed positive case.

■ Department for Education: Staff

Bridget Phillipson:

[104315]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 22 December 2021 to Question 92909 on Department for Education: Staff, whether he has any plans to restructure staffing within his Department.

Michelle Donelan:

Like many organisations, having reflected on how the COVID-19 outbreak has changed us and our sectors, and at how we want to work in future, we are currently working with our staff to take a purposeful look at how we are organised to deliver. Doing this now allows us to work on this alongside the arm's length body review of the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

■ Mathematics: Education

Justin Tomlinson:

[\[102621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to review the performance of students in mathematics compared to their performance in English and science in schools.

Mr Robin Walker:

The government has no current plans to review the performance of students in mathematics compared to their performance in English and science in schools.

The department's secondary school accountability measures are designed to encourage schools to teach a broad and balanced curriculum, with a strong academic core, and to incentivise schools to focus on improving the attainment of all pupils. School performance tables include information on pupil entries and attainment across a range of subjects and qualifications, compared to national and local authority averages.

■ Pupil Premium: Finance

Munira Wilson:

[\[105746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of pupil premium funding planned to be 2.7 per cent in 2022-23 in light of inflation figures.

Mr Robin Walker:

The increase of 2.7% in pupil premium funding rates in financial year 2022-23 is in line with inflation based on the gross domestic product deflator forecast as in the Spending Review. As such, rates are expected to be maintained in real terms per pupil.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism

Robert Halfon:

[\[105476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of children who were absent for at least 50 per cent of possible lessons in summer term 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

The data required to answer this question was collected in the Autumn school census. It is currently being collated for pre-announced publication in March 2022 in the following National Statistics release: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england>.

■ Schools: Air Conditioning

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[102600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 94337 on Schools: Air Conditioning, whether Ministers made any request to civil servants overseeing procurement for the filtration device marketplace in respect of

encouraging the procurement of devices made in the UK at any stage during that process.

Bridget Phillipson: [102602]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 94337 on Schools: Air Conditioning, whether he had discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the inclusion of the makes of air purification device being trialled in Bradford primary schools before launching the filtration device marketplace.

Bridget Phillipson: [102603]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 94337 on the procurement of devices for the filtration device marketplace, whether (a) any, or (b) all the devices available for sale to schools through that marketplace have been included in the trial being carried out in primary schools in Bradford by the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care.

Bridget Phillipson: [102604]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether, in respect of the devices being trialled by the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care in primary schools in Bradford, and pursuant to the Answer of 5 January to Question 94337 on the procurement of devices for the filtration device marketplace, whether (a) any, or (b) all the devices being tested in Bradford are also available for sale to schools through the filtration marketplace.

Mr Robin Walker:

On 2 January, the department announced that up to 7,000 air cleaning units are being made available for mainstream state-funded providers for the very few cases where maintaining good ventilation is not possible. Deliveries will start in February. This is in addition to the 1,000 units made available for special and alternative provision providers that we announced in November. Deliveries of these units are already underway.

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

The department's decision to make air cleaning units available for poorly ventilated spaces in education and care providers has been informed by Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) advice and external consultation with specialists. When used properly, air cleaning units can help reduce airborne contaminants in a poorly ventilated space, including viruses like COVID-19. Air cleaning units are not a substitute for ventilation and should never be used as a reason to reduce ventilation. They are not necessary in spaces that are adequately ventilated.

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

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

Interim findings from the Bradford trial of air cleaning units in primary schools, which is a pilot run by the Department of Health and Social Care, were shared with the department as a part of the cross-government development of our specification. All discussions were supplier agnostic. The manufacturers involved in the Bradford trial did not gain any additional advantage or consideration for inclusion in the department marketplace, which followed its own compliant procurement process as outlined above. The products used in the Bradford trial were not presented as an offer from suppliers during the procurement process, they are therefore not available on the marketplace.

All procurement activity was undertaken with full compliance with the Public Contract Regulations (2015). The procurement of the air cleaning devices was undertaken using the Crown Commercial Service Framework (RM6157) which can be accessed by central government departments, including the department and the wider public sector. We have selected a range of products which meet our specification criteria to provide education and childcare providers with high quality air cleaning units of a suitable specification.

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

■ Schools: Attendance

Robert Halfon:

[105477]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many government attendance advisors have been appointed as of 17 January 2022; and how many schools are each of those advisers supporting.

Mr Robin Walker:

To date, 5 attendance advisers have been appointed by the department. During their first wave of work, they will be collectively supporting 15 multi-academy trusts and 20 local authorities.

■ Secondary Education: Pupils

Justin Tomlinson: [\[102617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils attend secondary schools that offer a grammar stream for high achieving students in England.

Justin Tomlinson: [\[102618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to (a) encourage the growth of new Grammar Streams and (b) facilitate the expansion of existing Grammar Streams within schools.

Mr Robin Walker:

Setting and streaming by ability is common in secondary schools. We believe that teachers are best placed to decide the approach in their own schools. It is therefore a matter for the school in question whether to test pupils on entry for ability and place them in a grammar stream, or to otherwise stream pupils by ability.

The census data we collect from schools does not include information on whether children are streamed by ability.

■ Students: Rented Housing

Ruth Jones: [\[101827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to support Welsh students who are attending university in England with the costs of renting student accommodation in England.

Ruth Jones: [\[101828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what fiscal steps he is taking to support Welsh students who are attending university in England with costs of renting student accommodation in England.

Michelle Donelan:

Devolution means that there are a range of policies and approaches to higher education (HE) which differ between the four administrations who deal with higher education policy in the United Kingdom. It is for each administration to decide how they deploy their resources and develop their HE system. Devolution allows for the different treatment of UK students in respect of student support within different parts of the UK.

The government plays no role in the provision of student residential accommodation. Universities and private accommodation providers are autonomous and are responsible for setting their own rent agreements. We encourage universities and

private landlords to review their accommodation policies to ensure they are fair, clear and have the interests of students at heart.

If a student thinks their accommodation provider is treating them unfairly, they can raise a complaint under the accommodation codes of practice as long as the provider is a code member. The codes can be found at: <https://www.thesac.org.uk/>, <https://www.unipol.org.uk/the-code/how-to-complain> and <https://www.nrla.org.uk/about-us/code-of-practice>.

We recognise that in the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 outbreak, some students may face financial hardship. Our grant funding to the Office for Students (OfS) for the current financial year includes an allocation of £5 million to HE providers in England in order to provide additional support for student hardship. This is to mitigate hardship due to COVID-19 impacts on the labour market which particularly affect, for example, students relying on work to fund their studies. In our guidance to the OfS on funding for the 2021/22 financial year we made clear that the OfS should protect the £256 million allocation for the student premiums to support disadvantaged students and those that need additional help.

Many providers have hardship funds that students can apply to for assistance should the COVID-19 outbreak affect individuals' finances in academic year 2021/22.

■ Teachers: Languages

Justin Tomlinson:

[102622]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is planning to take to increase the number of foreign-language teachers available in (a) the South West and (b) England.

Mr Robin Walker:

The 2020/21 academic year saw an increase of more than 5,000 full time equivalent (FTE) teachers in state-funded secondary schools across the whole of England, including the south-west. This equates to a 2.5% growth on the year before, the largest observed in the last 10 years, and has resulted in the largest qualified teacher workforce since 2015/16.

To support the recruitment of modern foreign language (MFL) teachers, the department has raised the languages bursary to £15,000 for the 2022/23 academic year to incentivise candidates to train to teach MFL. All MFL trainee teachers on tuition fee-funded initial teacher training routes are also able to apply for a tuition fee loan and maintenance loan to support their living costs. Additional student finance is also available depending on individual circumstances, such as the Childcare Grant.

The department has also now launched our early career framework reforms, as part of the department's Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy. These reforms provide a funded entitlement for all early career teachers trained in England to access high quality professional development at the start of their career.

To support international recruitment across several subjects including MFL, the department is also piloting a new Support Overseas Teachers acclimatisation service

in 2022. It is designed to provide newly recruited overseas trained teachers moving to England with pre-arrival training and support during the first term, to ensure they make a successful transition to teaching in England, with the intention of improving retention.

In line with the government's Professional Qualifications bill, in 2022 the department will review how we recognise the qualifications of overseas teachers with qualified teacher status (QTS). This includes foreign-languages teachers and aims to ensure that overseas teachers with the right overseas qualifications can be awarded QTS, meaning they can work unrestricted in English schools.

The department is also launching a new international teaching qualification called iQTS, with a pilot beginning in September 2022. iQTS will allow teachers to train to English standards overseas, meaning a greater global pool of employable teachers trained to our domestic standards.

In addition, the department continues to develop policies to increase the supply of specialist MFL teachers by focusing on new interventions. This covers a broad range of areas, including growing awareness and experience of teaching among undergraduates.

■ Teachers: Recruitment

Bridget Phillipson: [\[102595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish by (a) region, (b) upper tier local authority, (c) lower tier local authority, and (d) parliamentary constituency the number of teachers that have volunteered to return to teaching following the Government's appeal to former teachers in December 2021.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[102606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the former teachers who have responded to his request that they return to teaching, how many such teachers were in classrooms in England as of 12 January 2022.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[102607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) page impressions and (b) unique visitors there were to the GetintoTeaching website run by his Department from (i) 16 December 2021 to 4 January 2022 and (ii) 16 December 2020 to 4 January 2021.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[102608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Education Secretary calls for ex-teachers to return to classrooms published on 20 December 2021, with what (a) frequency and (b) regularity does his Department plan to (i) receive and (ii) publish updates on the number of ex-teachers volunteering to return to the classroom.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department is extremely grateful to all the teachers who are responding to our call to return temporarily to the classroom to support schools to remain open and deliver face to face education for pupils.

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>. We remain in close contact with supply agencies to monitor the interest they receive to help schools during this time.

We will keep the need for further data collections under review.

We directed the call for former 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, so we did not request information by region, upper/lower tier local authority or parliamentary constituency, and the employment agencies that are working with us have no reason to sort and organise their candidates in such a way. Where a specific supply teacher is prepared to work will differ from individual to individual for many different reasons.

Between 16 December 2021 and 4 January 2022, there were over 244,000 unique page impressions and over 86,000 unique visitors to the Get into Teaching website. There were over 41,000 unique impressions on the page containing the urgent call to qualified teachers up to 12 January 2022. In the same period last year, there were over 388,000 unique page impressions and over 108,000 unique visitors to the website, although the data is not directly comparable as the Get into Teaching website was relaunched on 8 April 2021.

The new site has condensed much of the information on the legacy website, meaning that year-on-year figures are not directly comparable. Engagement levels remain consistent, with users spending similar amounts of time on the new website. In addition, we saw increased interest in teaching during the first year of the COVID-19 outbreak, which was reflected in a particularly high number of visitors to the website.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Ammonia****Geraint Davies:****[102536]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the reduction in ammonia emissions in kilotonnes expected to be achieved in each of the calendar years (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021 following the publication in 2018 of a Code of Good Agricultural Practice (COGAP) for reducing ammonia emissions and the steps being taken by the farming industry.

Jo Churchill:

Statistics on national emissions of key air pollutants are published annually on gov.uk. Ammonia emission figures for 2019 and projections of emissions for 2020 and 2021 have been published in the [informative inventory report](#) and data for 2020 is due for publication in February 2022.

The Code of Good Agricultural Practice published in 2018 recommends a number of actions that farmers can take to reduce ammonia emissions. It is not possible to assess the specific contribution of this publication to reported emissions reductions.

Geraint Davies:**[102537]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of financial support through the Countryside Stewardship and Countryside Productivity schemes in enabling and promoting investment in the farm infrastructure and equipment on ammonia emissions; and what estimate his Department has made of the expected reduction in kilotonnes of ammonia emissions achieved as a result of that support in calendar years (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021.

Jo Churchill:

Under the Countryside Productivity scheme, an estimated £4.6 million of funds were approved for projects which addressed nutrient management, for example, low-emission slurry application equipment or mild acidification of slurry, both of which reduce ammonia emissions.

We have just closed the first round of the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund, the successor to Countryside Productivity small grants, which includes grants towards nutrient analysis, low emission spreading and separation equipment. Later this year, we will open applications for further rounds of large infrastructure grants, including for slurry acidification and slurry stores, under the Farming Transformation Fund, which will help further reduce ammonia emissions.

The Countryside Stewardship scheme provides financial incentives for farmers to look after and improve the environment. In 2021, the scheme allocated over £0.5 million to activities that reduce on-farm ammonia emissions including funding for slurry store covers, slurry scrapers and low emission flooring for livestock housing.

The data collected for evaluation does not allow for an assessment of the direct contribution to expected ammonia emission reductions achieved through this funding.

This depends on a number of factors such as how the equipment is used on farm and the volumes of slurry involved.

■ Agriculture: Standards

Geraint Davies:

[102538]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which sectors in the farming industry apply Best Available Techniques developed by the Environment Agency.

Jo Churchill:

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

An Environmental Permit requires operators to farm using Best Available Techniques (BAT). The Environment Agency is responsible for regulating Environmental Permits in England.

Environmental Permitting applies to many industrial sectors, including large intensive pigs and poultry farms. The Clean Air Strategy sets out the Government's commitment to extend the environmental permitting regime in England to dairy and intensive beef farms by 2025.

■ Air Pollution

Geraint Davies:

[102539]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which measures he has implemented from the National Air Pollution Control Programme dated March 2019 and published on 1 April 2019, to reduce emissions of fine particulate matter.

Jo Churchill:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 10 January 2022 to PQ UIN [98195](#).

Geraint Davies:

[102540]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will hold a public consultation on proposals for his Department to communicate air quality information and advice to ensure the public is provided with timely and relevant information about (a) air pollution, (b) actions people can take to limit their personal exposure, (c) the impact of air pollution on their health, and (d) their own influence on air quality.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is committed to making sure that the best possible advice on pollution is available to the public to enable them to make informed choices to protect their health. Defra makes air pollution information available through a range of channels, such as the UK-Air website and more recently working with Global Action Plan to deliver the Clean Air Hub.

Alongside this, we are conducting a holistic review of the way we communicate air quality information and advice.

This is an iterative review process guided by a steering group comprised of specialists in the fields of air quality science, public health, behavioural science and digital communications, along with representatives from vulnerable communities, the general public and central and local Government.

■ Animal Products: Imports

Angela Crawley: [\[102678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he will bring forward legislation to ban the import of hunting trophies into the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

We will be bringing forward ambitious legislation to ban the import of hunting trophies from thousands of species as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Angela Crawley: [\[102679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which organisations he has met that are (a) in favour and (b) opposed to the Government's proposed ban on trophy hunting imports to the UK in the last five years.

Rebecca Pow:

Ministers and officials have engaged with a wide range of stakeholders with differing views on trophy hunting over the last 5 years. This has included NGOs, industry representatives, scientists, and foreign government representatives.

Angela Crawley: [\[102680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the value to the UK economy of the trade of trophy hunting imports in the last (a) 12 months, (b) five years and (c) 10 years.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK recorded 26 imports of hunting trophies under CITES in 2020, 327 imports in the five years from 2016 to 2020, and 731 imports in the ten years from 2011 to 2020.

As hunting trophies are considered personal effects, the commercial value of the items themselves is limited. Responses to the call for evidence, which ran from 2 November 2019 to 25 February 2020, suggested that the value to the UK economy of the trade of hunting trophy imports is likely to be low.

Further information will be published when legislation is brought forward in due course.

■ Chemicals: Regulation

Geraint Davies:

[105338]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has carried out a cost and benefit analysis of changes to the identification and control of Substances of Very High Concern.

Jo Churchill:

Last year the EU's Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) legislation was brought into UK law, retaining the fundamental approach and key principles of EU REACH and ensuring a high level of protection of human health and the environment.

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

The substances on the EU REACH candidate list were automatically carried forward to UK REACH. In future, substances will be added to the list on the basis of the best UK scientific advice, taking into account our own risk assessments.

Defra, the Welsh and Scottish governments have agreed an interim approach to adding new SVHCs to the list (published on gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-reach-approach-to-including-substances-of-very-high-concern-on-the-candidate-list>). This is based on expert advice from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Environment Agency (EA), as well as feedback from a range of stakeholders.

We believe that focussing 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.

■ Dangerous Dogs

Wayne David:

[105376]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when his Department plans to publish its response to the report it commissioned from Middlesex University on dog attacks.

Jo Churchill:

In December 2021, Defra published research in collaboration with Middlesex University to look at responsible ownership across all breeds of dog. The research considers different approaches and the effectiveness of current dog control measures and makes several recommendations including specifically on improving the evidence base. The report will provide the basis for the consideration of reform in this

area and the Government is already working with the police, local authorities, and stakeholders to consider the recommendations further.

■ Farmers: Finance

Daniel Kawczynski:

[96829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to provide financial support to farmers in Shropshire who have seen their total income from farming in Shropshire fall 28 per cent from 2019 to 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

We have committed to maintain the farming budget for the duration of this parliament. In England, we are seizing the opportunity of EU exit to move away from the EU's unfair and ineffective approach. We will repurpose that money into new and improved environment schemes. The result is that the total level of funding will remain the same but will be focused on achieving better outcomes for farmers, farming and the environment. These schemes, a number of which are now live, will help farmers get their businesses ready for these changes. Including grants to invest in productivity measures, support new entrants, and support farmer-led innovation and improve farm resilience. Farmers including those in Shropshire will have the opportunity to engage in these offers as they continue to be rolled out.

It is important that we keep a close eye on farm profitability. Since the 2016 referendum result, farm incomes have generally increased. Farm incomes and commodity prices are very closely linked to exchange rates and to oil prices. There is also a growing world demand as the population grows and as demand for some proteins also expands.

As a result of this, we have seen the price of beef and sheep running at very strong levels. We have seen gross margins in some of the cereal sector increase by around 30%.

In the coming years, we want to build a thriving agricultural sector where the majority of farms are profitable, productive and economically sustainable without subsidies, and many are making a significant and widespread contribution to environmental, biodiversity and climate change goals.

■ Fast Food: Packaging

Alberto Costa:

[102664]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing a fast-food sales levy to help tackle the amount of packing discarded illegally from those businesses.

Jo Churchill:

Tackling litter is a priority for the Government, which is why we are taking measures to reduce packaging waste and increase the amount of 'on-the-go' packaging that is recycled or reused. Last year we consulted on the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers and Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging.

We will publish a government response to each consultation detailing our final policy positions in early 2022. We have no plans to introduce a fast-food sales levy.

■ Firewood: Air Pollution

Geraint Davies:

[102534]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish all the research studies that the Government has commissioned in the last five years to estimate the contribution of domestic wood burning to primary emissions of fine particulate matter.

Jo Churchill:

Within the last five years the Government has commissioned and published the following research studies to investigate the contribution of wood burning to PM_{2.5} concentrations:

- Airborne particles from wood burning in UK Cities, 2018: https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/library/reports?report_id=953).
- Burning in UK homes and gardens, 2020; https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/library/reports?report_id=1014)

Additionally, we have commissioned research to analyse data from the Black Carbon Network. However, findings from these studies do not inform estimates of the contribution of wood burning to PM_{2.5} concentrations. The following reports are in preparation for publication:

- Further assessment of PM from wood burning UK-wide
- Wood burning during the UK COVID-19 lockdowns

Most recently we commissioned a £1.6 million research project to investigate the emissions associated with different solids fuels. This research will begin to deliver results in 2023.

■ Lakes and Rivers: Sewage

Jim Shannon:

[102633]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to reduce the amount of sewage discharged into rivers and lakes.

Rebecca Pow:

We have been clear that the amount of pollution in our rivers and lakes is completely unacceptable, and so we are the first Government to take action to tackle the historic infrastructure issue of sewage overflows.

Last year, the Government published a new draft set of strategic priorities for Ofwat, the financial regulator for the water industry. In this publication, the government set out its expectation that water companies must take steps to "significantly reduce the frequency and volume of sewage discharges from storm overflows ."

The landmark Environment Act has placed our ambition on a statutory footing, setting a duty for water companies to achieve a progressive reduction in the adverse impacts of discharges from Storm Overflows. The Act also ensures that water companies are more transparent, requiring the publication of spill data in near real time and the monitoring of water quality impacts of their sewage discharges. The Government has also committed to publish a Discharge Reduction Plan which will be published by September 2022.

■ Solid Fuels: Air Pollution

Geraint Davies: [102533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 December 2021 to Question 88607, if he will publish the terms of reference for the £1.6 million research project to investigate the emissions associated with different solid fuels.

Jo Churchill:

The contract for the research project to measure emissions factors of domestic solid fuels is published on the Government Contract Finder website:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/Attachment/69d7d635-5624-43d9-98a8-b49296681c5b>

■ Swimming

Layla Moran: [105712]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the average timeframe for receiving approval for an application for bathing water status.

Rebecca Pow:

We aim to assess and make decisions within 4-6 months of receiving an application so that new designations can be added to the following year's list of designated bathing waters before the start of the season on 15 May. However, as every application is different, in some instances it can take longer.

■ Wood-burning Stoves: Carbon Emissions

Geraint Davies: [102535]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to Climate Change Committee's UK Health Expert Advisory Group's report entitled Sustainable Health Equity: Achieving a Net Zero UK, published on 6 November 2020, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the (a) recommendation to set a target date to eliminate home installations of wood burning and gas stoves, prioritising elimination in urban areas and (b) other recommendations in that report.

Jo Churchill:

The Government Response to the Committee on Climate Change's 2020 'Progress Report to Parliament' sets out the further action we are taking across all sectors of the economy to reduce emissions and deliver net zero.

■ Wood-burning Stoves: Smoke Control Areas**Geraint Davies:**[\[102530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's work to build consumer understanding of the Ecodesign and other requirements for the use of wood burning appliances including in Smoke Control Areas.

Jo Churchill:

The Ecodesign requirements came into force on 1 January 2022. No assessment has been made at this stage.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Afghanistan: Refugees****Dan Jarvis:**[\[105530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 January 2022 to Question 98300 on Afghanistan: Refugees, if she will publish guidance on how Afghan nationals can access financial support.

James Cleverly:

We have no plans to publish guidance on assistance for Afghan nationals in third countries, as this is dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

■ Armenia: Azerbaijan**Stephen Doughty:**[\[105549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when she last had discussions with her (a) Armenian and (b) Azerbaijani counterparts on the status of people still detained on either side as a result of the recent conflict.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In her meetings with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers, on 4 and 17 November 2021 respectively, the former Minister for Europe and Americas raised the importance of the return of all prisoners of war and detainees. I will continue to raise this important issue in my future engagements with representatives of the Armenian and Azerbaijani governments. The UK Government continues to support the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to facilitate discussions with a view to settling all outstanding matters related to the conflict.

■ **Baltic States and Poland: Foreign Relations**

Stephen Doughty: [\[105548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when she last had discussions with her counterparts in (a) Latvia, (b) Lithuania, (c) Estonia and (d) Poland.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Foreign Secretary last spoke with the Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian and Polish Foreign Ministers at the NATO summit in Riga on 30 November/1 December.

■ **China: Horn of Africa**

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[102573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential impact on UK diplomatic engagement in the Horn of Africa region of the announcement by the People's Republic of China that it will soon appoint a special envoy for that region.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is very concerned by the increase in conflict in the Horn of Africa and the unprecedented range and severity of humanitarian crises in the region - where drought and flooding, alongside ongoing conflict and issues of access, are putting tens of millions of people at risk. We hope that greater international interest will result in increased support for international efforts to deescalate and resolve conflicts, and address the substantial humanitarian needs. The UK Special Envoy for the Red Sea and Horn of Africa has been working with international partners to help coordinate international efforts. We welcome China's recent calls for a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Ethiopia at the United Nations Security Council. We look forward to China naming its new Envoy and discussing with them how we can work together to address these most pressing concerns.

■ **Common Travel Area**

Ruth Jones: [\[102773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential merits to the UK's foreign policy objectives of writing the Common Travel Area into domestic UK law.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Common Travel Area (CTA) is a longstanding administrative arrangement between the UK and Ireland, as well as the Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey. It allows British and Irish citizens to travel freely between the UK and Ireland and reside in either jurisdiction. It also facilitates the enjoyment of associated rights and privileges including the right to work, to study and to access social security benefits and health services.

This is already underpinned by current domestic legislation. In 2019, the British and Irish governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding reaffirming our mutual commitments on rights and privileges enjoyed by British and Irish citizens in each other's state.

It is estimated that some 60 million UK Citizens benefit from these administrative arrangements, with some 5 million Irish citizens benefitting.

■ **Commonwealth: Trade**

Stuart Anderson:

[\[102778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to promote trade across the Commonwealth.

Amanda Milling:

We are committed to working with our friends and allies in the Commonwealth to remove unnecessary barriers to free and fair trade. At CHOGM18, Heads of Government adopted the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda for Trade and Investment with the ambition of enhancing cooperation and boosting intra-Commonwealth trade to \$2 trillion by 2030. Programmes such as the UK-funded Commonwealth Trade Facilitation Programme have helped member states implement the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement, and our SheTrades programme has supported over 3,500 women-owned businesses in the Commonwealth to participate in international trade and helped generate £32million in sales for Women Owned Businesses.

The UK already has trade deals with 33 Commonwealth members. In addition, a further 15 Commonwealth members who qualify as developing countries benefit from reduced tariffs under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP). The Government is currently reviewing the GSP, with the aim of making it more generous and simpler for partner countries and businesses to use, and will launch a new Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS) in 2022. The DCTS will be a major opportunity to grow free and fair-trade with our Commonwealth partners, allowing them to diversify and grow their economies.

■ **Development Aid: Coronavirus**

Valerie Vaz:

[\[105499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress the Government has made on meeting its target of donating 100 million covid-19 vaccines by the end of June 2022; and when that target will be met.

Amanda Milling:

The UK has been a world leader in ensuring developing countries can access vaccines, through our early support to the COVAX scheme and commitment to donate surplus vaccines. The Prime Minister has been clear that no one is safe until we are all safe.

The UK has fulfilled its pledge to donate 30 million coronavirus vaccine doses by the end of 2021, with 25.4 million of these doses already deployed to countries in need. We are managing our vaccine supply so that all vaccines are either used as quickly as possible in our domestic programme or shared internationally. Decisions on vaccine donations will continue to depend on supply chain reliability, Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advice and the ability of countries to absorb and deploy vaccines.

■ Development Aid: Nutrition

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent estimate she has made of the scale of the global increase in need for nutritional support as a result of recent rises in the prices of basic foodstuffs.

Amanda Milling:

The global Integrated food security Phase Classification (IPC) estimates there will be over 223 million people living in crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity by the middle of 2022. This is up from 164 million at the end of 2020. Conflict is the primary cause of this increase in need, but it is being exacerbated by climate change and the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as global food price rises, compromising people's access to nutritious food. Our recently launched approach paper to Ending Preventable Deaths includes strengthening and transforming food systems to make safe and nutritious food accessible.

The UK's humanitarian response helps address the rising need in the short term. In 2021, the UK brokered the first-ever G7 Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Crises Compact to tackle this challenge, securing £5 billion in humanitarian assistance and resilience strengthening, helping to address people's immediate food insecurity in the 42 countries one-step from famine. FCDO have committed additional funding to deteriorating food crises since, including £50 million for Afghanistan and £76 million for Ethiopia, helping to tackle food insecurity and malnutrition.

■ Development Aid: Research

Chi Onwurah:

[\[103550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what oversight her Department's chief scientific adviser has of research funding allocations from the Overseas Development Assistance budget.

Amanda Milling:

The Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), who is also Director of Research, has oversight across all of the Department's allocations of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to research. She proposes a detailed plan for spending to the responsible Minister of State, with whom rests the final decision on allocations.

Other government Departments remain responsible for their allocations of ODA. The FCDO CSA liaises regularly with counterparts in these departments, both directly and through the Strategic Coherence for ODA-funded Research (SCOR) Board.

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

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[103612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy, published on 28 July 2021, what progress her Department has made on the launch of its enhanced Disability Inclusion Strategy; and (b) when that strategy will be launched.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[103613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy, published on 28 July 2021, what recent progress her Department has made on the launch of the International Development Strategy; and what steps she is taking to ensure that disabled people's rights are enshrined within that strategy.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[103614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy, published on 28 July 2021, whether the first meeting of her Department's External Disability Board went ahead in December 2021; and if she will publish details of the Board's members.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[103615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy, published on 28 July 2021, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the UK's Official Development Assistance spend for 2021-22 is disability-inclusive.

Vicky Ford:

The UK is committed to promoting and protecting universal rights for all, including people with disabilities. The UK is aiming to launch the new FCDO Disability Inclusion Strategy next month to mark the Global Disability Summit. The strategy continues to be guided by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The International Development Strategy will be published in the Spring.

The first FCDO Disability Inclusion Board took place last month. The Board covered the forthcoming strategy, disability inclusive climate action and the Board Terms of Reference. The FCDO's work on Overseas Development Assistance disability mainstreaming across other departments will commence in the new financial year.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Working Hours**Grahame Morris:** [\[102589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the compliance of her Department's staff working from home with the Working Time Regulations 1998.

Vicky Ford:

FCDO continues to apply the policies that were in place prior to the pandemic in regard to working time. Staff have contracted hours which do not exceed the limit specified in the Working Time Regulations 1998. Staff working from home are required to work their contracted hours as if they were attending a workplace. The policy includes provision for 'time off in lieu' to be authorised for any ad-hoc instances where staff have been required to work over their contracted hours for business reasons. Each employee's contracted hours are recorded on FCDO's payroll systems and ensuring staff work their contracted hours, and are not routinely working beyond this, is part of the role of the line manager.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: World Uyghur Congress**Ms Nusrat Ghani:** [\[102673\]](#)

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

Amanda Milling:

As referenced in my response to written questions 100589 and 100590, FCDO Ministers and officials regularly meet members of the Uyghur diaspora and maintain a dialogue with leading human rights Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) about the situation in Xinjiang. Most recently, in December, I hosted a roundtable for human rights NGOs attended by a representative of the World Uyghur Congress.

■ Health: Research**Chi Onwurah:** [\[103547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will publish (a) Government spending on global health research in the financial years (i) 2018-19, (ii) 2019-20 and (iii) 2020-21 and (b) planned spending for 2021-22.

Amanda Milling:

The total spend on centrally commissioned health related research by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office over the last three financial years is as follows:

2018/19 - £132.33 million

2019/20 - £155.41 million

2020/21 - £371.86 million

2021/22 - Final and audited spend for 2021/22 will be published in our annual report later this year.

■ Human Rights: Trade Agreements

Jim Shannon:

[\[103555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to ensure that the UK's building of new economic partnerships will not adversely impact human rights overseas.

Amanda Milling:

The Government is clear that more trade will not come at the expense of human rights. The UK will continue to show global leadership in encouraging all states to uphold international human rights obligations and hold those who violate human rights to account. In doing so we will continue to bring to bear all of the diplomatic and development tools available to us. We have, for example, used the powers provided by the Global Human Rights sanctions regulations to impose sanctions on 81 individuals and entities involved in serious human rights violations or abuses around the world.

■ India: Islam

Catherine West:

[\[105680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department has made an assessment of the implications for its policies of recent reports of anti-Muslim attacks in India; and whether she has raised that matter with the Indian Government.

Amanda Milling:

We condemn any instances of discrimination because of religion or belief, regardless of the country or faith involved. We look to India to uphold all freedoms and rights guaranteed in its strong constitution and by the international instruments to which India is a party. We engage with India on a range of human rights matters, working with Union and State Governments, and with non-governmental organisations, to build capacity and share expertise to promote human rights for all. Where we have concerns, we raise them directly with the Government of India, including at ministerial level.

The British High Commission in New Delhi and our network of Deputy High Commissions regularly meet religious representatives and engage with Indian faith communities. The British High Commission supports a UK-India Interfaith Leadership Programme for a cohort of emerging Indian faith leaders, including Muslims, creating an opportunity to promote values of tolerance and multi-culturalism. The UK will host an international Ministerial conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in 2022 to energise collective efforts on this agenda, demonstrating our enduring commitment to promoting FoRB for all. We also work with the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, G7 and other multilateral fora to promote FoRB.

■ Nigeria: Security

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[102574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to support the Governments of (a) Nigeria, (b) Niger and (c) other neighbouring states with a process to restore security in areas of north-west Nigeria affected by banditry, farmer-herder conflict, and intercommunal conflict.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[102575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to offer support to the Government of Nigeria with the humanitarian impact of the massacres in Zamfara state between the 4 and 6 January 2022.

Vicky Ford:

We are concerned by deteriorating security in North West Nigeria. Intercommunal violence and attacks by criminal groups are having a devastating impact on communities in this region, as well as in the Maradi region of Niger. I discussed insecurity in Nigeria with Foreign Minister Onyeama in a bilateral meeting in November and I will hold further such discussions with the Nigerian Government during the upcoming Security and Defence Dialogue.

We condemn the recent attacks in Zamfara State in North West Nigeria. On 10 January, I publicly expressed my concern about these horrific attacks and reiterated our commitment to working with the Government of Nigeria to support sustainable peace and security. We are working with our Nigerian partners to monitor the situation. In 2020 we supported more than 15,000 displaced people in Kaduna State, North West Nigeria, with cash grants to address food security as well as water and sanitation needs. Furthermore, we are supporting local peace-building efforts, including through our work with the Nigeria Governors' Forum. The UK Government is also supporting the International Organisation for Migration's work with the Governments of Niger and Nigeria to improve border management.

■ Northern Ireland Protocol

Jim Shannon: [\[102629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent progress the Government has made on negotiating a settlement on the Northern Ireland Protocol with the EU; and what recent assessment the Government has made of the need of using article 16 of that protocol.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Foreign Secretary and European Commission Vice-President Šefčovič held their first face-to-face meeting at Chevening on 13-14 January. They agreed that officials would meet this week (w/c 17 January) in intensified talks and that they will meet again on 24 January to assess progress.

The UK's preference remains for a negotiated solution but if this is not possible, we remain ready to use the safeguard measures (Article 16) in order to preserve stability in Northern Ireland and protect the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

■ **Peru: Floods**

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[105367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assistance the Government is providing to Peru following the severe flooding as a result of the volcanic eruption in Tonga.

Vicky Ford:

The volcanic eruption in Tonga caused anomalous waves and temporary changes in sea-level along parts of the Peruvian coast, which sadly led to the loss of two lives. Whilst some buildings were damaged by flooding, this was on a limited scale and the Peruvian Government has not requested any assistance from the international community.

■ **Russia: Cuba and Venezuela**

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[105368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with her (a) Cuban and (b) Venezuelan counterpart on the Russian Government's refusal to rule out military deployments to those countries.

Vicky Ford:

We have not had discussions with the Cuban Government or with counterparts in Venezuela, where we do not recognise the Maduro regime. We are, however, concerned by Russia's refusal to rule out military deployments to Venezuela and Cuba.

■ **Russia: Disinformation**

Stephen Doughty:

[\[105547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of recent attempts by Russia to spread disinformation to UK and European traditional and social media outlets.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Russian State's record of unprovoked, reckless and destabilising activity, including industrial-scale disinformation, is a stain on Russia's reputation, damages its international standing and undermines the Russian Government's claims to be a responsible global actor.

The Government takes the issue of disinformation very seriously. We know that certain states routinely use disinformation as a foreign policy tool.

■ Shavendra Silva**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[102719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department has considered the submission made by International Truth and Justice Project on the potential sanctioning of Sri Lankan General Shavendra Silva under the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime.

Amanda Milling:

Sanctions are one response among a number of diplomatic tools we can deploy around the world as part of a broader political strategy in order to change or send a political signal regarding particular behaviours. The Global Human Rights Sanctions regime gives the UK a powerful tool to hold to account those involved in serious human rights violations or abuses. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is grateful for the submission by the International Truth and Justice Project in relation to General Shavendra Silva. We will continue to consider targets globally, guided by the objectives of the human rights sanctions regime and the evidence. However, it is not appropriate to speculate on who may be designated in the future, as to do so could reduce their impact.

■ Somaliland: Freedom of Expression**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[102576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2022 to Question 98241 on Somaliland: Freedom of Expression, whether the engagement included raising the cases of (a) Abdifatah Mohamoud Abdi, (b) Khadar Farah Rikaah, (c) Hamze Abdi Ahmed and (d) Mukhtaar Hersi Waal.

Vicky Ford:

We note that Abdifatah Mohamoud Abdi, Khadar Farah Rikaah, Hamze Abdi Ahmed and Mukhtaar Hersi Waal were released on 3 January without any charges. The UK engages with the Somaliland Government on an ongoing basis, including with regular meetings between the UK Ambassador to Somalia and President Muse Bihi Abdi, most recently on 18 December 2021. This meeting did not involve specific discussion of the four cases; however, our regular engagement covers a broad range of issues, including discussion of our shared interests in upholding human rights in Somaliland - of which freedom of expression and freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention are important elements.

■ Tonga: Tsunami**Catherine West:**[\[105679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, (a) what assessment the Government has made of the damage in Tonga caused by the tsunami in that country and (b) if she will make it her policy to increase assistance to that country.

Vicky Ford:

The UK is very concerned by the appalling devastation caused by the volcanic eruption and tsunami in Tonga. The Tongan authorities, with the support of the Australian and New Zealand defence forces, are conducting an urgent humanitarian assessment of the islands. Once this assessment is complete, we will have a fuller picture of the scale of damage and the nature of the assistance that is needed, so that we can assess what assistance the UK can most helpfully provide. Most UK aid in the Pacific Island countries is delivered through multilateral institutions, which have the capacity and scale to deliver strong development impact in the region on our behalf. Since 2015, Tonga received over £25.9 million of UK aid through our core funding to multilateral institutions.

■ Ukraine: Electronic Warfare**Stephen Doughty:**[\[105546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to respond to the cyber attack on Ukraine what assessment she has made of who is responsible for the attack; and what steps she is taking to ensure the UK's infrastructure is resilient to such hostile action.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Investigations into this incident are ongoing. The UK provides support to Ukraine in many areas, including supporting the implementation of their cyber strategy. We enjoy close political cooperation on cyber security and provide programme support as part of this. The UK's recently announced National Cyber Strategy will be supported by £2.6 billion of fresh investment in cyber and legacy IT over the next three years, including a £114 million increase in the National Cyber Security Programme. This is in addition to investment in the National Cyber Force announced in the Spending Review 2020.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Abortion****Scott Benton:**[\[102790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many reports of home abortions carried out (a) above 24 weeks and (b) at 28 weeks gestation the Department received between January and June 2020; and whether those reports are accounted for in his Department's response to FOI-1250644.

Maggie Throup:

From January to June 2020, the Department was not notified of any abortions in England and Wales where one or both medical abortion pills were taken at home at 24 weeks gestation or above. The Department was also not notified of any abortions where one or both medical abortion pills were taken at home at 28 weeks gestation

for residents of England and Wales, from January to June 2020. This aligns with our response to FOI-1250644.

■ **Abortion: Drugs**

Sir John Hayes: [\[102547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many cases have occurred of medical abortion pills being sent for home use to unintended recipients since March 2020.

Maggie Throup:

The Department does not hold this information.

■ **Autism: Mental Health Services**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[102742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to address the increase in the number of autistic people in mental health inpatient facilities since 2015.

Gillian Keegan:

The NHS Long Term Plan commits to achieving a 50% reduction in the number of autistic people and people with a learning disability in specialist inpatient settings, compared to March 2015, by 2023/24. We are investing £40 million to improve the capacity and capability of community services, such as crisis services and support at-risk children with complex needs. We are also investing £31 million in 2021/22 to increase community support and prevent admissions. This includes funding to improve the quality of inpatient care for autistic people, including £4 million to make inpatient settings more autism-friendly. In addition, we are providing £21 million in 2021/22 to local government to facilitate discharge of autistic people and people with a learning disability from inpatient care.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[102744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of levels of knowledge within mental health services to offer appropriate support to autistic people; and what steps he is taking to ensure more staff have received sufficient training to adequately support autistic people.

Gillian Keegan:

To inform the autism strategy published in July 2021, we launched a national call for evidence. This assessed the understanding of autism amongst health professionals, including those in mental health services. The findings indicated a need for improvement, therefore we are investing £1.5 million to develop training for staff working in adult inpatient mental health settings in 2021/22, in line with tier 3 of the 'Core Capabilities Framework for supporting autistic people'. In addition, we have provided £1.4 million to trial the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training in learning disability and autism, intended for all health and social care staff. A final trial evaluation report is due in spring 2022 which will inform plans for further deployment.

■ Coronavirus

Sarah Olney:

[\[98374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will include the number of reinfections in the daily update on covid-19 infections.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 10 January 2022]: The daily COVID-19 dashboard for the United Kingdom does not currently include reinfections for England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. For these nations, those who test positive more than once are recorded once at the time of their first test. Work is ongoing to allow the inclusion of data on re-infections on the dashboard in the near future.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

Rachael Maskell:

[\[105621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he taking to help ensure that Directors of Public Health have access to the contact tracing data they require to bring down covid-19 infection rates.

Maggie Throup:

We continue to work with Directors of Public Health and local authority tracing teams across England. This includes the regular sharing of contact tracing data and discussions on local outbreak management plans to reduce COVID-19 infection rates. These arrangements are formalised within a local trace operations standard operating procedure, which includes a data sharing agreement. Information obtained through contact tracing is recorded on the Contact Tracing and Advice Service system in real time.

■ Coronavirus: Death

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[105326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of total recorded deaths of UK citizens who died while infected with the Omicron variant of covid-19, died primarily as a result of (a) that infection and (b) a different cause, to date.

Maggie Throup:

This information is not held in the format requested. To 29 December 2021, there were 981 confirmed cases of the Omicron variant which were hospitalised and 75 deaths. As Omicron is now the dominant strain in England, as of 1 January 2022 these statistics are no longer reported separately.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[100504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to take steps to monitor the long-term immunity of people who have contracted the omicron covid-19 variant.

Jim Shannon:

[\[100547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure long-term immune monitoring of people who have contracted the omicron covid-19 variant.

Maggie Throup:

There are several ongoing studies on the immunity to COVID-19 conferred by prior infection. An assessment of long-term immunity in those who have contracted the Omicron variant will be included as evidence emerges over time. Since June 2020, the SIREN study has assessed, through serial antibody and swab testing, the protection granted by prior infection and vaccination in a large cohort of healthcare workers.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[100505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will introduce ongoing monitoring of covid-19 variant strains.

Jim Shannon:

[\[100548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has for ongoing monitoring of covid-19 variant strains.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency undertakes regular monitoring of United Kingdom and international COVID-19 genomic data. This comprises of updates on previously reported viral variants and detection of novel variants.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[102691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his plan is for the long term management of covid-19 after the efficacy of the vaccine depletes.

Maggie Throup:

We have secured early access to 453.5 million vaccines doses through supply agreements with six vaccine developers and signed contracts to buy a further 4.98 million courses of antiviral treatments. The highest risk patients in the United Kingdom are already able to access molnupiravir, an antiviral treatment, as well as monoclonal antibody treatments from COVID Medicines Delivery Units. 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.

The Government will set out further plans on managing the virus in due course.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[102793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the level of covid-19 (a) infections, (b) hospitalisations and (c) deaths that would result in the Government considering additional covid-19 restrictions.

Maggie Throup:

There is no pre-determined level of COVID-19 infections, hospitalisations or deaths. The Government monitors these metrics with a range of other health data to assess the risk to the National Health Service and the potential need for additional measures. This includes metrics such as hospital occupancy for COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients, admissions in vaccinated individuals and the rate of growth of admissions. The current measures will be reviewed before 26 January 2022.

Rachael Maskell:[\[105619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his priority will be for managing the covid-19 outbreak once the efficacy of the booster vaccine has reduced.

Maggie Throup:

The Government will set out further plans on managing the virus in due course.

■ Coronavirus: Research**Rachael Maskell:**[\[102692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to understand the retention of antibodies in people who have contracted covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

There are several studies currently looking at immunity to COVID-19, including the retention of antibodies conferred by prior infection. These include the SIREN study, the Easter6 project and the Vivaldi study. Since June 2020, the SIREN study has assessed protection granted by prior infection and vaccination in a large cohort of healthcare workers, through serial antibody and swab testing. The study aims to determine whether the presence of antibodies is associated with a reduction in the subsequent risk of re-infection.

The Easter6 study and the Vivaldi study are reviewing data from care homes in London and England. Antibody tests have been repeated over time to learn how COVID-19 spreads in care homes, how long the antibody response lasts and whether this helps to prevent re-infection with the virus.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Daisy Cooper:**[\[102785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on how many occasions his Department has engaged with key regulatory bodies to pursue legal action for a breach of standards and obligations by private PCR test providers.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has done so on 12 occasions. The UKHSA has also engaged with regulatory bodies to ensure private providers undertake corrective action without pursuing legal action.

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[105345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department provides to people with disabilities who are unable to self-administer covid-19 lateral flow tests; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

We provide a range of testing instructions in accessible formats and we are procuring lateral flow device (LFD) test kits which are easier to administer, based on feedback from users. Those who are unable to self-administer nine LFD tests unaided can access guidance from a trained operative at asymptomatic test sites located in many towns and cities. Following a successful pilot conducted with a diverse set of visually-impaired volunteers, an expanded 119 Be My Eyes service will be available from the end of January 2022, helping to support people to self-test independently and accurately using a LFD test kit.

John Redwood:

[\[96745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what budget has been allocated for covid-19 testing in 2021-22; and how many self-testing kits are being used each day.

Maggie Throup:

In 2021/22, £15 billion was allocated for test, trace and isolate activities. Of this, approximately £11.26 billion relates to testing, including polymerase chain reaction and lateral flow device testing and associated costs. The number of self-testing kits used each day is not held centrally as some tests are likely to be unregistered.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[99016\]](#)

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

Maggie Throup:

No estimate has been made as the information is not held in the format requested. However, during the week commencing 3 January 2022, 48.3% of in-person test results were received within 24 hours and 81.6% within 48 hours.

■ **Coronavirus: Travel**

Naz Shah:

[\[105579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing covid-19 recovery certificates for UK citizens who desire to travel abroad.

Maggie Throup:

COVID-19 recovery certificates for United Kingdom citizens can be obtained 10 days after a positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test demonstrating recovery from infection within the previous 180 days. The certificates are already available for those aged 16 years old and over in the digital NHS COVID Pass for travel via the NHS

App and NHS.UK. A digital solution to allow those aged 12 years old and over access to recovery certificates will be made available shortly.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Rachael Maskell:

[\[101768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in the context of the reduction of covid-19 vaccine efficacy over time, what steps the Government plans to take in the medium-term to protect people from covid-19 and its variants.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 14 January 2022]: We have secured early access to 453.5 million vaccine doses through supply agreements with six vaccine developers and procured a further 4.98 million courses of antiviral treatments for the National Health Service. The highest risk patients can access molnupiravir, an antiviral treatment, as well as monoclonal antibody treatments from COVID Medicines Delivery Units. In addition, oral antiviral treatments are available through the PANORAMIC national study, run by the University of Oxford. The study is open to clinically eligible individuals in the United Kingdom. The Government will set out further plans on managing the virus in due course.

Wes Streeting:

[\[101794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many vaccine doses in England were disposed of in each of the last six months due to passing their expiry date.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 17 January 2022]: The information is not available in the format requested.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to work with large employers to enable direct access to covid-19 vaccination in the workplace in areas with persistently low relative levels of vaccine uptake.

Maggie Throup:

We have no specific plans to do so. There are now hundreds of walk-in sites and the opening hours of vaccination sites have been extended to seven days a week. General practitioners and pharmacies have also been asked to increase their provision of vaccination services, including in areas of lower uptake.

Jim Shannon:

[\[102627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions his Department has had with relevant stakeholders on future covid-19 vaccine immunisation programmes; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of deploying covid-19 vaccines in parallel with the flu vaccine as a yearly injection.

Maggie Throup:

The Department, NHS England and NHS Improvement and the UK Health Security Agency regularly have discussions with stakeholders on a range of issues, including the vaccine deployment programme. Currently, we do not know if there will be a need for future COVID-19 vaccination campaigns and therefore whether the COVID-19 vaccine may be delivered annually in parallel with the flu vaccine.

Rachael Maskell:[\[102683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in the context of potential depletion in covid-19 vaccine efficacy, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure ongoing protections against covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 17 January 2022]: We have secured early access to 453.5 million vaccines doses through supply agreements with six vaccine developers. We have also signed contracts to procure a further 4.98 million courses of antivirals for the National Health Service. The highest risk patients in the United Kingdom are already able to access molnupiravir, an antiviral treatment, as well as monoclonal antibody treatments from COVID Medicines Delivery Units. 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 living in the UK. The Government will set out further plans on managing the COVID-19 virus in due course.

Rachael Maskell:[\[102698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a second covid-19 booster for people aged over (a) 70 and (b) 80 years old.

Maggie Throup:

On 7 January 2022, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) indicated that an immediate second booster dose in the most vulnerable, such as the elderly, would provide limited additional benefit against severe disease. This advice was based on evidence that vaccine effectiveness against hospitalisation due to the Omicron variant continues to be highly effective at approximately 90% at 10 weeks after one booster dose in those aged 65 years old and over.

The JCVI will continue its review of the booster programme, particularly in relation to the potential merits of any second booster doses for older adults and the most vulnerable.

Daisy Cooper:[\[102780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2021 to Question 76833 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, what progress has been made on the expansion of the service that allows individuals who have received a vaccination overseas to access a Covid Pass.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 17 January 2022]: Currently, 17 vaccination centres are capable of recording overseas vaccinations in the National Immunisation Management Service. There is at least one site in each of the seven National Health Service regions. The number of vaccination centres offering this service in England has been limited due to the rapid expansion of the booster programme. However, a further 13 new sites have been identified by regional teams as appropriate to offer this service. This will double the capacity at these sites by the end of March 2022.

Dr Kieran Mullan:[\[102794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the progress of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Maggie Throup:

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, with over 90% having received one dose. Over 36 million people in the UK have received a booster or third primary dose, with every eligible adult in England aged 18 years old and over offered a booster vaccination by the target of 31 December 2021.

Andrew Gwynne:[\[105409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that covid-19 vaccines are utilised prior to reaching their expiry date.

Maggie Throup:

Robust mitigations have been put in place to reduce wastage. Stock levels have been closely monitored at a regional, system and site level with deliveries adjusted accordingly. This includes keeping stock back in the supply chain and encouraging sites to reallocate stock at a local level, rather than draw from central stores. Vaccine deliveries have been carefully managed in line with site capacity, population density and available supply, to ensure that any vaccine being delivered would be used within as short a timeframe as possible.

Following recent discussions with Pfizer and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, NHS England and NHS Improvement wrote to healthcare providers on 17 January 2022 setting out that certain unpunctured and undamaged Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines' post thaw shelf-life has been extended from 31 days to 45 days.

Andrew Gwynne:[\[105411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable people are provided adequate information in respect of covid-19 booster vaccinations.

Maggie Throup:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are in regular contact with groups representing people in at risk groups to provide the latest information on booster vaccinations. The current guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/who-is-at-high-risk-from-coronavirus/>

NHS England and NHS Improvement also provide information directly to National Health Service systems and general practitioner practices in particular. On 4 January 2022, a letter was sent to NHS systems highlighting new guidance for people whose immune system means they are at higher risk of serious illness if they become infected with COVID-19. The letter is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/information-on-the-governments-additional-covid-19-advice-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk/>

Those in at-risk groups are also featured in targeted advertising campaigns for the vaccination programme. This is supported by a large-scale marketing campaign, including TV, radio, press partnerships, social media and digital/social media takeovers. There is also ongoing engagement with stakeholders, community groups and faith leaders to reinforce the vaccine messaging among ethnic minority communities, patient groups and disproportionately impacted communities.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[105596]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government plans to make an announcement on the provision of covid-19 vaccination to children aged five to 11 who are clinically extremely vulnerable or a close family member of someone who is immunosuppressed.

Maggie Throup:

General practitioners (GPs) and hospital consultants are currently identifying eligible children and the National Health Service will contact their parents or carers. GPs will contact immunosuppressed individuals to advise that their family member is eligible for vaccination. We expect deployment to begin by the end of January 2022 with appointments offered by the NHS locally.

Sir Graham Brady:

[69579]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the relative benefits of administering covid-19 vaccinations via aspiration compared to intravenous injection.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has not made this assessment. The UKHSA provides guidance on immunisation techniques in Chapter Four of the Green Book, which follows available evidence and international recommendations for the administration of vaccines. This is reviewed and updated regularly by the UKHSA and states that it is not necessary to aspirate the syringe after the needle is introduced into the muscle because there are no large blood vessels at the recommended injection sites.

In addition, the only licensed route of administration for COVID-19 vaccines is via intra-muscular injection into the preferred site, the deltoid muscle. No assessment

has therefore been made for intravenous injection. Vaccinations are not administered into the vein as this would be potentially harmful.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[89604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the NHS app will be updated to register when an immunosuppressed person has had a third primary covid-19 vaccination dose, rather than a booster.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 13 December 2021]: Third vaccinations are currently recorded in the same section as booster doses in the NHS App. The functionality was immediately available at the start of the booster vaccination programme and is clinically accurate in recording details of the vaccine received. This information is updated on general practitioner records and the NHS COVID Pass.

More than 87% of the severely immunosuppressed cohort has received a third primary dose. An assessment of retrospectively updating records in the immediate future was made and it was determined that this could risk data quality issues. We are reviewing plans to record third primary doses via the NHS App in the longer term.

■ Disability: Children

Alexander Stafford:

[\[104409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress his Department has made to reduce the backlog in disabled children's therapies and health services.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[104410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help support NHS trusts to meet legal requirements for the delivery of disabled children's services.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[104411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that every disabled child can access the health services they need.

Gillian Keegan:

There are no legal referral targets for disabled children's health services. The NHS Constitution for England provides that patients have the right to access certain services, which may include health services for disabled children, within maximum waiting times, or for the National Health Service to offer suitable alternatives if this is not possible.

We have made £2 billion available in 2021/22 and a further £8 billion from April 2022 to March 2025 to increase activity, tackle backlogs in elective care services and reduce waiting times for patients, including disabled children. This funding could deliver the equivalent of approximately nine million more checks, scans and procedures. The NHS will aim to deliver 30% more elective activity by 2024/25

compared to pre-pandemic levels. A further £5.9 billion of capital funding was announced in October 2021 to support elective recovery, diagnostics and technology.

■ General Practitioners: Standards

Damien Moore:

[\[103676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that GP practices are increasing the availability of face to face appointments with patients.

Maria Caulfield:

The National Health Service has been clear that general practitioner (GP) practices must provide face to face appointments, alongside remote consultations. Patients' input into consultation type should be sought and practices should respect preferences for face to face care unless there are good clinical reasons to the contrary, such as the presence of COVID-19 symptoms.

In October 2021, we published 'Our plan for improving access for patients and supporting general practice'. This included an additional investment of £250 million in a Winter Access Fund to increase the number of face to face appointments, while also investing in technology to make it easier for patients to see or speak to their GP.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[102799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce covid-19 hospital admissions.

Maggie Throup:

Measures including the mandatory use of face masks in most public indoor venues, the requirement to display the NHS COVID Pass in specific settings and advice to work from home where possible, will help to reduce the spread of the Omicron variant and pressure on the National Health Service. The booster vaccination campaign continues which will provide additional protection against hospitalisations, especially amongst older and more vulnerable populations. We are also increasing capacity in the NHS, deploying antiviral and monoclonal antibody treatments and providing free lateral flow device tests to 100,000 critical workers.

■ Hospitals: Discharges

Dr Liam Fox:

[\[96755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Delayed Transfers of Care were recorded in the NHS in England in each of the last six months.

Dr Liam Fox:

[\[96758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Delayed Transfers of Care were recorded in the NHS in England in (a) January 2016, (b) July 2016, (c)

January 2017, (d) July 2017, (e) January 2018, (f) July 2018, (g) January 2019, (h) July 2019, (i) January 2020, (j) July 2020, (k) January 2021 and (l) July 2021.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 12 January 2022]: The collection and publication of data on delayed transfers of care (DToC) was paused in March 2020 to release capacity across the National Health Service to support the COVID-19 pandemic response. Therefore data on DTOCs in each of the last six months is not available.

Monthly data on the number of DTOCs in England is not held in the format requested. NHS England and NHS Improvement's data collection is based on the average number of people delayed per day. This is calculated by dividing the number of delayed days during the month by the number of calendar days in the month. This measure was previously known as DToC beds. The following table shows the average number of delayed discharges in England in the NHS and social care until January 2020.

DATE	AVERAGE NUMBER OF DELAYED DISCHARGES
January 2016	5,144
June 2016	5,771
January 2017	6,371
June 2017	5,929
January 2018	4,883
June 2018	4,503
January 2019	4,368
June 2019	4,502
January 2020	5,183

Since 9 December 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement have published weekly data on daily discharge figures across England. This is the first published data on hospital discharges since the DToC collection was paused in March 2020 and is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/uec-sitrep/urgent-and-emergency-care-daily-situation-reports-2021-22/>

■ **Integrated Care Boards: Disclosure of Information**

Andrew Gwynne:

[105412]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to encourage Integrated Care Boards to publish board papers and minutes.

Edward Argar:

Integrated care boards (ICBs) will be subject to the transparency requirements set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. This requires meetings to be open to the public, including making the time and location of meetings public and sharing an agenda on request.

The Health and Care Bill includes a requirement that ICBs must specify in their constitution the arrangements to be made for ensuring transparency in relation to the decisions of the board and the manner in which they are made. NHS England will also publish guidance if it is deemed necessary to ensure the accountability and transparency of ICBs.

■ Learning Disabilities: Coronavirus**Barbara Keeley:**[\[105446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people with a learning disability are able to access a covid-19 vaccine booster.

Maggie Throup:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have worked with the UK Health Security Agency, local authorities and voluntary sector partners to ensure the delivery of COVID-19 vaccinations to people with a learning disability and autism. Advice, training and guidance has been provided to all vaccination sites to consider communication and access needs for individuals and their families.

Primary Care Networks (PCNs) have been instructed to prioritise the administration of booster vaccines to those in at-risk groups, including people with a learning disability. General practitioners have been supported to appropriately identify those on the Learning Disability Register to invite them for a booster vaccination. Easy read letter templates and information materials have been developed for the invitation process. Individuals are invited to local PCN sites or provision is made via a roving team where individuals are in a care home, housebound or need delivery at home. People with a learning disability eligible for a booster dose can book at a mass vaccination site or at a local participating pharmacy. Individuals and families are being encouraged to raise any need for a reasonable adjustment required ahead of vaccination appointments.

■ Members: Correspondence**Justin Madders:**[\[104351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston of 30 July 2021 on NHS Dentistry.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 20 January 2022.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[80254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 17 September 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, reference ZA57716.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 26 November 2021]: We replied to the hon. Member on 8 December 2021.

■ **NHS: Coronavirus**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[103585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect on retention of NHS staff as a result of the mandatory covid-19 vaccine programme for NHS staff.

Edward Argar:

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

The latest data of 13 January 2022 shows that since the Government consulted on the policy in September 2021, there has been a net increase of over 81,000 NHS trust healthcare workers receiving a first dose.

■ **Plastics: Medical Equipment**

Alberto Costa:

[\[102662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the amount of single-use plastic in lateral flow test kits.

Maggie Throup:

We are exploring alternatives to the current tests which are also safe and effective and made of predominantly recyclable or biodegradable materials.

■ **Social Services**

Karin Smyth:

[\[102670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the number of adults under 65 using social care.

Gillian Keegan:

At the end of 2020/21, there were 256,215 clients aged 18 to 64 years old in receipt of local authority commissioned long-term care.

While an end of year figure for those receiving short-term care is not held, there were 25,965 clients aged 18 to 64 years old who received short-term care to maximise

independence during 2020/21. This is defined as episodes of support provided that are intended to be time-limited, to maximise the independence of the individual and reduce or eliminate their need for ongoing support by local authorities. Data on the number of people in this group are not collected at a national level.

Karin Smyth:

[\[102671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the number of adults requiring care who currently have unmet needs.

Gillian Keegan:

No specific assessment has been made. Local authorities are responsible for assessing individuals' eligibility for care and support as stated in the Care Act 2014 and, where the individual is eligible for financial support, for meeting those needs. Where individuals are not eligible for financial support, local authorities may assist them to make arrangements for care. The assurance framework, being delivered through the Health and Social Care Bill, includes a new duty for the Care Quality Commission make an assessment of local authorities' delivery of adult social care duties.

■ Social Services: Children

Alexander Stafford:

[\[104418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Health and Care Bill delivers the integration and co-location of services used by victims of child sexual abuse, including by establishing more child houses.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[104419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking through the Health and Care Bill to ensure that Integrated Care Systems consider and meet the specific needs of victims of child sexual abuse.

Maggie Throup:

We will build on the work of existing non-statutory integrated care systems by establishing integrated care boards (ICBs) and requiring the creation of integrated care partnerships in each local system area. This will empower local health and care leaders to co-ordinate the planning and provision of services, within the National Health Service and with local authorities and deliver more person-centred and preventative care, including for victims of child sexual abuse.

The Government recognises the merits of the child house model of support. We have provided approximately £7.5 million towards a pilot of the United Kingdom's first child house, the Lighthouse. We are committed to working with other local commissioners, service providers and charities to further develop this model. Following the pilot, the Home Office published guidance for local partnerships seeking to adopt a child house approach.

We have also introduced an amendment to the Health and Care Bill which will require ICBs set out proposals to address the needs of both adult and child victims of abuse.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[104420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking through the Health and Care Bill to ensure Integrated Care Systems secure therapeutic recovery services for victims of child sexual abuse.

Gillian Keegan:

The Health and Care Bill establishes statutory integrated care boards (ICBs) with responsibility for the planning and commissioning of health services in their area. ICBs must provide a comprehensive health service, including therapeutic recovery services where appropriate. We have also accepted an amendment to the Bill requiring ICBs and partners to set out proposals to address the needs of victims of abuse, including children.

The NHS Long Term Plan and the Five-Year Strategic Direction for Sexual Assault and Abuse Services (SAAS) set out our ambition to improve access to services for all victims and survivors of sexual abuse, including children. Paediatric SAAS provisions are jointly funded across Government and are commissioned to ensure the complex needs of child victims can be met.

■ **Social Services: Labour Turnover**

Wes Streeting:

[\[103619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many workers have left the social care sector in England in each of the last 6 months.

Gillian Keegan:

The Department does not hold the information requested.

■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

Layla Moran:

[\[89653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many travellers have included a day two covid-19 PCR test on a passenger locator form since the introduction of those forms; and of those, how many (a) positive, (b) negative and (c) inconclusive results have been returned.

Layla Moran:

[\[89654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many day 2 PCR tests included on passenger locator forms have been completed to date.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 13 December 2021]: The data is not held in the format requested.

HOME OFFICE**■ Antisocial Behaviour****Stuart Anderson:**[\[103687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that local authorities have adequate resources to effectively respond to local anti-social behaviour issues.

Rachel Maclean:

The *Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014* provides a range of flexible tools and powers to local agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour. Local areas decide how best to deploy these powers depending on the specific circumstances of each individual case.

The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2022-23 makes available an additional £3.5 billion to councils, including funding for adult social care reform. This is an increase of over 4% in real terms, which will ensure councils across the country have the resources they need to deliver key services. In total, we expect Core Spending Power to rise to £53.9 billion in 2022-23, against £50.4 billion in 2021-22.

The Government is also providing around £1.6 billion additional grant in 2022-23. This includes additional funding for Supporting Families and Cyber Resilience, which will be distributed outside of this Settlement. We are allocating most of that funding through the provisional Settlement, including through a one-off 2022/23 Services Grant to councils to spend on vital frontline services, worth £822 million.

This funding will be given to councils to spend as they see fit, recognising that councils are placed to deal with local issues. The Government aims to publish a final settlement confirming allocations to individual local authorities in February 2022.

■ Armed Forces: Income**Dan Jarvis:**[\[105527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral contribution from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Home Affairs on 5 January 2022, Official Report, volume 706, column 80WH, when she will publish the medium term review on the impact of the minimum income requirement on armed forces personnel and their families.

Kevin Foster:

The family Immigration Rules include a minimum income requirement to ensure financial independence and encourage integration.

The minimum income requirement was implemented in July 2012, following advice from the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), and has not changed since its introduction.

The Home Secretary has committed to a medium term review of the impact of the minimum income requirement on armed forces families which is likely to form part of a wider review of the policy, and is considering commissioning the Migration Advisory Committee to undertake this review. Timescales are to be confirmed.

■ **Disability: Care Workers**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[102723]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy, published July 2021, what progress her Department has made towards a review into the protections and support available to adults abused in their own homes by people providing their care.

Rachel Maclean:

The Home Office is working jointly with Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to lead and deliver the review. The government is committed to ensuring people receive quality care with positive outcomes, which includes preventing and addressing any instances of abuse or exploitation by the people providing that care, in this case in their homes, a place where adults should feel safe.

The government is analysing the existing protections for adults abused in their own homes by people providing their care, and the support available to victims of such abuse. The review team are engaging with a range of stakeholders, collecting inputs from across-Government and particularly from those groups representing deaf and disabled people and carers to understand their lived experiences.

The review will be completed later this year and Parliament will be updated as it progresses.

■ **Dogs: Animal Welfare**

Mike Amesbury:

[102757]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment his Department made of animal welfare within the operation of large-scale dog farming factories in the UK; and what steps his Department is taking to stop the testing of animals for scientific research.

Damian Hinds:

The breeding and selling of dogs (other than for scientific purposes) is regulated in England under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 and the 2006 Animal Welfare Act. Since 2019 anyone in the business of breeding and selling dogs and/or who breeds three or more litters in a twelve-month period needs to have a valid licence from their local authority. Local authorities provide management and enforcement of this licensing regime and of the Animal Welfare Act. Any breeder failing to meet these standards may have additional licensing restrictions applied, have their licence revoked, or in extreme cases be prosecuted and potentially subject to the increased five -year custodial penalty the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act brought into force on the 29 June 2021.

The breeding of dogs to be used for scientific purposes is separately regulated under The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA). The Government has published a code of practice for the care and accommodation of animals (including dogs) used for scientific purposes. The appropriate regulators operationalise and enforce ASPA through licensing and compliance assurance activities. A range of remedies are used if licence holders are found to be non-compliant, including suspension or revocation of licences.

This government believes, in line with the current scientific position, that there is a need to continue to use animals in some areas of research where there are no non-animal alternatives, to advance scientific discovery and protect human and animal health and the environment. There is a robust regulatory regime to protect these animals and we continue to invest in the development and uptake of non-animal alternatives. Therefore, this government have no current plans to hold a review into the use of animals in science

■ Fixed Penalties: Coronavirus

Ruth Jones:

[\[102766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been issued penalties or received sanctions for breaching Coronavirus restrictions since April 2020.

Kit Malthouse:

Data on the number of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued under the COVID-19 regulations by police forces in England and Wales is collected by policing and published by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) on a monthly basis and can be found on the NPCC website.

■ Fraud

Emily Thornberry:

[\[105794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the amount of money lost to fraud conducted (a) through phone calls, (b) by text message and (c) online in (i) 2018, (ii) 2019, (iii) 2020 and (iv) 2021.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[105795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of specialist police officers assigned to scams conducted (a) through phone calls, (b) by text message and (c) online in (i) 2018, (ii) 2019, (iii) 2020 and (iv) 2021.

Damian Hinds:

Estimates for total monetary fraud losses to specific fraud channels is not held centrally by the Home Office. According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales, from year ending March 2017 to year ending March 2020, median losses for all fraud, regardless of the type or channel, where a victim has experienced a monetary loss are as follows:

YE MAR 17	YE MAR 18	YE MAR 19	YE MAR 20
£123	£180	£167	£150

Information on the number of police staff dedicated specifically to working on cases of scams conducted online and through telephones is not held centrally by the Home Office.

More broadly, the Home Office collects and publishes data on the size of the police workforce in England and Wales on a biannual basis in the 'Police workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-workforce-england-and-wales>

Information on the number of police officers, police staff and Police Community Support Officers by function is published annually in tables F1, F2 and F3 accompanying the police workforce statistics as at 31 March. These include the number of police staff working under function 7c – Investigations (Economic Crime).

■ Interpol: Public Appointments

Owen Thompson:

[105640]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has carried out of the ability of Interpol to carry out its functions with independence, impartiality and respect for democratic values following the election of Ahmed Nasser Al-Raisi as President.

Owen Thompson:

[105641]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the vulnerability of Interpol to abuse from member states following the election of Ahmed Nasser Al-Raisi as President.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government strongly supports INTERPOL's efforts to ensure systems are in place that protect individuals' human rights in line with Article 3 of INTERPOL's Constitution which strictly forbids any intervention or activities of a political, military, religious or racial character.

The Home Office continues to work with INTERPOL and the National Crime Agency (NCA), which acts as the UK's National Central Bureau (NCB) for INTERPOL, to monitor the effectiveness of existing safeguards. We encourage INTERPOL to uphold international human rights obligations and we won't hesitate to recommend further reforms to INTERPOL as necessary.

During the G7 Interior and Security Ministers' meeting in London on 7-9 September we also secured commitments from international partners to strengthen our collective efforts to deter the misuse of INTERPOL systems and support organisational reform and governance at INTERPOL.

■ Nitrous Oxide: Misuse**Alberto Costa:**[\[102663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of restricting the sale of nitrous oxide capsules to prevent their illegal use.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government takes the supply of substances for their psychoactive effect seriously. There are legitimate uses for nitrous oxide, such as in medicine, dentistry and as a propellant for whipped cream canisters, but those who supply nitrous oxide who know, or who are reckless as to whether, it will be used for its psychoactive effect may be subject to a maximum sentence of seven years' imprisonment, an unlimited fine, or both under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.

On 3 September, the Government asked the independent statutory advisory body, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, to provide an updated assessment of the harms of nitrous oxide, including whether it should be controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. The ACMD is independent of Government and provides a broad range of recommendations, including advice on legislative changes. The Government will consider the ACMD's advice carefully before deciding how to proceed.

■ Patrol Craft: Procurement**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[105380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to proceed with the procurement of cutters to police UK borders; and whether that responsibility will be moved to the Ministry of Defence.

Damian Hinds:

The Government is determined to prevent further loss of life in the Channel and break the business model of dangerous criminal people smugglers.

The UK armed forces already work closely with Border Force in these operations, given their expertise and experience in maritime operations.

This is a complex global issue requiring a response across the whole of government, and it is right that we pursue all options to prevent illegal crossings and protect life at sea.

It is right that we pursue all options to prevent illegal crossings and protect life at sea.

The Government's New Plan for Immigration will help deter illegal migration and break the business model of the criminal gangs.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan**Layla Moran:**[\[105711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghans evacuated under Operation Pitting are waiting to be granted indefinite leave to remain.

Kevin Foster:

Between 15 and 29 August, the UK evacuated over 15,000 people from Afghanistan, with people continuing to be evacuated from third countries.

In view of the urgency of the situation the majority of those who entered the UK during the evacuation phase were initially granted limited leave to enter with access to public funds and employment. This status is not a bar to them being permanently housed or to starting their life in the UK, including taking employment.

The Home Office has now started the process to support them in applying for and being granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). Our aim is to conclude this process before individuals' leave to remain expires. All those evacuated will be provided with ILR.

Communications have been issued advising individuals of next steps to progress permanent residence in the UK. They also provide links to guidance and information on how prospective employers and landlords can contact the Home Office to confirm individuals' right to take employment and rented accommodation.

The data on those waiting to be granted ILR is not currently available but once published we will direct to the publication.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**Stephen Kinnock:**[\[105572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when will she publish details of her proposal to use the Royal Navy to deter asylum seekers from crossing the English Channel illegally.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government is determined to prevent further loss of life in the Channel and break the business model of dangerous criminal people smugglers.

The UK armed forces already work closely with Border Force in these operations, given their expertise and experience in maritime operations.

This is a complex global issue requiring a response across the whole of government, and it is right that we pursue all options to prevent illegal crossings and protect life at sea.

The Government's New Plan for Immigration will help deter illegal migration and break the business model of the criminal gangs.

■ Visas: Turkey**Peter Grant:**[\[105609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made in assessing outstanding Turkish Businessperson visas, for applications made in 2020.

Peter Grant:

[\[105610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when people with outstanding Turkish Businessperson visa applications will receive a decision on their application.

Kevin Foster:

We received a significant increase in Turkish ECAA overseas applications before the route closed. Caseworking teams in UKVI continue to process ECAA applications and are focused on resolving them as quickly as possible.

At times, we may identify further information which is required in individual applications and need to contact applicants for this.

Some applications also require additional checks to be undertaken by the Home Office which may cause delays pending these essential checks being undertaken.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ House of Commons: Employment

Mrs Maria Miller:

[\[101662\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what provisions there are in House of Commons employment contracts to protect the confidentiality of work done in the House of Commons, including in the event that employment ceases.

Sir Charles Walker:

All employees of the House are required to sign a confidentiality statement at the start of their employment. The confidentiality statement not only refers to handling personal information but also Classified and Official Secret information too. There is also a statement about confidentiality in the staff handbook and, at the end of employment, a reminder of the confidentiality statement is included in the letter given to departing staff.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Department for International Trade: Consultants

Gareth Thomas:

[\[100407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, 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.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) has a contract with Clifford Chance LLP which can be found [Here](#). DIT had a number of meetings with Clifford Chance LLP in

order to set up this contract and has ongoing meetings to contract manage it. DIT has no financial contract with FTI Consulting and Fenchurch Advisory Partners.

Since 2015, DIT has interacted with Clifford Chance on at least 65 occasions, FTI Consulting on 97 and Fenchurch Advisory Partners twice. These interactions include meetings with officials and attendance at events.

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

In addition, DIT has previously had meetings with these companies as part of our commitment to working hard to promote Financial Services Trade and Investment, and a Partner from Clifford Chance LLP is a member of one of DIT's Trade Advisory Groups.

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

■ Overseas Trade: Australia

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[102802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to increase trade with Australia.

Penny Mordaunt:

The UK recently signed a Free Trade Agreement with Australia on 16th December 2021. The deal is expected to increase trade with Australia by 53% in the long run. The UK and Australia have committed to removing tariffs on a vast array of popular products which can now be more easily traded between the two countries including eliminating tariffs on 100% of UK exports. This deal is tailored to British strengths providing benefits for our world-class services industry, unprecedented new opportunities for UK professionals to work in Australia and trading digitally.

■ Small Businesses: Newport West

Ruth Jones:

[\[102768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent steps she has taken to ensure that SMEs in Newport West constituency can benefit from free trade agreements.

Penny Mordaunt:

It is important that UK small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), including those in Newport West, can trade with confidence.

HM Government has achieved and will continue to seek specific SME chapters in all our Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). These chapters ensure that SMEs are provided with the information necessary to take informed commercial decisions and benefit from the reduction in trade barriers achieved throughout our FTAs. This supports our SMEs to seize these new trade opportunities.

HM Government encourage SMEs to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by our FTAs and it will continue to ensure their needs are factored in throughout new FTAs.

■ **Visits Abroad: USA**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[100396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the full day by day itinerary of the Minister of State's visit to the US in December 2021; and if she will make a statement.

Penny Mordaunt:

Between 5 and 15 December I visited California; Atlanta, Georgia; Nashville, Tennessee, Oklahoma City and Charleston and Columbia, South Carolina.

The visit included productive meetings with Governors, Mayors and Agriculture and Economic Development Commissioners. I also met with business leaders from sectors including fintech, and agriculture. These stakeholders had great interest in doing more on trade with the UK, including Memoranda of Understanding agreements, which we are following up.

I also spoke to Members of Congress from other states including Washington State, Pennsylvania, Alabama and Missouri; building bridges for the UK at federal and state level.

JUSTICE

■ **Domestic Abuse: Victims**

Dan Jarvis:

[\[105531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions he has had with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) on the number of complaints the PHSO has received on the matter of family courts implementing (a) a ban on cross examination of domestic abuse survivors in court and (b) the statutory presumption that victims of abuse are eligible for special measures.

Victoria Atkins:

The Ministry of Justice has not been made aware of any complaints to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman about the implementation in the family court of the prohibition on cross-examination in person, or the presumption that victims of domestic abuse are automatically eligible for special measures, both of which are provided for by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

■ **HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Disability**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[102716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy, what progress his Department has made towards the full rollout by

HM Courts and Tribunals Service of a new national support service for users in England and Wales who need help to access online services.

James Cartlidge:

HMCTS is putting in place the National Digital Support Service as help for public users who lack skills, access, motivation or trust to access and engage with our services online. We Are Digital (WAD) were awarded the new national service contract in October 2021, to deliver support across England, Wales (including support in Welsh) and Scotland (for tribunals only). WAD deliver positive and practical solutions to break down the barriers of digital exclusion. They will be able to provide users with face to face and remote appointments through their advanced network of delivery partners who have experience in supporting users of justice services, such as Law Centres and Citizens' Advice.

A mobilisation period has now started. Within this time, HMCTS will be working with We Are Digital to design, test and implement the service. A test phase is due to go live on the 31st January with Social Security Child Support Appeals followed by the Single Justice Service in the West Midland Combined Authority before rolling out to full national and jurisdictional coverage of live reformed HMCTS services, which is expected late Spring 2022.

■ **Prison Sentences: Carers and Parents**

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[103527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of children annually affected by the imprisonment of a parent or main caregiver; and on what basis that estimate has been reached.

Victoria Atkins:

No recent annual estimate has been made of the number of children affected by the imprisonment of a parent or main caregiver. However, the Government acknowledges the importance of better data collection to further understand the prevalence and needs of prisoners with children and is committed to collecting more data centrally and using this to inform policy and improve our services.

Changes are currently being made to the Basic Custody Screening Tool to enable us to collect data on entry to prison about how many primary carers are in custody and how many children under the age of 18 are affected by their imprisonment. Once these changes are made, we will be able to collate this information centrally.

■ **Prison Sentences: Wales**

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[105678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate his Department has made of the imprisonment rate in Wales.

Victoria Atkins:

The Ministry of Justice does not publish information on the imprisonment rate in Wales as part of its statistical releases.

However, figures covering the total prison population in England and Wales as at 30 June each year, broken down by establishment, can be found in Table A1.13 of the document “Annual Prison Population: 2021” at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2021>

In addition, the Office for National Statistics publishes mid-year population estimates at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates>

■ Prisoners: Gender Recognition

Peter Gibson:

[102779]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what criteria is applied to housing prisoners who are transgender (a) with a certificate of gender reassignment and (b) without a certificate of gender reassignment.

Victoria Atkins:

The Ministry of Justice and Her Majesty's Prison & Probation Service take the allocation of transgender prisoners very seriously. All transgender prisoners (whether or not they have a gender recognition certificate) are managed in line with the policy framework 'The Care and Management of Individuals who are Transgender'.

Prisoners are initially held according to their legal gender. If a prisoner wishes to move to the part of the prison estate that does not match their legal gender, a Complex Case Board must be held, chaired by a senior prison manager, to consider any risks involved (both to or from the prisoner).

A prisoner can also be moved via the Complex Case Board process if placing them in the part of the prison estate matching their legal gender presents an unmanageable level of risk (to themselves or to others). Separate accommodation is also available in the women's estate for transgender women with gender recognition certificates who are assessed as posing too high a risk to be located with other women.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Batteries: Construction

Valerie Vaz:

[105796]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the Government's policy is on building a battery energy storage systems on green belt land.

Christopher Pincher:

This Government has a manifesto commitment to protect and enhance the Green Belt. Our National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes clear that most new building is inappropriate in Green Belt and should be refused permission unless in very special circumstances. When considering any planning application affecting

Green Belt land, the local authority should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

The latest NPPF published in July 2021 expects planning policies and decisions to support transitioning to a low carbon future by requiring renewable/low carbon energy generation and identifying areas for this infrastructure. It is rightly for the individual local authority to assess each case and judge whether an applicant has successfully argued that 'very special circumstances' would justify a planning permission in Green Belt.

■ Buildings: Disability

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[102721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy, what recent progress his Department has made in commissioning new research to develop the statutory guidance on meeting Building Regulations, covering access to and use of buildings.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[102722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy, published July 2021, what plans his Department has to improve the framework to deliver accessible new homes.

Christopher Pincher:

In June 2021 we commissioned research on the prevalence and demographics of impairment in England and ergonomic requirements and experiences of disabled people. Work is underway to develop robust data and evidence to help government consider what potential changes can be made to statutory guidance covering access to and use of buildings. The research work is due to complete in 2022.

■ Buildings: Fire Prevention

Marsha De Cordova: [\[101821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans he has to help protect leaseholders from paying the costs of non-cladding related fire safety defects, such as defective fire doors.

Christopher Pincher:

The new funding schemes will make sure leaseholders never pay a penny to fix dangerous cladding.

On non-cladding, we are clear that we have to make sure there is a proportionate approach – there are too many incentives currently to try to find new problems and declare buildings unsafe. We recognise there is a specific heightened safety risk with cladding which can accelerate fires. That is why our new plan to apply common sense is so important. If there are any remaining non-cladding costs, we want to support leaseholders across the board – they should not be bearing an unfair burden.

That is why:

- Developers will be expected to fix all fire defects in the buildings they built;
- We will work with MPs on broad statutory protections for leaseholders; and
- We are working across government to ensure leaseholders will be protected against eviction for any fire safety defect costs.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[101822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to help ensure that property developers are responsible for covering the remedial costs of fire safety defects; and what steps he is taking give those undertakings a statutory footing.

Christopher Pincher:

As the Secretary of State announced on 10 January, building owners and industry should make buildings safe without passing on costs to leaseholders, and leaseholders living in their own medium and high-rise buildings should not pay a penny to remediate historic cladding defects that are no fault of their own. It is also wrong to look to the taxpayer for another bailout for manufacturers and developers who created and installed dangerous fire safety building systems. Instead, we are clear that industry must develop a solution to resolve the problems they have caused and pay to fix them. If they do not agree to solving this crisis, we will look to impose a solution in legislation.

■ Carbon Emissions

Geraint Davies:

[\[105336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of the Climate Change Committee's UK Health Expert Advisory Group's report, Sustainable Health Equity: Achieving a Net Zero UK, published 6 November 2020.

Geraint Davies:

[\[105337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Climate Change Committee's UK Health Expert Advisory Group's report entitled Sustainable Health Equity: Achieving a Net Zero UK, published on 6 November 2020, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the four recommendations of that report including setting a target date to eliminate home installations of wood burning and gas stoves and prioritising elimination in urban areas.

Eddie Hughes:

I welcome the Climate Change Committee's report on Sustainable Health Equity: Achieving a Net Zero UK. My Department works closely with other government departments to deliver homes that are energy efficient, climate resilient and healthy.

On 15 December 2021 the Department published the government response to the Future Buildings Standard consultation, brought in the 2021 uplift to the Building Regulations and published a range of accompanying new statutory guidance.

The uplift is an important stepping stone on our way to implementation of the Future Homes Standard and the Future Buildings Standard from 2025. Together, the policy set out in the government response to the Future Buildings Standard consultation, and the Future Homes Standard consultation (published in January 2021) will ensure that new homes and buildings are highly efficient, with significantly lower carbon emissions. From June 2022, when the new regulations come into force, new homes will be expected to produce around 30% fewer carbon emissions and new non-domestic buildings will be expected to produce 27% fewer carbon emissions, becoming zero-carbon over time as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise. The consultation, uplift and new statutory guidance also delivered improvements to ventilation, and a new requirement to mitigate overheating in new-build residential buildings, particularly important for adapting to an increasingly warm climate.

We are considering how the planning system can further support our commitment to reaching net zero. As set out in the Net Zero Strategy, we will make sure that the reformed planning system supports our efforts to combat climate change and help bring greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

The Government Response to the Committee on Climate Change's 2020 Progress Report to Parliament sets out the further action they are taking across all sectors of the economy to reduce emissions and deliver net zero.

■ Development Plans

Scott Benton:

[\[102792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which Local Authorities have yet to reach an agreement on a housing Local Development Plan with his Department.

Christopher Pincher:

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that local plans should provide a framework for addressing housing needs, as well as other economic, social and environmental priorities.

Having an effective, up to date plan in place is essential to planning for and meeting housing requirements; in ways that make good use of land and result in well-designed and attractive places to live. The Government expects local authorities to work together to plan for and deliver the housing and infrastructure our communities and businesses need.

On 19 January 2021, a Written Ministerial Statement was made in the House of Commons which set out the importance of maintaining progress to get up-to-date local plans in place by the Government's deadline of December 2023.

Authorities that fail to ensure an up-to-date plan is in place are failing their communities by not recognising the homes and other facilities that local people need. Without an up-to-date plan, homes can end up being built on a speculative basis, with no co-ordination and limited buy-in from local people.

As of 31 December 2021, 22 local planning authorities (7%) do not have an adopted local plan (under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004). Most are at an advanced stage of preparing plans: 12 have submitted their plan for examination in public; and 1 has had the plan found sound following examination and is expected to vote on adopting it shortly. The authorities that have no plan in place are:

Amber Valley

Ashfield

Basildon

Brentwood

Bury

Calderdale

Castle Point

Eastleigh

Epping Forest

Liverpool

Medway

North Hertfordshire

Northumberland

Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation

Salford

St Albans

Tameside

Uttlesford

Welwyn Hatfield

Windsor and Maidenhead

Wirral

York

■ Disabled Facilities Grants

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[102717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy, what guidance his Department has made available to local authorities in England on effective delivery of the £573 million Disabled Facilities Grant.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to delivering the actions in the National Disability Strategy, including the publication of new guidance for local authorities on the effective delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grant. The new guidance will be published as soon as possible in Spring 2022.

■ Elections Bill

Emily Thornberry:

[\[105419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, , what assessment she has made of the potential effect of Clause 16 of the Elections Bill on the (a) prosecution and (b) conviction rates for breaking electoral law relating to parties and campaigners.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[105420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, , whether the Crown Prosecution Service will be provided with any additional funding in response to the removal of the prosecutorial powers of the Electoral Commission proposed in Clause 16 of the Elections Bill.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[105421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, , what assessment she has made of the potential impact of (a) the proposed transfer of prosecutorial powers from the Electoral Commission and (b) reform of the Serious Fraud Office on the overall capacity of the (i) CPS and (ii) Government to conduct prosecutions against people charged with criminal acts.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[105422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to Clause 16 of the Elections Bill, whether the Electoral Commission will maintain its investigatory powers into the breaking of electoral law relating to parties and campaigners when the Bill comes into effect.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[105423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what systems to ensure collaboration between the Crown Prosecution Service and Electoral Commission in prosecuting those who break electoral law relating to parties and campaigners (a) are currently in place and (b) will come in place when the Elections Bill comes into effect.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[105424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to Clause 16 of the Elections Bill, what assessment he has made of the costs or savings of removing the prosecuting function of the Electoral Commission.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Electoral Commission has to date never brought criminal prosecutions. The measures in the Elections Bill simply maintain the status quo.

The Elections Bill clarifies that the Electoral Commission should not bring criminal prosecutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and provides that this should remain the responsibility of the Crown Prosecution Service and Public Prosecution Service Northern Ireland which are already experts in this domain. Having the Commission perform this function would risk wasting public money by duplicating the work of the prosecution authorities. We are committed instead to supporting the police and prosecution authorities as necessary to enforce electoral regulation proactively and effectively.

As a result, the Government does not anticipate that this measure will result in any impact on prosecution rates or any costs.

The Bill makes no changes to the Commission's investigatory powers. The Electoral Commission will continue to have a wide range of investigatory and civil sanctioning powers available to it and, as is currently the case, it will continue to be able to refer matters to the police and the prosecution authorities.

More generally, the Government will invest an additional £80 million per year in the Crown Prosecution Service by 2025. This will allow for the recruitment of additional frontline staff to deal with all types of casework, including electoral offences.

■ Freeports

Paul Girvan:

[\[102753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans his Department has to announce the next group of freeports.

Ruth Jones:

[\[102761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans his Department has to announce the next group of freeports.

Neil O'Brien:

The Government is working hard to support the other prospective Freeports. Subject to agreeing their governance arrangements and successfully completing their business cases, we expect the next set of Freeports to begin operations in 2022.

Ruth Jones:

[\[102762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans his Department has to roll out the economic development measures within the freeports programme to other UK coastal regions.

Neil O'Brien:

We want all the nations of the UK to be able to share in the benefits of Freeports. We remain committed to establishing our Freeport programme in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as soon as possible. Given the mixture of reserved and devolved policy levers which are required to realise the full benefits of Freeports, we are working with the devolved administrations to deliver Freeports across the UK.

■ High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention**Daisy Cooper:**[\[105744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will provide a working definition of who will count as landlords in the context of excluding landlords from the scheme to protect leaseholders from bearing the cost of external wall system remediation; and if he will consult hon. Members and leaseholders on that definition.

Christopher Pincher:

We are bringing this scandal to an end – protecting leaseholders and making industry pay. It is not right that innocent leaseholders, including former occupiers who have moved out and sublet their properties, should pay to remove dangerous cladding for which they were not responsible. We will explore whether this support should extend to other leaseholders such as buy-to-let landlords.

■ Housing: Construction**Ben Bradley:**[\[101816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has powers to impose sanctions on developers for providing unfinished or poor quality homes to homeowners.

Christopher Pincher:

My Department sets the standards that developers are required to follow including through planning requirements and building regulations. Local planning authorities and building control bodies hold enforcement powers. Developers are required to ensure that new houses are built correctly and to comply with building regulations. Building inspectors check to ensure that these requirements are met on new homes. The Department may also restrict access to Government support or funding such as Help to Buy, which has recently been used to exclude Rydon Homes where there are concerns about unacceptable business practices.

The Building Safety Bill, currently before Parliament, includes provisions to strengthen the building safety regime including through the Building Safety Regulator, which will have oversight of the whole of the built environment and the New Homes Ombudsman scheme. Developers will be required to become members of the Ombudsman scheme, which will investigate and determine complaints from new build homebuyers against their developers.

■ Housing: Prices

Rachael Maskell: [\[101781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what real time data his Department collects on the average cost of (a) social rent, (b) private rent and (c) house prices in each constituency.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities does not collect real time data on the cost of social rent, private rent or house prices in each constituency.

Rachael Maskell: [\[101782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of the broad market rental area (BMRA) on (a) York and (b) other areas where house prices and rental prices are comparatively higher compared with other locations within the BMRA.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department has not made an assessment of the impact of broad market rental areas in York. The Department does not hold data on house prices at a BRMA level nor sub-BRMA level rental price data.

■ Landlord and Tenant Act 1954

Sarah Olney: [\[103634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to begin the review of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954.

Neil O'Brien:

We know there is concern that the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, part II, has not kept pace with today's commercial property sector. Government announced [a review of the landlord and tenant legislation](#) in December 2020, and recommitted to the review as part of the [Build Back Better High Streets](#) strategy. The review will develop proposals for a framework that helps support the efficient, flexible use of space and supports high streets and town centres

Officials are currently engaging across departments and with industry stakeholders to inform the scope and focus of the review; further details will be announced in due course.

■ Local Government: Video Conferencing

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[102583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans he has to re-introduce virtual participation in district and parish council meetings to ensure accessibility for members who may have to isolate as a result of covid-19 infection.

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.

■ Proportional Representation**Owen Thompson:**[\[105642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits of introducing a proportional representation voting system as part of the Elections Bill.

Kemi Badenoch:

This Government was elected on a manifesto commitment to continue to support the First Past the Post voting system. The Government believes the First Past the Post system is a robust and well-understood way of electing representatives that provides for strong and clear local accountability.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Coastal Areas**Ruth Jones:**[\[102760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for the levelling-up White Paper of recommendations made in the Coastal Powerhouse Manifesto published by Maritime UK and the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group.

Neil O'Brien:

We appreciate Maritime UK and the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group's detailed and insightful Coastal Powerhouse manifesto and we recognise the value of the recommendations made. We welcome the continuous engagement of the sector as we are progressing with our levelling up agenda. In this respect, we share the view expressed on the need to continue the strong partnership that exists between Government and key stakeholder groups.

Britain's maritime sector is inextricably linked to our island's rich history - to the exploration, free trade and global exchange which laid the foundations for modern Britain. Our maritime sector, our ports, harbours and coastal towns are extremely important to recovery from the pandemic.

As the Coastal Powerhouse Manifesto has highlighted, there are a number of areas where action must be taken to catalyse investment, level-up coastal communities and capitalise on the potential of the UK's coastal regions. That is why we are working with local leaders to ensure every region including coastal areas, cities and towns will recover from COVID-19 and ultimately level-up. The Government will publish a White Paper that builds on existing action being taken across Government, setting out a new policy regime that will drive change for years to come.

■ Regulation: Apprentices**Tim Loughton:****[105329]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing a ring-fenced fund for regulatory compliance apprenticeships.

Kemi Badenoch:

Regulatory services are not the responsibility of a single department. While no DLUHC funding is currently available we will keep this under review and maintain a dialogue with other departments and local government regarding this matter.

My Department is committed to addressing capacity and capability issues affecting regulatory services in general, and the regulation of the construction products sector in particular. The Government has supported the sector through the National Regulator for Construction Products within the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) to oversee a stronger regulatory regime. Up to £10 million has been set aside for this work in 2021/22. My Department remains committed to making sure that OPSS have the necessary resources at its disposal, and we expect that OPSS will continue to work with and support Local Authority Trading Standards teams to implement the regime.

■ Transport: North East**Bridget Phillipson:****[102601]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions officials in his Department have had with their counterparts in the Department for Transport on plans for a future city region settlement in north east England to allow access to funding through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements programme.

Neil O'Brien:

CRSTS funding is available for the North East subject to the appropriate governance structures being in place as set out in Baroness Vere's letter to regional leaders on 22 October 2021. It is for the relevant local authorities to propose new governance structures in order to access the funds available. The department is continuing its engagement with local authorities, and the North of Tyne Mayoral Combined Authority, on these plans and continue to update colleagues in DfT as the engagement progresses.

PRIME MINISTER■ **10 Downing Street****Caroline Lucas:**[\[105453\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, what assessment he has made of whether all covid-19 guidance was followed in No. 10 Downing Street from 23 March 2020 to date; and if he will make a statement.

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.

Angela Rayner:[\[105566\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his Oral contribution of 12 January 2021, Official Report, column 562, what the evidential basis is for his statement that the event in the Downing Street garden on 20 May 2020 could be said to technically fall within the guidance.

Boris Johnson:

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

Angela Rayner:[\[105567\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his Oral contribution of 12 January 2021, Official Report, column 562, whether he had been aware of plans for the event in the Downing Street garden on 20 May 2020 before 6.00pm on that day.

Boris Johnson:

I refer the Rt Hon. Member to the answers I gave to the House at Prime Minister's Questions on 12 January and 19 January.

TRANSPORT■ **Bus Services****Sir Robert Goodwill:**[\[103535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support the UK bus and coach industry.

Trudy Harrison:

Since the start of the pandemic, an unprecedented level of support has been provided to the bus sector. Initially, over £1.5bn in emergency support was provided to operators and Local Transport Authorities through the Coronavirus Bus Service Support Grant.

Recognising the ongoing financial challenges faced by the sector as passengers return, the Government has provided an additional £226.5m in recovery support through the Bus Recovery Grant. This scheme will run between September 2021 and April 2022.

For the coach industry, the Government has announced a range of measures available to support UK businesses, including coach operators, such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough), loan schemes and grant funding.

On 25 March 2021, the Government announced a new Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) of £1.5 billion, available to support those businesses affected by the pandemic but that are ineligible for existing support linked to business rates. While this funding is allocated at local authorities' discretion, the Government has issued guidance to councils encouraging them to consider tour operators among the businesses eligible for support. Coach operators should contact their local authorities for more information.

The Department continues to engage with stakeholders from both sectors to understand the challenges faced and support recovery.

■ **Driving Licences: Applications**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[103659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is investigating why DVLA applicants are experiencing delays on the return of identification documents.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) routinely returns original identity documents to the applicant as soon as a driving licence application is processed. However, to reduce the impact of any processing delays, the DVLA has introduced a process of returning original documents as soon as the application is opened on selected transactions and is working to expand this.

Damien Moore: [\[103679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to (a) tackle the backlog of enquires at the DVLA and (b) prioritise urgent cases relating to medical issues.

Trudy Harrison:

The quickest and easiest way to apply for a driving licence is by using the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)'s online service. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their licence within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application and the DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day. The DVLA understands the impact of delays on those who make paper applications and is working hard to process them as quickly as possible. To help reduce waiting times for paper applications, 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 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.

■ Driving Tests

Dr James Davies:

[102702]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help ensure that people who have their driving tests cancelled can re-book an appointment in a timely manner.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) recognises the high demand for learners wanting to take their practical driving test following the suspension of routine driver training and testing during the pandemic.

The DVSA understands how disappointing it is when driving tests are cancelled and therefore will only cancel appointments as an absolute last resort. Those affected by cancellations will automatically be offered a new appointment at the original test centre on the next earliest date available.

The DVSA is working hard to provide as many practical driving test appointments as possible and has a number of measures in place to do this. These include offering a national recovery allowance and annual leave buy back to examiners, asking all those qualified to conduct tests, but who do not do so as part of their current day job, to return to conducting tests, and conducting out of hours testing (such as on public holidays and weekends).

The DVSA is also continuing with its campaign to recruit more driving examiners across Great Britain and further increase availability of driving test appointments.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Mike Amesbury:

[104403]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the timeframe is for local authorities to develop and complete their electric vehicle charging transition strategy.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government has a programme of engagement and support for local authorities, to ensure all areas are working to help deliver on the phase out of the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030. This includes funding the Energy Saving Trust (EST) to provide free advice to local authorities in England, on matters such as developing a local electric vehicle charging strategy.

Local authorities are best placed to consider local needs and the Government's forthcoming Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy will serve to define the role and responsibilities of local authorities in the delivery of charging infrastructure.

The leadership and action by local authorities through local transport and planning policy can help support local zero emission vehicle uptake, and make sure it is integrated with wider local transport strategy.

■ High Speed 2 Line: Carbon Emissions**Louise Haigh:**[\[105636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what environmental assessments and estimates were made on the effect of carbon emissions as part of the decision not to proceed with the Eastern Leg of HS2 to Leeds.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Government is proceeding with the Eastern Leg of Phase 2b to the East Midlands and taking forward further work on how HS2 services could best reach Leeds. Detailed environmental assessments and estimates of carbon emissions will be undertaken as part of future development work.

■ Highway Code: Publicity**Louise Haigh:**[\[105633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, in which types of media and platforms, advertising campaigns were carried out by or on behalf of his Department raising awareness of the forthcoming changes to the Highway Code coming into force at the end of January 2022 including the new advisory measures.

Trudy Harrison:

The plan is to communicate the changes to The Highway Code in two phases:

- A factual awareness raising campaign in early February, alerting road users to the changes as they come into effect.
- A broader behaviour change campaign later in the year, to align with seasonal increases in active travel, to help embed the changes and encourage understanding and uptake of the new guidance.

■ Leamside Line

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[105493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 10 January 2022 to Question 96861 on Leamside Line, for what reason the Parliamentary Under-Secretary does not plan to visit the Leamside line to discuss the case for its proposed reopening.

Wendy Morton:

As stated in the Integrated Rail Plan, the case for re-opening the Leamside route would be best developed as part of any future city region settlement. The North East will be eligible for these settlements once appropriate governance is in place. I understand that the previous Rail Minister discussed with you the challenges around progressing this scheme at the present time.

■ Regional Planning and Development

Sir Robert Goodwill:

[\[103534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the role of the bus industry in delivering the levelling-up agenda.

Trudy Harrison:

The National Bus Strategy published in March 2021 will help deliver better bus services for passengers across England, including through far-reaching reform of how services are planned and delivered, targeted fares reductions and bus priority measures. Enhanced Partnerships and Franchising arrangements will deliver more comprehensive services to drive forward the Government's levelling-up agenda.

■ Roads: North Yorkshire

Louise Haigh:

[\[105634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the Highways Maintenance funding allocation was for North Yorkshire County Council in (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22.

Trudy Harrison:

The total Highways Maintenance funding allocated by the Department for Transport to North Yorkshire County Council in (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22 is listed in the table below. These figures also include allocations from the Potholes Fund.

£ MILLION	2020/21	2021/22	TOTAL
North Yorkshire	49.600	37.021	86.621

Roads: Safety

Lilian Greenwood: [\[105490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the report on road safety targets which was commissioned by his Department in conjunction with WSP and Loughborough University.

Trudy Harrison:

The report will be published in full in due course.

Selby-Hull Railway Line: Electrification

Louise Haigh: [\[105637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what environmental assessments and estimates were made on the effect of carbon emissions as part of the decision not to proceed with the electrification of rail from Selby to Hull.

Wendy Morton:

The Government's Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) identified a core pipeline of schemes. Future development of further schemes, such as electrification from Selby to Hull, will be considered in due course.

Travel Requirements: Coronavirus

Carol Monaghan: [\[105602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason the Government does not recognise covid-19 vaccinations administered in Mexico.

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.

Carol Monaghan: [\[105603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of recognising covid-19 vaccinations administered in Mexico.

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.

Dan Carden:

[\[105709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress his Department has made in allowing citizens of Mexico to have their covid-19 vaccination status recognised by the UK.

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.

TREASURY

■ Economic Cooperation: China

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[105452\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will put on hold the 11th session of the UK-China Economic and Financial Dialogue in the context of the conclusions of the Uyghur Tribunal that the Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims are subject to human rights abuses and Crimes Against Humanity.

John Glen:

The UK has led international efforts to hold China to account for its human rights violations in Xinjiang at the UN. We have imposed sanctions, including asset freezes and travel bans, on senior Chinese officials and taken steps to help ensure that no UK organisations are complicit in these violations through their supply chains.

However, we can also pursue an economic relationship with China in a safe, mutually beneficial way without compromising our values. UK-China Economic and Financial Dialogues (EFDs) provide a key mechanism for doing this. We have always been clear that our economic relationship does not come at the expense of human rights, and where we have concerns, we will continue to speak out and act.

■ Financial Services Authority

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[103605\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what (a) correspondence and (b) other information his Department holds on the basis on which the Economic Secretary to the Treasury decided not to take forward the Financial Services Authority regulation of administering a regulated contract on 2 January 2013.

John Glen:

In January 2011, the Government announced its intention to introduce further regulation in relation to the sale of regulated mortgage contracts to unregulated firms. Following a review, the Government decided that it would not take forward legislation

but would instead keep the position of contracts sold to unregulated firms under review and return to legislation if there was sufficient evidence of consumer detriment.

The Government remains open to further regulation but is yet to see evidence that any consumer harm has occurred under the current regulatory regime that would have been prevented by the proposed regulation. Under the current regulatory regime, firms administering regulated mortgages, including third-party administrators, must be regulated. This means that they are subject to relevant provisions of the Financial Conduct Authority's Mortgage Conduct of Business requirements, including provisions regarding the fair treatment of customers in arrears. It is also worth noting that further regulation of this kind would not necessarily enable borrowers to switch to a cheaper mortgage deal or to materially lower the interest rates they pay.

■ Financial Services: UK Relations with EU

Gareth Thomas:

[\[104295\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2021 to Question 38132, on Financial Services: EU Action, what progress has been made in the UK and EU on signing the Memorandum of Understanding on financial services; what timeframe has been agreed for greater regulatory cooperation on financial services; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

As detailed in the answer to Question 38132, technical discussions on the text of the Memorandum of Understanding on financial services regulatory cooperation have concluded. The Government is ready to sign but further steps are required on the EU side before the MoU will come into effect and the UK-EU Forum can be convened.

■ Minimum Wage

Andy McDonald:

[\[105558\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many national minimum wage enforcement staff were employed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs in each region in Financial Year (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Andy McDonald:

[\[105559\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs spent on national minimum wage enforcement in Financial Year (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC enforces the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and National Living Wage in line with the law and policy set out by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). BEIS funds HMRC to deliver this activity.

For the year 2019-20, HMRC were given a budget allocation of £26.3 million. In the year 2020-21 this was increased to £26.4 million. The vast majority of the NMW

funding allocation is invested in front line NMW compliance activity so that HMRC can provide adequate coverage across the UK. HMRC aim to keep their resourcing level at a minimum of 410 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff. There are many factors that impact on their level of resourcing, including staff moves and pay settlements.

The total number of FTE staff employed by HMRC, working out of 12 regions across the country, to carry out NMW enforcement and compliance in the years 2019-20 and 2020-21 is provided in the table below.

REGION	2019-2020	2020-2021
East Midlands	24.81	22.2
Greater London	40.07	41.2
North East	33.74	37.2
North West	106.06	100.5
Northern Ireland	25.23	26.2
Scotland	63.95	55.1
South East	12.34	11.2
South West	13.46	11.0
East of England	3.00	2.00
Wales	24.05	23.4
West Midlands	51.98	47.3
Yorkshire and Humberside	43.36	42.6
Total	442.05	419.9

The table shows where the staff were located but this does not necessarily mean these staff were working on cases linked to the locations given. HMRC deploy a national resource deployment model, to enable them to flexibly deploy their resource to deal with the highest risk area.

■ Plastics: Taxation

Chi Onwurah:

[\[105514\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the annual revenues that will be raised by the plastic packaging tax from 1 April 2022 onward.

Helen Whately:

The government has published information on the annual revenues that will be generated from the Plastic Packaging Tax. This can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/introduction-of-plastic-packaging-tax-from-april-2022/introduction-of-plastic-packaging-tax-2021>

■ Revenue and Customs: Working Hours

Grahame Morris:

[102590]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 2 December 2021 to Question 81168, Treasury: Working Hours, what policies are in place to ensure that HM Revenue and Customs staff working from home comply with the Working Time Regulations 1998.

Lucy Frazer:

There are a range of policies which cover how working time operates in HMRC. These policies also apply to homeworkers.

- HR28000 Working Time Regulations policy: applies to all employees, including contractual homeworkers, and includes:

‘what counts as working time: work performed away from the normal place of work, for example drafting a document at home.’
- HR25005 Contractual homeworking policy: includes the ‘how to make contractual homeworking work well’ toolkit which states:

‘What does HMRC expect of homeworkers? ...Basically HMRC expects the same standards from homeworkers as all other employees. You'll still be bound by Our Commitments and the HMRC values, and all the HR policies will still apply to you. You'll be expected to agree your working hours with your manager as normal...’

‘Working hours: The same flexibility exists for contractual homeworkers to ask for help to achieve a better work life balance, or deal with life changing events. It's important to discuss and explore with your manager if you need to consider more flexibility in when and how long you work for...’
- HR25601 When we work policy: provides an overview of working time in HMRC and applies to all employees, including contractual homeworkers. This includes these fundamental principles:

‘HMRC ‘standard operating hours’ are 07:00 to 20:00 from Monday to Saturday. Working time is time when you are undertaking the work required to deliver your role. You will only be paid, or receive a flexi credit, for times when you are performing the duties that are required to carry out your role. Working time is therefore any period of time in which you are:

 1. working; and
 2. carrying out your duties; and
 3. at HMRC’s disposal (that is, required to be in a specific place and to be ready to work at a specified time for HMRC’s benefit); or
 4. receiving ‘relevant training’ (agreed for the purposes of HMRC employment); or

5. any additional period which is agreed in a relevant agreement to be working time (for example, undertaking trade union duties).

- HMRC sets the hours you are required to work and how those hours are to be worked. This will be set out within contracts of employment and/or as part of Directorate Working Arrangements. These may require you to work shifts or variable or unsocial hours, including weekends and public and privilege holidays.
- Working Time Regulations mean you should normally work no more than an average of 48 hours per week within each reference period of 17 weeks.
- Break times do not contribute toward working time and as such are not paid. There may be local arrangements on the approach to breaks, which if relevant, will be set out as part of any applicable Directorate Working Arrangements.
- Most of us will carry out the duties required of our roles within Standard Operating Hours, but some roles may require you, either on a temporary or permanent basis, to work outside of these times. Where this is the case, HMRC will be clear about the requirement and the agreed arrangements. HMRC expects you to apply the same consideration offered on flexibility to reasonable management requests.'
- HR25200 Balancing home and office working: this policy applies to all employees, including contractual homeworkers, and includes these relevant statements:

'As part of your usual performance development conversation, you and your manager should discuss your homeworking arrangements to make sure they are working for you, to address any concerns that may arise and to ensure the arrangements are meeting the needs of our customers, those of the wider team and your personal needs.' And 'You should agree with your manager any times you will not be available, or if something occurs which means you cannot work, whilst working at home (as you would when in an office). If you are unwell on a working from home day you should take the time off if you are unfit for work. You should follow the Supporting your attendance policy in the usual way.'

- HR35001 Working your hours flexibly in HMRC: Flexible working hours (flexi) approach: applies to all employees, including contractual homeworkers, and describes how the flexible working hours scheme works. It includes this statement:

'Working Hours: In general, colleagues will work in line with their contracted daily and weekly hours and in line with any Directorate Working Arrangements. You are not expected to work longer than a 10-hour day, excluding breaks. However, there may be occasions when a longer day is required, for instance if you are travelling to a location other than your usual place of work.'

WALES**■ Television Licences: Wales****Ruth Jones:**[\[105727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the impact of freezing the BBC licence fee until April 2024 on the people of (a) Newport West constituency and (b) Wales.

Simon Hart:

Under the new licence fee settlement, the fee will remain at £159 until April 2024 and then rise in line with inflation for the following four years. Television is important to people across the UK, including those in Newport West and Wales as a whole. This settlement shields licence fee payers from the current inflationary pressures for the next two years, while providing billions of pounds and secure funding for the BBC for the next six years. This settlement strikes the right balance between protecting households and allowing broadcasters to deliver their vital public responsibilities, while also encouraging them to make further savings and efficiencies.

The licence fee offers a strong settlement for S4C, providing £88.8 million per annum for the first two years, then rising in line with inflation thereafter. This includes a new commitment of £7.5 million per annum to support S4C's digital development, ensuring S4C's offering remains sustainable in the digital age. Overall, this settlement delivers a 9% increase in funding for S4C following a five-year funding freeze.

As the only Welsh language broadcaster, S4C is vital to the people of Newport West and Wales overall, and this settlement will enable S4C to continue to reach more Welsh language speakers, including younger audiences, and contributes to the UK Government's commitment to support the ambition of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ LGBT People: Surveys****Anneliese Dodds:**[\[106860\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, for what reason the Government Equalities Office published a collection of documents relating to the 2017 National LGBT Survey and 2018 Action Plan on the Department's website on 4 January 2022.

Anneliese Dodds:[\[106861\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what the status is of the Government's LGBT Action Plan.

Mike Freer:

Earlier last year, the Minister for Women and Equalities set out her top LGBT policy priorities, which we are making good progress towards delivering. We have launched a public consultation on our plans to ban Conversion Therapy; we are digitising the

Gender Recognition Certificate application process, having already reduced the fee, and are improving healthcare for trans people. In December 2021, we published the HIV Action Plan, whilst also announcing the end of the ban on HIV+ people joining the UK armed forces. This month we have announced an independent review into the impact of the pre-2000 ban on homosexuality in the armed forces on LGBT veterans, as part of the Veterans' Strategy Action Plan.

We have appointed Iain Anderson as LGBT Business Champion, and the Prime Minister has appointed Lord Herbert of South Downs as Special Envoy on LGBT rights, with both an international and domestic focus. The UK will also be hosting its first global LGBT conference in June, *Safe To Be Me*, which will bring together government representatives, businesses, civil society and international parliamentarians to address the safety of LGBT people at home and abroad.

The UK Government regularly updates GOV.UK to improve the experience and accessibility of users. The update on 4 January 2022, regarding the 2017 National LGBT Survey and 2018 Action Plan, was to support user access to existing, previously published, documents.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme

Vicky Foxcroft:

[102728]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published on 28 July 2021, what recent progress her Department has made on working with disabled people, disabled people's organisations and charities via the Access to Work Stakeholder Forums to develop an Access to Work Adjustments Passport; whether the pilot went ahead as planned in 2021; and if she will publish the outcomes of that pilot.

Chloe Smith:

We are continuing to work with a range of stakeholders including disabled people's charities and organisations, alongside our Access to Work Stakeholder Forums in England, Scotland and Wales to inform the development of the Adjustments Passport. As a result, a number of Adjustments Passport pilots are already underway including the freelancers and contractors pilot which began in May 2021, and the universities pilot which commenced in November 2021.

We will continue to work with stakeholders during 2022 to inform the further development of the Adjustment Passport pilots. The Armed Forces service leavers pilot and various Department for Education programmes supporting young disabled people are due to be rolled out in Spring 2022.

The findings from the pilots will be used to inform future development and implementation. There are no plans to publish the findings.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[102730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published on 28 July 2021, what steps her Department has taken to review the effectiveness of the Access to Work communication campaign.

Chloe Smith:

Following the Access to Work communication campaign in early 2021, and our findings from a thorough evaluation, we have taken a number of steps to continue to raise awareness of the scheme amongst people with a disability or long-term health condition.

We frequently promote the scheme through the Department's social media channels, and have introduced specific Access to Work pages on the JobHelp website (to maximise reach via our Jobhelp TV campaign), and on gov.uk. We monitor web traffic and optimise our plans accordingly.

We have also sought to ensure advisers who work with potential service users have the information and tools to act as advocates for the scheme. We have produced a communications toolkit specifically for stakeholders and partners, to help them raise awareness amongst their customers.

In addition, we are continuing to promote Access to Work to citizens via our JobHelp campaign, and to employers as part of the Disability Confident scheme.

As part of communications planning for Access to Work in 2022-23 we continue to adapt our approach as necessary to maximise effectiveness.

■ Chemicals: Regulation

Geraint Davies:[\[105339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, If she will publish HSE's initial assessment of substances added to the EU Substances of Very High Concern Candidate List.

Chloe Smith:

HSE will be publishing the initial assessment of substances added to the EU Substance of Very High Concern (SVHCs) Candidate List in an update to its website within the next two weeks. This is in line with the commitment made in the 2021-2022 UK REACH Work Programme, and guided by the interim principles for the inclusion of SVHCs on the candidate list which have been agreed by Defra and the Welsh and Scottish Governments.

■ Disability: Advocacy

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[102724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy, published July 2021, when her Department plans to publish the results of its testing of advocacy support to assess its effectiveness and establish the best delivery model.

Chloe Smith:

Following the receipt of over 4,500 submissions to *Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper* we are now working to analyse these responses. We are considering the feedback we have received on advocacy support in our design of the test. We will be bringing forward a White Paper with detailed proposals in mid-2022.

■ Disability: Employment**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[102725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published on 28 July 2021, whether her Department's plans to fund a local supported employment trailblazer working with 20 local authorities began as expected in autumn 2021.

Chloe Smith:

Local Supported Employment (LSE) is a key part of our future disability employment strategy. Delivery of support is now expected to start in Autumn 2022 following a competitive process.

This work was paused as a result of COVID-19 and implementation was delayed to ensure we provide the right support for individuals who will take part in this initiative and the 20 participating Local Authorities.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[102726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published on 28 July 2021, what progress her Department has made on the development and testing of an improved information and advice offer for employers.

Chloe Smith:

DWP is developing an information and advice service for employers, focused on the needs of smaller businesses. An early and limited version is currently in private live testing with a large group of employer testers.

It is being developed in accordance with Government Digital Service standards, and subject to test findings, this service will be further developed and expanded during 2022.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[102731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published on 28 July 2021, what steps her Department has taken on testing whether providing additional support for employers who are willing to do more and flex job roles for those who need more than standard Access to Work can open up job opportunities for disabled people.

Chloe Smith:

Work is progressing well to develop a model to test whether providing additional support for employers who are willing to offer more than standard Access to Work

programmes can open up additional job opportunities for disabled people. DWP officials are continuing to work with stakeholders, employers and disabled people to develop the funding model. To enable us to gain early feedback and learning to inform any future development of this work we will be adopting a test and learn approach starting this year.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[102732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published on 28 July 2021, what steps her Department has taken with the Disability Confident Professional Advisers Group (PAG) and the Business Leaders Group to review and strengthen levels 2 and 3 of the scheme, to support employers to increase disabled people's employment opportunities.

Chloe Smith:

As announced in the National Disability Strategy, DWP has taken steps to review the Disability Confident scheme (levels 2 and 3). We have held a number of events and workshops to gather views about the scheme from disabled people, Business Leaders Group, Professional Advisers Group and disability representative organisations. Together we are considering the content of the scheme to ensure it remains up to date, credible and sufficiently challenging in support of disability employment. The review is expected to conclude by Spring 2022 at which point any changes to the scheme will be communicated and the scheme guidance will be updated.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[103611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy, published 28 July 2021, what assessment her Department has made of the average time taken for disabled people and people with health conditions to rapidly access appropriate tailored support following the 25 per cent increase in places on Intensive Personalised Employment Support from August 2021.

Chloe Smith:

As the 25% increase in available places on the Intensive Personalised Employment Support (IPES) programme only began on 4th January, it is too early to have any data on its impact.

■ Disability: Students

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[102729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy on 28 July 2021, what progress her Department has made on making an Access to Work Adjustments Passport available to all disabled students, including those receiving Disabled Students' Allowance, when they leave university.

Chloe Smith:

The Adjustments Passport universities pilot announced in the National Disability Strategy was launched with students at University of Wolverhampton and Manchester

Metropolitan University in November 2021. This was publicly announced on gov.uk in December 2021. A third university is due to join the pilot in early 2022.

■ Employment

Stephen Timms:

[105340]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2022 to Question 98884, on Employment, whether it is her policy to include the self-employed in the calculation of the total number of people in employment; and what comparative estimate she has made of the total number of people in employment when calculated (a) with and (b) without the number of self-employed (i) as of 17 January 2022 and (ii) before the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

The answer of 11 January 2022 to question [98884](#) referred to the payroll employment measure of people in work.

The payroll employment measure is the timeliest labour market measure of people in work, derived from Real Time Information employers submit to the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) system. Further explanation of this measure is available at: [Comparison of labour market data sources - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

■ Employment and Support Allowance: Denton and Reddish

Andrew Gwynne:

[105408]

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

Rosie Cooper:

[105430]

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

Nia Griffith:

[105431]

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

Barbara Keeley:

[105447]

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

Barbara Keeley: [\[105448\]](#)

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

Barbara Keeley: [\[105449\]](#)

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

Barbara Keeley: [\[105450\]](#)

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

Ian Murray: [\[105475\]](#)

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

Lilian Greenwood: [\[105488\]](#)

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

Rachel Reeves: [\[105491\]](#)

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

Rachel Reeves: [\[105492\]](#)

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

Bill Esterson: [\[105494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people who have been affected by the underpayment of benefits after

transitioning from incapacity benefit to employment and support allowance in Sefton Central constituency.

Bill Esterson:

[\[105495\]](#)

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

Stella Creasy:

[\[105504\]](#)

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

Kate Green:

[\[105505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people who have been affected by underpayment of benefits after transitioning from incapacity benefit to employment and support allowance in (a) Trafford, (b) Stretford and Urmston and (c) Altrincham and Sale West constituency.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[105509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people who have been affected by the underpayment of benefits after transitioning from incapacity benefit to employment and support allowance in (a) Stockton North constituency and (b) the Tees Valley Combined Authority area.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[105511\]](#)

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

Seema Malhotra:

[\[105533\]](#)

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

Stephen Doughty:

[\[105545\]](#)

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

Thangam Debbonaire:[\[105599\]](#)

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

Rachael Maskell:[\[105613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people who have been affected by the underpayment of benefits after transitioning from incapacity benefit to employment and support allowance in (a) York Unitary Authority and (b) York Central constituency.

Wes Streeting:[\[105668\]](#)

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

Matthew Pennycook:[\[105677\]](#)

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

Matt Western:[\[105690\]](#)

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

Anna McMorris:[\[105695\]](#)

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

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[105701\]](#)

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

Anneliese Dodds:[\[105713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many individuals were not accurately transferred from incapacity benefit to income related employment and support allowance in Oxford East constituency.

James Murray:

[\[105754\]](#)

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

Chloe Smith:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 19th January to question number [104377](#).

■ **Employment and Support Allowance: South Yorkshire**

John Healey:

[\[105359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people who have been affected by the underpayment of benefits after transitioning from incapacity benefit to employment and support allowance in (a) Wentworth and Dearne constituency, (b) Rother Valley constituency, (c) Rotherham local authority area and (d) Barnsley local authority area.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[105413\]](#)

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

Valerie Vaz:

[\[105500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people who have been affected by the underpayment of benefits after transitioning from incapacity benefit to employment support allowance in (i) Walsall South, (ii) Walsall North and (iii) Aldridge Brownhills constituency.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[105532\]](#)

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

Angela Rayner:

[\[105563\]](#)

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

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

[\[105639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people who have been affected by the underpayment of benefits after

transitioning from incapacity benefit to employment and support allowance in Torfaen constituency.

Chloe Smith:

I refer the Rt hon. Member to the answer I gave on 19th January to question number [104377](#).

■ New Enterprise Allowance

Seema Malhotra:

[105535]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect on potential entrepreneurs of ending the New Enterprise Allowance.

Mims Davies:

No assessment has been made.

The contract for the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) was extended by nine months to support claimants through the unprecedented challenges that arose due to the pandemic. While new referrals to the NEA ended on 31 December 2021, participants on the programme will receive support until October 2023.

The NEA was just one form of provision available to the self-employed. Those self-employed or those wishing to become self-employed can access support from the Small Business Helpline in England, Business Wales and Fair Start Scotland. Additionally, the Start Up Loans scheme, run by the British Business Bank, delivers support to many people that may have otherwise struggled to obtain support through a commercial bank loan. The scheme provides mentoring to those starting their business, and offers support to women entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs from ethnic minority backgrounds and individuals who were previously unemployed.

Support for the self-employed is built into Universal Credit. Self-employed claimants on Universal Credit receive financial support to supplement their earnings, and during a start-up period, regular support from self-employment Work Coaches. This includes signposting claimants to tools and resources to develop the skills and experience they need. Claimants on legacy benefits who become self-employed may migrate to Universal Credit and receive a start-up period of up to one year, which includes 1-2-1 Work Coach support to develop their business. DWP also partners with local and national organisations so that claimants can access tailored, all-round support.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations

Darren Jones:

[102750]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the mental and physical pressures that medical reassessments relating to a personal independence payment claim has on claimants with a chronic illnesses or a hidden disability.

Chloe Smith:

The Department aims to continually improve the assessment process for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) through customer insight, stakeholder engagement and qualitative research. For people with the highest level of support and with severe and lifelong health conditions which will not improve or will deteriorate, new guidance was introduced in August 2018 for both new claims and award reviews to ensure they receive an ongoing award of PIP, with a light-touch review at the 10-year point. Since 2019 ongoing awards with a light-touch review at the 10-year point are also applied to most awards for people over State Pension age.

PIP is designed to support an individual's functional needs arising from a range of disabilities, including chronic or hidden illnesses, and the PIP Assessment Guide (PIPAG) makes clear that Health Professionals must take into consideration the invisible nature of some symptoms such as fatigue and pain in their assessment of a claimant.

We published 'Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper' in July 2021 and asked for views on how we might improve health assessments considering a number of options. The consultation closed on 11 October 2021 and we will set out next steps in a White Paper later this year.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[102727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published on 28 July 2021, what recent progress her Department has made on exploring options to reduce the frequency of repeat Work Capability Assessments and Personal Independence Payment assessments, to avoid assessments where a change of award is unlikely.

Chloe Smith:

As announced in the recent Shaping Future Support: Health and Disability Green Paper we want to make changes to the assessment process so people with the most severe health conditions and disabilities have a simpler process to claim the benefits they are entitled to. We are exploring how to test a new Severe Disability Group (SDG) so those with severe and lifelong conditions can benefit from a simplified process to access ESA/UC and PIP without ever needing to complete a detailed application form or go through a face to face assessment.

We have already stopped reassessments for people with the most severe conditions which are unlikely to change. In Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper, we proposed ways to further reduce the number of unnecessary assessments, while continuing to ensure support is properly targeted. Alongside this, we proposed ways of offering greater flexibility and simplicity in the way that assessments are delivered, including improving the evidence we use to make decisions from health assessments, and learn the lessons of coronavirus where we introduced telephone and video assessments.

We consulted on a range of proposals in the Green Paper and received more than 4,500 responses. We will set out next steps in a White Paper later this year.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ 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.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 19 January 2022. The correct answer should have been:

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. **I (Minister for Africa) expressed the importance of upholding human rights with the President of Uganda during my visit to Uganda on 19 January 2022.** Our High Commission in Kampala issued a tweet on 7 January publicly stating our concern over Rukirabashaija'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.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ NATO Parliamentary Assembly

Minister for Middle East, North Africa and North America (James Cleverly):

[\[HCWS546\]](#)

The hon. Member for Gosport (Dame Caroline Dinéage) has replaced the hon. Member for South Derbyshire (Heather Wheeler) as a Member of the United Kingdom delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ The Fourth Report on the Use of the Petition of Concern Mechanism in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis):

[\[HCWS550\]](#)

I am today laying before both Houses of Parliament the fourth report by the UK Government on the use of the Petition of Concern mechanism in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

As part of the New Decade, New Approach deal upon which devolved government was restored in Northern Ireland on 11 January 2020, the UK Government committed to undertaking such a report every six months.

This report covers the period from 12 July 2021 to 11 January 2022 during which no Petition of Concern has been lodged against any motion in the Assembly.

The fact that there have been no uses of the Petitions of Concern since the restoration of the political institutions is a positive reflection of the conduct of business within the Assembly. However, I want to take this opportunity to reinforce the importance of a stable, mature, functioning Executive and Assembly that is focussed on addressing the issues that really matter to their daily lives.

The UK Government is standing by its commitment to bring forward legislation that provides the necessary reforms to the Petition of Concern mechanism. The Northern Ireland (Ministers, Elections and Petitions of Concern) Bill has completed Report Stage in the House of Lords. Once this legislation has completed its passage through Parliament and received Royal Assent, it is crucial that the Assembly reflects the detail of these reforms in its standing orders to ensure the full implementation of these aspects of the New Decade, New Approach deal.

This is the final report of this Assembly mandate under the UK Government's commitment to report on the use of the Petition of Concern. As there have been no uses of the Petition of Concern mechanism since the restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly, we conclude that no further reform is necessary at this time.

SCOTLAND**■ Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2020 and Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014 (Consequential Modifications) Order 2022**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland (Iain Stewart):

[\[HCWS549\]](#)

I wish to update the House on the Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2020 and Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014 (Consequential Modifications) Order 2022.

The government consulted within the House and this statement is to ensure that the House is aware of the circumstances of the Order's approval, and to set out the UK Government's approach in bringing forward the Order.

The Order was laid on 16 November and considered by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. The motion for approval was agreed at the end of the day's business on 5 January 2022, having been tabled to the Order Paper just before the rise of the House for the Christmas recess.

Due to an administrative error in the orders tabled by the Government, which was not picked up by the House of Commons authorities, the Order was listed for decision under Standing Order No. 118(6) even though the previously planned Delegated Legislation Committee debate had been postponed until early 2022. The Order therefore appeared on the Order Paper ahead of its debate in Committee, and was agreed by the House without objection on Wednesday 5 January. The debate in the House of Lords took place as normal on 14 December 2021.

The Secretary of State for Scotland is due to make this Order next week.

The Order

The aim of this Order is to make consequential amendments to legislation in view of the Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2020. This legislation was brought forward by the Scottish Government and introduces opposite sex civil partnerships to Scotland. The changes made through the Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2020 reflect that civil partnerships in Scotland are no longer just an option for same sex relationships and they are now open for opposite sex relationships too.

The Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2020 and Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014 (Consequential Modifications) Order 2022 amends the Equality Act 2010 to add further protection for individuals, such as religious and belief celebrants, who do not wish to take part in the registration of mixed sex civil partnership. The Gender Recognition Act 2004 is also amended to reflect that because opposite sex civil partnership is now recognised, it is possible for civil partners to apply for gender recognition and stay in the civil partnership.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 is also amended to ensure equal treatment for children of marriages, and children of civil partnerships, in cases of assisted reproduction. The Order also makes changes to legislation concerning the registration

overseas, through UK consular officials and armed forces, of marriages and civil partnerships.

The Order is made under the Scotland Act 1998, and extends across the United Kingdom, although some provisions only extend to certain parts of the UK. It demonstrates devolution in action, and the UK Government is pleased to support the Scottish Government introduce opposite sex civil partnerships to Scotland.

TRANSPORT

■ Publication of 2020-21 Annual Accounts for the Dartford – Thurrock Crossing

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Trudy Harrison):

[\[HCWS547\]](#)

My Noble Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Baroness Vere of Norbiton) has made the following Ministerial Statement

Under regulation 3 (1) (d) of the Trunk Road Charging Schemes (Bridges and Tunnels) (Keeping of Accounts) (England) Regulations 2003, annual accounts for the Dartford – Thurrock Crossing Charging Scheme are published today. The accounts relate to financial year 2020-2021 and will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

TREASURY

■ Public Service Pension Scheme Indexation and Revaluation 2022

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr Simon Clarke):

[\[HCWS548\]](#)

Public service pensions continue to be among the very best available. This technical update sets out the rates of indexation and revaluation that will be applied to public service pensions in April 2022.

Legislation governing public service pensions requires them to be increased annually by the same percentage as additional pensions (State Earnings Related Pension and State Second Pension). Public service pensions will therefore be increased from 11 April 2022 by 3.1 per cent, in line with the annual increase in the Consumer Prices Index up to September 2021, except for those public service pensions which have been in payment for less than a year, which will receive a pro-rata increase. This will ensure that public service pensions take account of increases in the cost of living and their purchasing power is maintained.

Separately, in the career average revalued earnings public service pension schemes introduced in 2014 and 2015, pensions in accrual are revalued annually in relation to either prices or earnings depending on the terms specified in their scheme regulations. The Public Service Pensions Act 2013 requires the Treasury to specify a measure of prices and of earnings to be used for revaluation by these schemes.

The prices measure is the Consumer Prices Index up to September 2021. Public service schemes which rely on a measure of prices, therefore, will use the figure of 3.1 per cent for the prices element of revaluation.

The earnings measure is the Whole Economy year on year change in Average Weekly Earnings (non-seasonally adjusted and including bonuses and arrears) up to September 2021. Public service schemes which rely on a measure of earnings, therefore, will use the figure of 4.1 per cent for the earnings element of revaluation.

Revaluation is one part of the amount of pension that members earn in a year and needs to be considered in conjunction with the amount of in-year accrual. Typically, schemes with lower revaluation will have faster accrual and therefore members will earn more pension per year. The following list shows how the main public service schemes will be affected by revaluation:

SCHEME	POLICE	FIREFIGHTERS	CIVIL		TEACHERS	LGPS	ARMED	
			SERVICE	NHS			FORCES	JUDICIAL
Revaluation for active member	4.35%	4.1%	3.1%	4.6%	4.7%	3.1%	4.1%	3.1%