

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 24 January 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:32 P.M., 24 January 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

### ATTORNEY GENERAL

#### ■ Hare Coursing: Prosecutions

**Matt Western:**

[\[106828\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many prosecutions there have been for offences relating to hare coursing by police force in the latest period for which data is available.

**Alex Chalk:**

Offences of hare coursing may be prosecuted using offences created by the Game Act 1831, the Night Poaching Act 1828 and the Hunting Act 2004.

The CPS does not maintain a central record of the number of prosecutions for offences of hare coursing. This information could only be obtained by examining CPS case files, which would incur disproportionate cost.

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ Audit: Standards

**Jonathan Reynolds:**

[\[104333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the number of auditors required to extend the definition of public interest entities under the proposals set out in their consultation on restoring trust in audit and corporate governance.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government is carefully considering the responses to the White Paper on 'Restoring trust in audit and corporate reporting', including on proposals to extend the definition of public interest entities to bring large private businesses which are of significant public interest in scope of higher standards of transparency and oversight.

The Government will respond in due course, and will publish its assessment of audit market capacity to deliver reforms in the final impact assessment.

#### ■ Banks: Regulation

**Jonathan Reynolds:**

[\[104331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of continuing to include small non-complex retail financial institutions in the definition of public interest entities in the context of those institutions being regulated by the Prudential Regulatory Authority.

**Paul Scully:**

Public interest entities are businesses of particular importance to the UK economy, and are subject to more stringent requirements and oversight to reflect this. On 18

March, the Government published a White Paper on 'Restoring trust in audit and corporate reporting', which included proposals to extend the definition of public interest entity to bring other large businesses into scope.

Arguments have been made that some smaller entities, including small non-complex retail financial institutions, should not be within the UK's definition of public interest entity. However, this needs to be balanced against the need to maintain public confidence in these institutions, and to protect the public interest in their reporting. The Government is considering the responses to the consultation carefully and will respond in due course.

**Jonathan Reynolds:**

[\[104332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether defining non-complex retail financial institutions as Public Interest Entities is in line with (a) HM Treasury's work on proportionate regulation, (b) the Prudential Regulatory Authority's strong and simple work and (c) the Financial Conduct Authority's principles for good regulation.

**Paul Scully:**

On 18 March, the Government published a White Paper on 'Restoring trust in audit and corporate reporting', which included proposals to extend the definition of public interest entity to bring other large businesses into scope. The White Paper did not propose to remove any entities from the existing definition of public interest entity as these businesses of particular importance to the UK economy, and are subject to more stringent requirements and oversight to reflect this.

The Government is considering the responses to the consultation carefully and will respond in due course. The Government is committed to proportionate regulation. Any future changes will balance the need for entities of public interest to have appropriate regulation, whilst also ensuring regulation is proportionate and not unduly burdensome.

#### ■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Apple Distribution International

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[104328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what purposes his Department spent £4,552 on Apple Distribution International Ltd between 22 and 23 September 2021.

**George Freeman:**

£4,522 was paid to Apple for devices relating to non-executive Directors and Ministers.



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

**Bill Esterson:** [\[104330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to BEIS transparency data: spending over £500, published on 13 January, for what purposes did his Department authorise £71,539.16 of payments to Park Retail Ltd. during July and September 2021.

**George Freeman:**

Park Retail Ltd supply non-cash award vouchers to the Department. These vouchers support the BEIS performance management reward process.

## ■ Electric Cables: Seas and Oceans

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[107728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what representations his Department has received from the Scottish Government or any of its agencies on the creation of subsea cables transmitting offshore wind energy from Scotland to England.

**Greg Hands:**

Under the scope of the Offshore Transmission Network Review, National Grid ESO is currently working on a Holistic Network Design which will provide a national blueprint for how the offshore and onshore electricity network needs to evolve to facilitate UK 2030 offshore wind targets. Officials from Scottish Government, Marine Scotland and Crown Estate Scotland, as well as relevant statutory national bodies, are all directly involved in the Review and sit on its various governance fora.

The provision and regulation of network assets, including subsea cables, is a matter for Ofgem in its role as regulator, in conjunction with network operators. Officials engage regularly with the Scottish Government on electricity network matters.

## ■ Energy: Prices

**Colleen Fletcher:** [\[107608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of the effect of rising energy prices on the household finances of pensioners in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

**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.

Eligible pensioners receiving a state pension will automatically receive the Winter Fuel Payment. Recipients will receive between £100 and £300 towards heating bills. Cold Weather Payments are paid to vulnerable claimants on qualifying benefits, including older people on Pension Credit, for every week of severe cold weather over

the winter period. Between 1 November 2020 and 31 March 2021 the Government made £98.8 million in payments to those in need.

In addition to this, the Warm Home Discount scheme provides over £350m of energy bills support to low income and vulnerable households, largely through the provision of £140 rebates on energy bills.

## ■ Fuel Poverty

**Colleen Fletcher:** [\[107605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of the effect of rising energy prices on the number of households in fuel poverty in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

**Greg Hands:**

BEIS publish Fuel poverty statistics by Region (Table 1), Local Authority (Table 2) and parliamentary constituency (Table 4) in England, the latest data covers 2019. These are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-sub-regional-statistics#2019-statistics>.

The Government's projection for the number of households in England that are in fuel poverty for the year 2022 will be published on 24 February.

The energy price cap from 1 April 2022 will be announced by Ofgem later this year.

## ■ Housing: Insulation

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[103602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the proportion of houses in the UK which are sufficiently insulated; and what steps he will take to install adequate insulation in houses that do not have it.

**Greg Hands:**

The Government set an aspiration in the Clean Growth Strategy for as many homes as possible to reach at least EPC Band C by 2035, where cost-effective, affordable, and practical.

The UK has made good progress in improving the energy performance of homes. Over 40% of homes in England now have an EPC of C or better, up from 12% in 2009. The Government has committed to spend £3.8 billion in this Parliament to improve the energy performance of homes, including through insulation.

## ■ Oil: Prices

**Robert Halfon:** [\[107545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that falling wholesale oil prices are reflected at filling stations.

**Greg Hands:**

BEIS publishes weekly national average pump prices:

[www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/oil-and-petroleum-products-weekly-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/oil-and-petroleum-products-weekly-statistics). The Department's analysis shows that both rises and falls in crude oil prices are passed through to consumers over the course of 6-7 weeks. No evidence has been found to suggest that, for given changes in crude oil prices, retail prices rise faster than they fall.

Competitive markets ensure that consumers get a fair deal and that road fuel prices stay as low as possible. This framework delivers pre-tax prices in the UK which are below the European average.

**Robert Halfon:****[107546]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a pumpwatch body to monitor petrol and diesel prices to ensure that the prices motorists pay reflect changes in the wholesale oil price.

**Greg Hands:**

The Government believes that it is essential for consumers to get a fair deal when they visit the pumps. The Department actively monitors fuel prices, and its analysis shows that both rises and falls in the price of crude oil reach the pumps within seven weeks. An open and competitive market is the best way to keep prices low; a new regulator is not necessary. If people have evidence of anti-competitive practices in the fuel supply sector, this should be passed onto the Competition Markets Authority.

**Robert Halfon:****[107547]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Competition and Markets Authority on the relationship between petrol and diesel prices at filling stations and wholesale oil prices.

**Greg Hands:**

The Department monitors petrol and diesel prices at retail and wholesale levels and conducts periodic assessments of the relationship between these costs. If there is any evidence of market failure at a national level this will be passed to the Competition and Markets Authority. The Competition Markets Authority is not a price regulator and applicable competition legislation does not provide any general powers to regulate either prices or profits. The price or pricing structure that a company or group adopts for a particular product or service is a matter for its own commercial judgement.

**Robert Halfon:****[107548]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure motorists are charged prices for petrol and diesel which reflect the wholesale oil price.

**Greg Hands:**

The Department's analysis shows that retail prices of petroleum products such as petrol and diesel are primarily driven by the underlying price in the global market of crude oil and by exchange rates. Departmental analysis shows that changes to the price of crude oil feed through to retail prices over the course of 6-7 weeks. The prices are also influenced by a range of other supply and demand factors, including refining capacity, stock levels, logistics and distribution costs and seasonal demand variations.

**Renewable Energy****Rachael Maskell:**[\[103589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring all new residential and commercial properties to install (a) heat pump technology or (b) other cleaner forms of energy.

**Greg Hands:**

The Future Homes and Buildings Standards, when implemented from 2025, will ensure the installation of low carbon technologies such as heat pumps in all new residential and commercial properties. Subject to further technical consultation in 2023, the Government assesses that these new standards will significantly reduce carbon dioxide emissions from buildings, whilst avoiding the need for further costly retrofitting work.

**CABINET OFFICE****Conflict, Stability and Security Fund: Hate Crime****Sarah Champion:**[\[106710\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Written Statement of 15 December 2021, HCWS487 on Conflict, Stability and Security Fund Allocations 2021-22, which of the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund's programmes for the financial year 2021-22 will encompass projects to tackle hate speech; and what the regional locations are of those projects.

**Michael Ellis:**

The CSSF is a unique, cross-government fund that tackles conflict, stability and overseas security challenges. The fund supports programmes to tackle the root causes and drivers of conflict and instability, to improve social cohesion, to prevent harm to minority groups and to enable their inclusion in society. This can include - but is not limited to - activities that aim to tackle hate speech. In the financial year 2021/22, this includes a multi-country 'Gender, Peace and Security' programme in India, Lebanon, Malta, Mexico and South Africa that aims to create an early warning system that will flag online violence targeted at women journalists.

The fund also supports the 'Caught in the Web' project in Sri Lanka which tackles online gender-based hate targeting women in public life. The fund is also piloting new projects jointly with local law enforcement to enhance and prevent hate speech activity in Poland, France and Spain.

## ■ Electronic Government

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

**[105666]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published on 28 July 2021, what steps the Central Digital and Data Office took towards the continuation of its programme to make online public services accessible.

**Michael Ellis:**

Since the publication of the National Disability Strategy last July, the Government's Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) has also published the outcome of its monitoring of the UK's public sector websites and mobile applications. This can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accessibility-monitoring-of-public-sector-websites-and-mobile-apps-2020-2021/accessibility-monitoring-of-public-sector-websites-and-mobile-apps-2020-2021>.

The report also explains CDDO's ongoing work to implement the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 ("accessibility regulations"). This includes publication of guidance on how users can report accessibility issues with a public sector website or mobile app and guidance on how to make mobile apps accessible. CDDO will continue to monitor public sector websites and mobile applications throughout 2022.

## ■ Employment: Veterans

**Andrew Rosindell:**

**[107496]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department has taken to (a) implement the Great Place to Work for Veterans initiative and (b) help ex-service men and women secure employment.

**Leo Docherty:**

We have successfully piloted the Great Place to Work scheme across six government Departments and have commenced the roll out of this initiative across Departments for all Civil Service roles, including Senior Civil Servant positions by the end of March 2022. During the pilot phase, the scheme received 3,000 applications, made 155 appointments to roles and saw 180 successful applicants placed on a reserve list.

The new Veterans' Strategy Action Plan outlines over 60 commitments funded by over £70 million from departments across Government, including initiatives to make sure veterans are able to find quality employment after leaving service.

These commitments build on recent progress and support to encourage employers to recruit veterans, such as the National Insurance contribution holiday for employers of Service leavers and the Defence Employer Recognition scheme. We have committed

to promoting pathways into careers in public service for veterans, such as teaching and in the uniformed and health services and introduced a fast-track recruitment scheme for veterans wishing to become prison officers.

## ■ Government Departments: Coronavirus

**Angela Rayner:** [\[107597\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what guidance was issued to civil servants, ministers and special advisers on working arrangements in government buildings in addition to the prevailing government guidance published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy for all employers on managing the risk of covid-19 in the workplace.

**Michael Ellis:**

Throughout the pandemic, Cabinet Office staff have worked from home and the workplace in line with the appropriate government guidance in place at the time - particularly the [Working Safely during Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) guidance](#) - recognising the different approaches taken by the devolved administrations. Additional assorted guidance has been issued to Cabinet Office staff to support them in working safely from home and in the workplace, as deemed necessary.

Cabinet Office has followed the latest government guidance in relation to managing the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace. It will continue to follow this advice - as we actively support staff back to the workplace following the most recent update in guidance.

## ■ Intelligence Services: Annual Reports

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[107505\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Cabinet Secretary plans to publish a financial statement covering the accounts of the Security and Intelligence Agencies in financial year 2020-21.

**Michael Ellis:**

The financial statement covering the accounts of the Security and Intelligence Agencies in the financial year was laid in Parliament on 16 December 2021. The information was published on GOV.UK on 20 December 2021.

## ■ LGBT People: Armed Forces

**John Healey:** [\[107448\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the independent review into the historic treatment of LGBT armed forces personnel will (a) open and (b) publish its findings.

**John Healey:** [\[107449\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the chair of the independent review into the historic treatment of LGBT of armed forces service personnel will be announced.

**John Healey:** [\[107450\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the independent review into the historic treatment of LGBT armed forces service personnel will consider appropriate compensation for those affected.

**John Healey:** [\[107451\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the terms of reference for the independent review into the historic treatment of LGBT armed forces service personnel.

**Leo Docherty:**

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Secretary of State for Defence have commissioned an independent Review into the impact of the pre 2000 ban on homosexuality in the Armed Forces. The Review will look at the experiences of former LGBT service personnel, and make evidence-based recommendations, including on how the Government can better tailor support to the LGBT veteran community. An independent Chair will be announced shortly, after which the full terms of reference will be published and the Review can commence. As the Review is independent, we cannot comment on potential findings and recommendations that it may make.

## ■ **Members: Correspondence**

**Robert Largan:** [\[107745\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to reply to the correspondence from the hon. Member for High Peak of 1 December 2021, reference RL26970.

**Michael Ellis:**

The Government recognises the great importance of the effective and timely handling of correspondence, and the important points raised by the hon. Member on behalf of his constituent.

The Minister of State (Lord True) responded to the hon. Member's letter on 7 January. A copy of this response has been passed to the hon. Member's office.

## ■ **Office for Veterans' Affairs: Finance**

**John Healey:** [\[106626\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will list the budget for the Office for Veterans Affairs for each year from 2019-20 to 2024-25.

**Leo Docherty:**

The Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) was set up in October 2019 and annual spending has been as follows:

2019/20: £50k (actual spend)

Represents initial set-up costs following the OVA's establishment in October 2019, part-way through the financial year.

2020/21: £1.6m (actual spend)

Reflects expenditure on building OVA capability and capacity during this period, and the impact of the COVID pandemic on delivery.

2021/22: £4.4m (forecast spend)

In addition to full year expenditure, the OVA is working with the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to distribute a further £5 million through the Afghanistan Veterans Fund, as announced by the Prime Minister in September 2021.

The budgets for 2022-23 and future years are not yet confirmed and will be set in accordance with the department's annual process of business planning. The OVA will also deliver the £5m Veterans Health Innovation Fund in 2022/23, as announced at the Budget in October 2021.

The budget allocated to the OVA represents only part of the Government's wider support for veterans. The Veterans' Strategy Action Plan, launched on 19 January 2022, outlines over 60 commitments funded by over £70 million from departments across Government, including initiatives on health and wellbeing, employment opportunities, digitalisation of services, and enhanced research and data. These commitments build on recent progress and support including the National Insurance contribution holiday for employers of Service leavers, and the introduction of the Veterans Railcard.

**■ UK Trade with EU: VAT****Daisy Cooper:**[\[106894\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the MPs Toolkit for UK Transition Campaign communication, emailed to hon. Members on 7 January 2021, what data were used to show many of the queries the Government receives about VAT are regarding the VAT regimes and operation of those in EU Member States.

**Michael Ellis:**

We do not systematically record where queries specifically relate to EU VAT regimes. However, questions on this topic have been raised numerous times in various cross-government engagement fora over the last year. Although we do not record the data, we always direct customers to the relevant guidance.



**Daisy Cooper:**[\[106895\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January to Question 100698, UK Trade with EU: VAT, how many fulltime equivalent staff are dedicated to engaging with counterparts in EU Member States on issues relating to the interpretation by those countries' custom officials of the VAT rules being applied to UK traders and hauliers.

**Michael Ellis:**

Officials in a number of different Government Departments work on the full range of issues relating to trade with the EU under the new arrangements set out in the Trade and Co-operation Agreement. It is not possible to disaggregate the level of full time equivalent staff resource involved specifically in engaging with EU Member States on the interpretation of their VAT rules which is one issue among many.

**■ Veterans Advisory Board: Meetings****Owen Thompson:**[\[107632\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reasons published minutes of a meeting of the Veterans Advisory Board might be permitted to be edited retrospectively.

**Owen Thompson:**[\[107633\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions (a) Ministers and (b) his officials had at the meeting of the Veterans Advisory Board on 24 November 2021 about veteran UK medical assessors.

**Leo Docherty:**

I recognise the importance of transparency in government and, for that reason, I opt to routinely publish minutes from my expert committee on veterans issues - The Veterans Advisory Board. Once published, minutes may only be amended to correct factual errors.

The Veterans Advisory Board provides valuable insight into issues affecting the veteran community, helping to develop appropriate policy interventions. At the meeting of 24 November, the board offered insight into the perspective of veterans accessing services provided by Veterans UK. A summary of this meeting and all others may be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

**CHURCH COMMISSIONERS****■ Church of England: Staff****Jane Hunt:**[\[107739\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what the total number of people employed in full and part time diocesan roles across the UK was, excluding parish priests and lay readers, in (a) 1959, (b) 1979, (c) 1989, (d) 1999, (e) 2010 and (f) 2020, including Bishops, Suffragan Bishops,

Archdeacons, governance managers, human resource management, operations directors, inclusivity and diversity managers, directors of giving, mission enablers, directors of social justice, environment managers, training leaders, youth leaders, conference centre managers and wardens, and all associated support staff.

**Andrew Selous:**

No information is held centrally about the number of staff employed by each diocese, so the requested information is not readily available and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

For most of the information requested, figures have not been collected consistently, if collected at all. However, the following information about clergy numbers was provided in response to a similar question asked at the General Synod November 2021 group of sessions:

CATEGORY		1959	1979	2000	2010	2020
Archdeacons		106	104	106	109	129
Suffragan bishops	1	70	72	67	58	67
Diocesan bishops	2	43	43	41	39	39

1. For 1959 to 2000, this includes Suffragan and Assistant Bishops. For 2010 onwards, this includes Suffragan bishops only
1. For 1959, this includes Archbishops and Diocesan Bishops. For 1979, this includes Diocesan Bishops only

All figures are taken from publications available on the Church of England web page: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/research-and-statistics> . These publications also contain methodological information and further detail.

## DEFENCE

### ■ A400m Aircraft: Repairs and Maintenance

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

**[106653]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, in which facility the UK's A400M fleet will undergo depth maintenance work.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Depth maintenance on the UK's A400M Atlas fleet is carried out at a dedicated facility, Hangar 1300, at RAF Brize Norton.

## ■ Afghanistan: Refugees

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[107582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 10 December 2021 to Question 88732 on Afghanistan: Refugees, what assessment he has made of the impact on applicants of tasking 84 personnel to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy team to work through 102,000 applications.

**James Heappey:**

More than 90% of ARAP applications, including all of those received during or prior to Op PITTING, are either complete, or in progress.

Applications continue to be received at a rate of several hundred per week and the time taken to process an individual application can vary enormously due to factors outside the control of the Ministry of Defence (MOD). Staffing levels will remain under review and this endeavour remains a high priority. MOD personnel continue to work seven days a week to maintain this high volume of output.

## ■ Armed Forces Covenant

**Alex Davies-Jones:** [\[107744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his timetable is for the implementation of phase 2 of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

**Leo Docherty:**

The Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) is an ongoing programme of work and will continue to be a key part of the Ministry of Defence's long-term plans to develop and encourage public support for the Armed Forces community through the Armed Forces Covenant.

There is no timetable for the implementation of a second phase of the Defence ERS; there is an annual programme of review and award to enable interested employers to progress through the three levels of the scheme (Bronze to Silver to Gold) which begins in January each year.

## ■ Armed Forces: Coronavirus

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[105510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the Government's policy is on sanctions for armed forces personnel who refuse to receive the covid-19 vaccination.

**James Heappey:**

*[Holding answer 20 January 2022]:* Within Defence, vaccinations are administered under the principles of informed consent. For some operational deployments and roles all personnel must be vaccinated either to manage medical risks, maintain critical capabilities, or if a host nation requires it as a condition of entry.

Those refusing or unable to take a COVID-19 vaccine may be ineligible to deploy or undertake certain roles, and we would seek to identify an alternate role for those affected.

■ **Armed Forces: Furs**

**Martyn Day:** [\[105647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to replace real bearskins with faux fur in attire worn by service personnel.

**Jeremy Quin:**

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

**Attachments:**

1. Armed Forces Uniforms [87697 - Armed Forces Uniforms.docx]

■ **AWACS: Procurement**

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[106650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the whole life costs of the E-7 delivery programme.

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[106651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish TDEL costs of the E-7 Wedgetail programme.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I am withholding the whole life and TDEL costs of the E-7 Wedgetail programme as disclosure would prejudice the commercial interests of the Department as there are elements of the Programme that are not yet on contract.

■ **AWACS: Repairs and Maintenance**

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[106652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, in which facility the E-7 Wedgetail fleet will undergo depth maintenance.

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[106654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, in which facility the UK's P-8 fleet will undergo depth maintenance work.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Routine maintenance of the UK Poseidon MRA1 fleet, including some scheduled depth activities, is already being carried out at the Atlantic Building at RAF Lossiemouth.

The arrangements for other scheduled depth activities, such as the longer duration and deeper but less frequent maintenance events during the in-service life of the aircraft, do not need to begin for the Poseidon fleet until the mid-2020s and for the

Wedgetail AEW Mk 1 fleet until later in the decade. These arrangements are still being considered and will be subject to the usual Ministry of Defence scrutiny and approvals processes.

## ■ Children: Maintenance

**Martyn Day:** [\[105648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2022 to Question 100622 on Children: Maintenance, how many deduction of earning requests made by the Child Maintenance Service have been declined by Defence Business Services in the financial year 2020-21; and what the reasons for those requests being declined were.

**Leo Docherty:**

In financial year 2020-21 a total of 554 deduction of earning requests were received from the Child Maintenance Service for Service personnel; of these, 142 could not be processed. The reasons for the rejections were:

NO. OF REJECTIONS	REASON FOR REJECTION
118	A deduction of earning order was issued, rather than a deduction of earning request
15	Service person had been discharged
3	Service person was a reservist
1	Service Person not in receipt of pay
4	Service person in Operational Zone
1	Request addressed to a Service person directly and not to Defence Business Services

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

## ■ HMS Argyll: Decommissioning

**Luke Pollard:** [\[106869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to bring forward the decommissioning of HMS Argyll from 2023 to 2022.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 19 October 2021 to the right hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey) in response to Question 58732.

**Attachments:**

1. Type 23 Frigates [UIN 58732.docx]

**■ LE TacCIS Programme: Costs**

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[105382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the (a) TDEL and (b) whole life costs of the Le Taccis programme.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Ministry of Defence is not able to release financial information regarding forecasted TDEL (whole life costs) for the Land Environmental Tactical Communication and Information System (LE TacCIS) programme as it would prejudice our ability to conduct future negotiations with Industry in order to deliver best value for money.

**■ Maritime Patrol Aircraft**

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[107478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many combat-ready crews there are in the P-8 Poseidon Force.

**James Heappey:**

The Poseidon MRA1 fleet currently has five frontline crews and two instructional crews.

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[107479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many personnel are currently undergoing training to fly the P-8.

**James Heappey:**

There are currently 16 students allocated to the Poseidon MRA1 training course which will commence in March 2022.

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[107481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much has been spent on support of the P-8 Force with Boeing since the aircraft arrived at RAF Lossiemouth.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Since the Royal Air Force Poseidon fleet began operating from RAF Lossiemouth in October 2020, the cost of support through arrangements with Boeing has been £44.586 million up to 17 December 2021, which is the latest date for which verified figures are available.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Annual Reports**

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[107504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to publish his Department's annual report and accounts for financial year 2020-21.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Ministry of Defence Annual Report and Accounts were laid before Parliament on Thursday 20 January 2022.

**Ministry of Defence: Diaries****Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[106882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish in full his Ministerial diary for 20 May 2020.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

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

**Ministry of Defence: Expenditure****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[105379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's definition is of TDEL costs.

**Jeremy Quin:**

HM Treasury sets the budgeting system for central government and publishes details in the Consolidated Budgeting Guidance on gov.uk. Total Departmental Expenditure Limit (TDEL) is Resource DEL, excluding depreciation, plus Capital DEL.

**Nuclear Submarines: Deployment****Caroline Lucas:**[\[104310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will confirm that the Royal Navy has maintained uninterrupted continuous at sea deterrence nuclear armed submerged submarine patrols since 15 June 1968.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I can confirm that HMS RESOLUTION commenced the first at sea nuclear deterrent patrol in June 1968, but the first of our continuous at sea deterrence patrols commenced in April 1969. Since then, there has always been at least one Royal Navy nuclear armed submarine at sea, keeping us safe from the most extreme threats to our national security and way of life.

**Submarines: Decommissioning****Luke Pollard:**[\[107718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which of the decommissioned Royal Navy submarines that are stored at Devonport Dockyard will be the first to be recycled as part of his Department's dismantling programme.

**Jeremy Quin:**

On current plans, Valiant will be the first Devonport submarine to be dismantled.

**■ Type 26 Frigates and Type 31 Frigates: Procurement****Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[105381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the TDEL costs for the (a) Type 26 and (b) Type 31 frigate programme.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I am withholding the TDEL costs for the Type 26 and Type 31 frigate programmes as their disclosure at the present time would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of the Ministry of Defence.

**■ Type 31 Frigates: Procurement****Luke Pollard:** [\[106870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what period of time is planned to elapse between the final Type 23 frigate being removed from service and the first Type 31 frigate coming into service.

**Jeremy Quin:**

On current plans, the last Type 23 frigate will transition out of service in 2035. The Royal Navy will start to take delivery of Type 31s from 2025, with all delivered by the end of 2028.

**■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel****John Healey:** [\[107452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason his Department rejected the Home Secretary's MACA request in 2020 to assist with Channel crossings.

**James Heappey:**

The Ministry of Defence has no record of a rejected Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) request in 2020, relating to Channel crossings or counter migration support. Four such MACA requests in 2020 were approved encompassing the provision of intelligence and surveillance capabilities, and support relating to the management and accommodation of arrivals.

**■ Veterans UK****John Healey:** [\[105355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total amount of compensation paid by Veterans UK was in each year between 2010 and 2021.

**Leo Docherty:**

The below tables provide a summary of Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) and War Pension Scheme (WPS) Expenditure by financial year.



FINANCIAL YEAR	AFCS TOTAL COMPENSATION PAYABLE (£MILLION)	WPS TOTAL COMPENSATION PAYABLE (£MILLION)
2009-10	34.2	979.6
2010-11	59.5	935.1
2011-12	141.5	915.7
2012-13	68.3	907.8
2013-14	90.6	859.0
2014-15	72.9	837.6
2015-16	80.7	794.8
2016-17	80.6	764.8
2017-18	87.8	723.2
2018-19	89.8	697.3
2019-20	90.0	680.3
2020-21 <sup>p</sup>	84.3	652.4

1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest £100,000.
2. WPS Includes gratuity payments and those who opted to take the mesothelioma lump sum payment.
3. p = 2020/21 accounts pending audit and may change in the future.

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[106792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what professional qualifications Veterans UK medical assessors are required to hold.

**Leo Docherty:**

When Medical Advisors are recruited the professional qualifications required are:

Valid licence to practice medicine in UK

Registration with the GMC

Current re-validation certificate

#### ■ Veterans: Medical Examinations

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[106793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2022 to Question 102705 on Veterans: Medical Examinations, what assessment he has made of

the compatibility of that answer with the ability of veterans to receive information on the professional qualifications of medical assessors during tribunal under judges' directions.

**Leo Docherty:**

The Ministry of Defence has been working with the Tribunal Presidents to establish an approach to releasing information about Veterans UK medical advisers' professional qualifications to the Tribunals that is compatible with data protection legislation. Agreement has been reached that medical advisers will be identified by a pseudonym and information on GMC registration and qualifications will be provided.

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ **Broadband: Standards**

**Lucy Powell:**

[\[107590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of households have access to (a) superfast and (b) gigabit broadband as of 1 January 2022.

**Julia Lopez:**

According to the independent website [Thinkbroadband](#), 96.9% of premises (households and business) in the UK have access to superfast broadband ( $\geq 30$  Mbps) and 65.6% of premises have access to gigabit-capable broadband.

### ■ **Business and Retail Trade: Platinum Jubilee 2022**

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[106899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to support (a) high streets and (b) local businesses in their celebrations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

**Chris Philp:**

Her Majesty's Government is delighted to be supporting the celebrations to mark Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, and there are many ways that we are helping high streets and local businesses to join in and benefit from this national moment.

The Government has written to Local Authorities in England, highlighting the many opportunities for their communities to get involved in the celebrations. The Home Office are currently consulting on extending the licensing hours over the bank holiday weekend. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) set out a cross-Whitehall vision through the [High Streets Strategy](#) and government's commitment to support celebrations and involvement of communities.

Those local authorities who have signed up to take part in the Government's Welcome Back Fund may choose to use their allocation to undertake preparations for the Platinum Jubilee, before the Fund ends on 31 March 2022.

The Platinum Jubilee Emblem is available, free of charge, to all communities and businesses.

The Government's dedicated Platinum Jubilee website contains information on sources of funding, including £22m of [Lottery funding](#). The website also contains an [online map](#) onto which event organisers can add their events and Jubilee celebrations.

## ■ **Derby County Football Club: Government Assistance**

**Robert Halfon:**

[\[107549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to support Derby County FC and help ensure the survival of the club.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Government continues to engage closely with the English Football League about Derby County Football Club. Ultimately, it is for the EFL, the administrator and the club to resolve issues to ensure the survival of Derby County FC, but the government has urged pragmatism from all parties to find a solution for the benefit of fans and the community that the club serves.

The EFL must equally preserve the integrity of the league on behalf of all member clubs, but all parties want to see one of the founding members of the Football League continue this season and beyond under appropriate ownership.

The Fan Led Review of Football Governance made proposals directly addressing how to prevent clubs ending up in such difficult financial situations. We have endorsed in principle the primary recommendation of the review, that football requires a strong, independent regulator to secure the future of our national game. The Government is now working at pace to determine the most effective way to deliver an independent regulator, and any powers that might be needed.

## ■ **Internet: Pornography**

**Julian Knight:**

[\[105582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of France and Germany introducing compulsory age verification for adult content online.

**Chris Philp:**

The threat posed by online harms is global. The UK, France, Germany and the EU have similar objectives in our efforts to protect our citizens, including children. We work closely with France and Germany in the G7 and were pleased to see the agreement of Internet Safety Principles under our Presidency of the G7 in 2021. We are watching the development of the EU Digital Services Act with interest.

Our engagement with international partners on online harms includes the key issues of child online safety and the use of age verification. Protecting children was one of the agreed G7 Internet Safety Principles.

The strongest protections in the Online Safety Bill will be for children. Age assurance technologies, including age verification solutions, are a valuable child safety tool and

will play an important role in supporting the Bill. Ofcom will take a robust approach to sites that pose the highest risk of harm to children, including sites hosting online pornography. This may include recommending the use of age verification technologies to prevent children from accessing pornography content.

**Julian Knight:**

[\[105583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending Ofcom's powers to include the regulation of commercial pornography sites which do not implement safety by design and age verification.

**Chris Philp:**

The strongest protections in the draft Online Safety Bill are for children. Companies in scope of the legislation which are likely to be accessed by children will need to take steps to prevent children from accessing content which poses the highest risk of harm, including online pornography. Ofcom will set out in its codes of practice the steps companies need to take to comply with their duties under the Bill which we expect will include the use of age verification technologies.

The draft Bill covers many of the most visited pornography sites, social media platforms, video-sharing sites, forums and via search engines - thereby capturing many of the sites through which children access pornography.

The Government recognises the concerns that have been raised about online pornography on services which do not currently fall within the scope of the Bill. We are giving careful consideration to the Committee's recommendations and remain committed to introducing the Bill as soon as possible.

**Julian Knight:**

[\[105584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure that the Online Safety Bill will result in a measurable improvement in the protection of children from online pornography.

**Chris Philp:**

The strongest protections in the draft Online Safety Bill are for children. Services in scope of the legislation which are likely to be accessed by children will need to take steps to prevent children from accessing content which poses the highest risk of harm, including online pornography. The draft Bill covers many of the most-visited pornography sites, social media platforms, video-sharing sites, forums and via search engines - thereby capturing many of the sites through which children access pornography.

The Government recognises the concerns that have been raised, including from the Joint Committee scrutinising the draft Online Safety Bill, about protecting children from online pornography on services which do not currently fall within the scope of the Bill.

Ofcom will set out in its codes of practice the steps companies need to take to comply with their duties under the Bill. Ofcom will have a range of information and

transparency powers which it will use to understand whether companies are meeting their safety duties. These will help build an understanding of the impact that the framework is having on users, including children.

The Bill includes the requirement that the Secretary of State for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport must undertake a review on the effectiveness of the regulatory framework, two to five years after it comes into force, producing a report which will then be laid in Parliament. This review must consider how effective the regulatory framework is at providing higher levels of protection for children than for adults.

### ■ **Marketing: Digital Technology**

**Damian Collins:**

[\[108516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to publish the Government's response to the consultation on a new pro-competition regime for digital markets.

**Chris Philp:**

The consultation closed in October. We are carefully considering the responses we received and will publish our response in due course.

### ■ **National Lottery: Regional Planning and Development**

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[107572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 January 2022 to Question 101712 on National Lottery: Regional Planning and Development, for what reason the £1.8 billion spent by Camelot is not part of the Levelling Up agenda; and whether he has had discussions on that matter with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

**Chris Philp:**

Camelot, as the current operator of the National Lottery, has no involvement with or responsibility for the distribution of good cause income raised by the National Lottery.

Good cause income is distributed at arm's length from the government by 12 Lottery Distributing Bodies, to fund projects in the arts, sport and heritage sectors and to support communities and charities across the whole of the United Kingdom.

The Department has ongoing engagement with the Lottery Distributing Bodies on how their funding can continue to support the government's objective of levelling up opportunity across the United Kingdom. The Levelling Up White Paper will give more detail on the government's plans when it is published in due course.

## ■ Streaming

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[105484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate her Department has made of the number of households in the UK that regularly use video on demand to access entertainment.

**Julia Lopez:**

Ofcom's Media Nations: UK 2021 report estimates that 74% of UK households use a broadcaster video-on-demand service such as BBC iPlayer or All 4, and 75% of UK households use a subscription video-on-demand service, like Netflix or Amazon Prime Video.

The Government launched a consultation in August 2021 to level the playing field between traditional broadcasters and video-on-demand streaming services, to provide a fair competitive framework and ensure UK viewers receive equivalent standards. We are now considering the response to the consultation and will publish next steps in due course.

## ■ Telecommunications: Digital Technology

**Dehenna Davison:** [\[105733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that the digital telephone network will replicate the ability of the analogue telephone network to provide stable emergency communications in the event of power outages.

**Julia Lopez:**

Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) migration is industry-led. The Government and the independent telecoms regulator, Ofcom, are working together to ensure customers are protected.

Ofcom places a regulatory obligation on communications providers to take all necessary measures to ensure uninterrupted access to emergency organisations for their customers. Ofcom has issued guidance explaining how providers can fulfil this regulatory obligation during power outages, stating that at least one solution must be available for a minimum of one hour that enables access to emergency organisations in the event of a power cut. Any solution must be made available free of charge to customers who providers determine are reliant on their landline to make emergency calls during a power cut.

## ■ Television Licences: Fees and Charges

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:** [\[107594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many people over 75 years of age (a) have been (i) fined, (ii) arrested, (iii) imprisoned and (b) are subject to legal action for non payment of their television licence.

**Julia Lopez:**

Responsibility for collecting and enforcing the Licence Fee is the responsibility of the BBC. The BBC has confirmed that no enforcement action has been taken against over-75s for TV licence evasion at this stage.

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.

**■ Television Licences: Wales****Ruth Jones:**[\[105726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she discussed her proposals to freeze the BBC licence fee until April 2024 with the Welsh Government.

**Julia Lopez:**

In the course of setting the licence fee for the next six years, discussions were held with a number of stakeholders.

Broadcasting remains a reserved matter, and the UK Government has a strong record of demonstrating its commitment to minority language broadcasting to ensure that our broadcasting sector services all audiences of the UK nations and regions.

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. As the only Welsh language broadcaster, S4C is vital to the people of Wales, and this settlement will enable S4C to continue to support the Welsh economy, culture and society, reach more Welsh language speakers including younger audiences, and the UK Government's commitment to support the ambition of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050.

**■ Video Games: Children****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[105672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that there are adequate age-related controls in place for people purchasing Non-Fungible Tokens in video games.

**Julia Lopez:**

This Government is committed to ensuring that video games are enjoyed safely and consumers are empowered to make informed decisions. Video game ratings are mandatory under UK law for physical products. The Games Rating Authority - which is part of the Video Standards Council - rates games using the Pan European Games Information (PEGI) system. In addition to age classifications, PEGI ratings also include content descriptors to ensure buyers are informed about games at the point

of purchase, including whether a title contains 'in-game purchases', such as Non-Fungible Tokens, loot boxes and other in-game items.

We will continue to work with industry and other relevant stakeholders to understand the impact of new in-game technologies.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Academies: Finance

**Bridget Phillipson:**

**[102609]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of the proportion of academy trusts with financial reserves in excess of (a) 10%, (b) 20% and (c) 30% of their annual budget.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

At the end of 2019/20 academic year, the total cumulative surplus of trusts with positive reserves was £3.17 billion. This compares with the total cumulative surplus of schools with positive reserves in the local authority maintained sector of £2.27 billion at the end of financial year 2020/21. The proportion of academy trusts with financial reserves in excess of (a) 10%, (b) 20% and (c) 30% of their income is as follows:

#### PROPORTION OF ACADEMY TRUSTS IN SURPLUS BANDS

> 10% revenue reserves as a percentage of income	55.9%
> 20% revenue reserves as a percentage of income	21.8%
> 30% revenue reserves as a percentage of income	8.0%

This is derived from the latest published data on the schools financial benchmarking website and represents academy trusts' financial position at the end of the 2019/20 academic year. This website is available at: <https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk/Help/DataSources>.

A sound reserves policy is essential for all academy trusts. Unlike local authority maintained schools, academies are subject to company law, and therefore cannot operate while being insolvent, so they often hold reserves to reduce this risk.

The amount of reserves each academy trust should set aside will depend on the type and size of the academy trust, as well as the particular risks that it faces (for instance, if they are part of a Private Finance Initiative contract).

This is in addition to any reserves that academy trustees wish to set aside to accommodate longer-term plans, such as capital developments and financial investment.



## ■ Apprentices

**Mr Toby Perkins:**

**[107539]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many people participated in the Government's traineeship programme in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

**Alex Burghart:**

Traineeship starts for the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic year is shown in the table below.

Traineeship starts August to July

AGE GROUP	2019/20	2020/21
Under 19	9,100	9,900
19-24	3,000	7,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,100</b>	<b>17,400</b>

Note:

1. Volumes are rounded to the nearest 100
2. Source: Individualised Learner Record

Further information on apprenticeship starts and traineeship starts can be found in the Apprenticeships and traineeships statistics publication, available here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships#content-10-heading>.

## ■ Apprentices: Finance

**Mr Toby Perkins:**

**[106684]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much of the public funding allocated for traineeships in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21 was returned to the Treasury due to being unspent.

**Alex Burghart:**

In 2019-20, the department did not return any funding allocated for traineeships to Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT). In 2020-21, an underspend of £65 million was returned to HMT. This was because of the time involved in running a procurement to increase training provider capacity and the lag between providers developing their offer and engaging with potential employers and young people to mobilise delivery. Our procurement enabled additional money to reach 81 training providers of which 53 were new to the market. Traineeships starts increased by 44% in the 2020/21 academic year compared to 2019/20.

As is usual practice, any underspends in overall departmental budgets by the end of the financial year are first returned to HMT as per the Consolidated Budgeting Guidance.

We are supporting the largest-ever expansion of traineeships as part of the government's Plan for Jobs to ensure that more young people have access to high-quality training. At Spending Review, we announced funding for up to 72,000 traineeships starts over the next 3 years. We have also extended the £1,000 incentive payments for offering traineeship work placement opportunities until 31 July 2022. We are continuing to support the further expansion of traineeships, and are working closely with employers, providers and key intermediaries to grow the programme.

## ■ Apprentices: Taxation

**Mr Toby Perkins:**

[\[106683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what amount of previously unspent apprenticeship levy funds has been allocated by levy-paying employers to (a) small and (b) medium sized companies as part of the apprenticeship levy transfer scheme.

**Alex Burghart:**

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

Large employers are able to choose how to spend their levy funds to best meet their skills needs, and since April 2018 have been able to transfer funds to other employers. We continue to make improvements to the levy transfer system to make it easier for large employers to make full use of their levy funds and support starts in their supply chain, sector, or local area, and to support more employers, including small and medium sized enterprises, to take on new apprentices.

Latest published figures on transfers can be found within the 'Apprenticeship Service and monthly transparency data' section of the Apprenticeships and Traineeships statistical release. As of 8 December 2021, there have been 2,860 apprenticeships recorded on the apprenticeship service that have started, or are due to start, during the 2021-22 academic year funded by a transfer of levy funds. Of these, 62% (1,760) were transfers to non-levy-paying organisations.

In September 2021, we launched a new online service to allow levy-paying employers to advertise funding pledges, and to enable other businesses to browse and apply for these funds. So far in the 2021-22 financial year, over 100 employers have pledged £7 million of levy funds for transfer through the new online service.

We do not anticipate that all employers who pay the levy will need or want to use all the funds available to them, but they are able to if they wish. As well as funding new apprenticeships in levy-paying employers, income from the levy is used to fund new apprenticeships in employers that do not pay the levy, as well as existing apprentices that started in previous years. In the 2020/21 academic year, 116,110 apprenticeship starts were in non-levy paying employers.

In the 2021-22 financial year, funding available for investment in apprenticeships in England is £2.5 billion and this will grow to £2.7 billion by 2024-25 financial year.

## ■ Department for Education: Civil Servants

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[104324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has additional plans to relocate civil service posts currently in central London to other parts of England.

**Michelle Donelan:**

The department has made positive and significant progress in reducing its presence in London. In 2016, 50% of our workforce was based in London but by 2022 this has shifted to just 30%. Our future plans as part of commitments to the Places for Growth agenda achieve the right balance between relocating roles while still providing opportunities to develop talent and expertise within our London workforce. This aligns with our aim to connect policy delivery with local stakeholders and delivery partners across England.

## ■ Department for Education: Staff

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[104321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many staff were directly employed by his Department to work on contingency planning guidance for educational institutions in (a) November 2019, (b) February 2020, (c) May 2020 and (d) August 2020.

**Michelle Donelan:**

Work on contingency planning guidance for educational institutions is undertaken by teams across the department with responsibility for various policy areas.

The information on staff working on these areas is not centrally held as the department's HR system does not record the specific tasks that staff are employed on. Seeking the information across the department's six main business areas could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

## ■ Disabled Students' Allowances

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:** [\[106715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the requirement for all non-medical help providers to offer face-to-face support on (a) providers who are unable to offer face-to-face support, (b) sole traders who can only provide face-to-face support in one location and (c) users who require out of hours and weekend support.

**Michelle Donelan:**

Students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance can choose to have their non-medical help sessions either face-to-face or remotely (for example by video call). We therefore expect all non-medical help suppliers to be able to provide either face-to-face or remote non-medical help sessions, or a mixture of the two, as the student chooses. The department confirmed this to the sector in July 2021 and more information is available here: <https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1887/ssin-0721-new-arrangements-for-remote-support-202122.pdf>.

In the context of the COVID-19 outbreak and providers who are unable to offer face-to-face support, the department considered the impact of this policy on non-medical help suppliers who were particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. Following this, we announced in December 2021 that there would be an exemption to this policy for non-medical help sole traders who have received specific clinical advice from a medical professional not to engage in face-to-face work for reasons relating to COVID-19. Further details of this exemption and how to apply for it can be found here: [https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1913/update-on-arrangements-for-remote-support\\_ssin\\_december-2021\\_final.pdf](https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1913/update-on-arrangements-for-remote-support_ssin_december-2021_final.pdf).

With regard to sole traders who can only provide face-to-face support in one location, sole traders are able to specify in which regions they can offer non-medical help support in their listing on the department's register of suppliers here: <https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/exchange-blog/2020/september/10092020-guidance-for-nmh-suppliers/>. We require non-medical help suppliers, including sole traders, to be able to provide both face-to-face and remote support in the regions for which they are listed. Apart from that it is a matter for the supplier to decide in which regions they wish to operate.

Regarding users who require out of hours and weekend support, students have a choice between face-to-face and remote support. If students require out of hours and weekend support, and would prefer this to be remote, then they can request remote support from their non-medical help supplier.

## ■ Education and Mental Health Services: Autism

**Robert Halfon:**

**[105481]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support the (a) learning and (b) mental health of autistic children and young people.

**Will Quince:**

The department wants every autistic young person to reach their potential and feel heard at every stage of their life. That is why, in its first year alone, the department is investing £74 million into our cross-government National Autism Strategy to promote a straightforward route to diagnosis, the correct support, increasing understanding and improving access to a quality education and social care.

£600,000 of this funding has gone toward the department's contract with the Autism Education Trust (AET) for the 2021/22 financial year. The department has funded the AET since 2011 to deliver autism awareness training to education staff in early years, schools and further education colleges. It has so far reached more than 305,000 people across the country. This includes not only teachers and teaching assistants, but also support staff such as receptionists, dining hall staff and caretakers, encouraging a 'whole school' approach to supporting autistic pupils.

The mental health of all students, including autistic children and young people, is a priority for this department. During Mental Health Awareness week in May 2021, we

announced more than £17 million to improve mental health and wellbeing support in schools and colleges.

This is in addition to the £79 million to boost children and young people's mental health support we announced in March 2021. This includes increasing the number of Mental Health Support Teams in schools and colleges to cover approximately 35% of pupils in England by 2023.

In addition to our existing commitments, the department is also determined to ensure that the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system works more effectively for those children who need extra support, including autistic children. That is why we are completing the SEND Review, to improve outcomes and build a sustainable SEND system where there is clear accountability.

## ■ Education: Coronavirus

**Matt Western:**

**[104390]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the validity of the scientific guidance on the risks of transmission of covid-19 during face-to-face teaching.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The department regularly considers advice from a number of different sources, including the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), to ensure our policies are guided by the most up to date scientific evidence. The current COVID-19 operational guidance for schools balances the government's priority to deliver high quality face-to-face education to all pupils with the need to retain measures to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. The evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, mental and physical health.

The department has published its own evidence summaries at three points during the COVID-19 outbreak, bringing together high quality evidence from government commissioned research as well as research published in academic journals. The evidence summary can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-summary-covid-19-children-young-people-and-education-settings>.

Public Health England (now the UKHSA) previously published a rapid review of available evidence relevant to interventions to reduce transmission in schools, which remains relevant, although precedes the full rollout of vaccinations since April 2021 until now: <https://ukhsa.koha-ptfs.co.uk/cgi-bin/koha/opac-retrieve-file.pl?id=9adedb17d5622f9cd7e42febcaadb19ad>.

**■ Education: Disadvantaged****Bridget Phillipson:** [\[104319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has had discussions with external stakeholders on the best means to evaluate his Department's Opportunity areas programme in the last two years.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The department has commissioned external contractors to carry out an evaluation of the Opportunity Area (OA) programme. The national process evaluation is being conducted by NatCen, whilst the intervention level evaluations, which focus on five specific OA projects, are being conducted by York Consulting.

Each evaluation has a steering group which helps to guide, and quality assure its design and delivery. Members include academic experts, OA partnership board chairs, delivery leads and education stakeholders.

**■ Education: Finance****Bridget Phillipson:** [\[104316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to make any substantive changes to the National Funding Formula for the 2023-24 financial year.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The department updates the national funding formula (NFF) annually and publishes the confirmed formula in advance of the dedicated schools grant (DSG).

We have already announced one substantive change in 2023-24, which is to roll the schools supplementary funding, worth £1.2 billion in the 2022-23 financial year, into the NFF. The schools supplementary grant will be allocated in the form of a separate grant for 2022-23 only and will be subsequently rolled into the yearly DSG allocations for the remainder of the spending review period.

In addition, in our consultation on 'Fair School Funding for All: Completing the Reforms to the national funding formula', published in July 2021, we set out further proposals for developing the schools NFF to improve the premises factors in the NFF. These proposals include reforming the approach to funding for schools experiencing significant growth in pupil numbers and beginning the process of transition to a directly funded formula within the NFF in 2023-24.

We will announce the outcome of that consultation, including any changes to be introduced in 2023-24, in due course.

In December, schools, high needs and early years funding allocations for 2022-23 financial year have been published through the DSG: 2022 to 2023 guidance, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2022-to-2023>, and the schools supplementary grant 2022 to 2023 guidance, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-supplementary-grant-2022-to-2023>.

## ■ Education: Health

**Bridget Phillipson:**

**[104320]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has made to update the contingency plans and guidance for future health crises for (a) his Department, (b) schools, (c) nurseries and early years providers, (d) colleges, (e) further education institutions and (f) universities and the higher education sector.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The government developed its contingency framework for education and childcare providers to help them, and others who work with them, to manage the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, and have contingency plans in place for future COVID-19 outbreaks. This guidance is regularly updated, most recently on 21 January 2022, and is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-restrictions-in-education-and-childcare-settings/contingency-framework-education-and-childcare-settings>

Education providers are required to prepare their own outbreak response plans, and then in December to refresh them before the end of term. Any measures providers are required to implement are supported by comprehensive national guidance. We work very closely across government to ensure our planning is in step with wider society and informed by the most up to date public health advice.

The department is considering how the changes made to respond to COVID-19 can support wider readiness for future potential public health scenarios. A contingency framework for any future health crisis would draw upon lessons learnt from COVID-19, but would need to be specific to the new circumstances and part of a coherent cross-government response.

## ■ Educational Institutions: Sexual Offences

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[104366]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support is available in schools, colleges and universities for women and girls who have experienced incidences of sexual violence.

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[104368]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what counselling services are available to support school, college and university aged young women who experience any form of sexual violence in or out of school, college or university.

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[104369]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on reducing the incidence of sexual assault in further education, higher education and school settings.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

Schools and colleges have a critical role to play in protecting children and keeping them safe. 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (KCSIE) is statutory guidance that schools and colleges must have regard to when carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The guidance is clear on the actions a school or college should take if there are any concerns about a child or young person's wellbeing and/or safety. KCSIE also signposts to various sources of support for victims and perpetrators. Following Ofsted's review into sexual abuse in schools and colleges, the department strengthened KCSIE, and provided more support to designated safeguarding leads (DSLs), including trialling supervision and training for DSLs in over 280 schools with a focus on supporting DSLs to respond to sexual abuse issues.

In January 2022, the Home Office also announced a Harmful Sexual Behaviour support service for safeguarding professionals across England. It will offer advice on individual cases or incidents of harmful sexual behaviour.

For schools, the department published a blueprint for school counselling services. This provides schools with practical, evidence-based advice, informed by schools and counselling experts, on how to deliver high quality school-based counselling. It also offers information on how to ensure that vulnerable children can access counselling provision. We have provided significant funding towards provision of support in schools and colleges, including £9.5 million in the 2021/22 financial year, for training for mental health leads. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) is continuing to run a helpline which provides appropriate support and advice, including how to contact the police and report a crime.

This government has firm expectations that higher education providers also take a zero-tolerance attitude towards sexual harassment and ensure they are going above and beyond in their approach to preventing and tackling these issues. Across the sector, there are examples of good practice in aiming to reduce violence against women and girls. For example, the Office for Student (OfS) Catalyst fund provided support to 119 projects with a particular focus on sexual harassment, online harassment and hate crime, including religious-based hate crime. However, the government recognises there is more to be done. The OfS wrote to providers in June 2021 asking them to review and update their systems, policies and procedures in line with their statement of expectations on harassment and sexual misconduct by the beginning of this academic year. In September 2021, the OfS published a briefing note for providers on the intersection of sexual violence, alcohol and drugs at universities and colleges. This includes a series of case studies and advice for providers on tackling these issues.

The government is also taking firm action against the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) in higher education. The use of NDAs against people reporting instances of harassment and abuse makes it harder for other victims to come forward, and helps perpetrators hide behind a cloak of anonymity. Therefore, in January 2022, my right hon. Friend, the Minister for Higher and Further Education



launched a new pledge alongside my hon. Friend, the member for Basingstoke, Maria Miller, and the campaign group Can't Buy My Silence, which commits universities to not use NDAs to silence victims of sexual misconduct, bullying, or other forms of harassment. The list of those universities who have signed the pledge will be held by Can't Buy My Silence, and hosted on their website.

Beyond schools, colleges and universities, the department is working closely with colleagues across government, including in the Home Office, on delivering the 'Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy' and 'Violence against Women and Girls Strategy'. These were published last year and set out the government's ambition to prevent, tackle and respond to child sexual abuse by bringing offenders to justice, preventing offending and re-offending, and protecting and safeguarding children and young people.

### ■ **Further Education and Schools: Mental Health Services**

**Mr Nicholas Brown:**

[\[105374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department is on track to provide senior mental health lead training to all state schools and colleges by 2025.

**Will Quince:**

The government is making good progress on its commitment to offer senior mental health lead training to all state-funded schools and colleges in England by 2025. The department has invested over £9.5 million in financial year 2021-22 to fund senior mental health lead training grants for over 8,000 eligible schools and colleges. As of 14 January, over 3,500 senior leads are estimated to have begun their training. Our position on issuing grants for financial year 2022-23 will be confirmed later in the spring.

### ■ **GCE A-level and Gcse**

**Esther McVey:**

[\[102612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether students will be required to sit (a) GCSE and (b) A-Level examinations in summer 2022.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

It is the government's firm intention that exams and assessments should go ahead this year. We regularly engage with stakeholders throughout the education sector and there continues to be widespread support for exams to go ahead.

Together with Ofqual, we have confirmed a range of adaptations to GCSE, AS and A level exams. Students will have advance information on the focus of their exams in most subjects to support their revision. Combined with the choice of content or topics in some GCSEs, and a transition year for grading, this constitutes a package of unprecedented aid and support, reflecting the disruption caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

In the unlikely event that exams cannot go ahead fairly or safely, we have contingency arrangements in place and have confirmed students would receive teacher assessed grades instead.

### ■ Higher Education: Finance

**Matt Western:** [\[104387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the financial viability of Higher Education providers.

**Michelle Donelan:**

The Office for Students (OfS) are responsible for monitoring provider financial viability of the higher education sector in England.

I and my officials work closely with the OfS and various parties including a variety of universities across the sector, mission groups and other government departments to understand the ongoing impacts and changing landscape of financial sustainability in the sector.

The OfS report dated December 2021 shows that despite the many operational and financial challenges arising from the COVID-19 outbreak, the overall financial position of universities, colleges and other providers registered with the OfS across the higher education sector has remained sound over the course of the last year, with generally reasonable financial resilience.

Providers were able to manage COVID-19 impacts better than originally expected, with student numbers holding up, and through careful management of cash and costs. Government support measures have served to help universities navigate those challenges.

The OfS continuously monitors provider financial sustainability, engaging more closely with those where it considers there to be increased financial risk.

Universities are autonomous businesses and continue to remain responsible for the decisions they make regarding their business model and sustainability.

### ■ Higher Education: Muslims

**Matt Western:** [\[104380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of potential impact on Muslim students' participation in higher education of the absence of Sharia-compliant student finance.

**Matt Western:** [\[104381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to introduce Sharia-compliant alternative student finance.

**Michelle Donelan:**

The government has been carefully considering an alternative student finance product, alongside wider reforms to the higher education system, and an update will

be provided alongside the conclusion to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding. The interim conclusion of the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding was published on 21 January 2021, and we will conclude the Review in full at a future date.

The government undertook an assessment of the impact of interest-bearing loans on Muslim students in the impact assessment for the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, which was published in December 2017, and can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-and-research-act-impact-assessments>.

## ■ Mandarin Language: Education

**Neil Coyle:**

**[105575]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the suitability of the IOE Confucius Institute as a provider of the Mandarin Excellence Programme in English schools.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The aim of the department's Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP) is to ensure that a high number of pupils in schools in England are on track to fluency in Mandarin, providing an increased pipeline of speakers to meet the future business and economic needs of the country.

In April 2021, the department considered tenders as part of a procurement for a new contract to run the MEP from September 2021 onwards. University College London's Institute of Education (UCL IOE) Confucius Institute met the requirements of the department's specifications and was awarded the contract in July as the successful bidder. UCL IOE delivers the MEP in partnership with the British Council.

UCL IOE has had a successful track record in delivering the MEP since its inception in 2016. The programme has grown from 14 schools in 2016 to 75 in 2022. There are currently over 7,800 pupils on the programme and over 8,000 pupils have benefitted from the programme since it began. In 2021, the first cohort sat their GCSEs in the language, with UCL reporting that 97% achieved at least Level 5 and 73% achieved either Level 8 or Level 9.

The department continues to monitor the provider and the programme closely through regular, on-going contract management.

## ■ Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[104367]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to improve sex education in PHSE lessons to reduce the scale of and prevent incidences of sexual assault.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The new statutory guidance for relationships, sex and health education (RSHE), which came into force in September 2020, emphasises that schools should be alive to issues such as everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes, and take positive action to build a culture where these are not tolerated, and any occurrences are identified and tackled. The guidance states that schools should make clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable, will never be tolerated and are not an inevitable part of growing up.

Following Ofsted's review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges in 2021, the department has committed to developing additional support to help teachers deliver statutory RSHE effectively and confidently. The government's October 2021 'tackling violence against women and girls strategy' emphasises the importance of educational interventions to change harmful attitudes. To ensure consistency of approach, the department will publish non-statutory RSHE guidance in 2022 providing more detail on when specific content around harassment and abuse should be taught. To support teacher development further, we will work with experts to host a series of national webinars on pornography, domestic abuse and coercion, and sexual exploitation. The department will also monitor and evaluate teacher confidence to deliver these difficult topics, continuing to build a programme of support that meets teachers' needs.

The department has also published revised statutory guidance, 'keeping children safe in education', which has been strengthened to better support schools and colleges to identify and prevent abuse, and respond appropriately where abuse is reported. The department will shortly be launching a consultation on the non-statutory 'behaviour and discipline in schools' guidance, which will provide more practical advice to schools about how to encourage good behaviour and respond effectively to incidents of poor behaviour, including advice on how to create a safe and respectful school culture in which sexual harassment and violence are not tolerated.

**■ Pupil Exclusions: Autism****Robert Halfon:**[\[105479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the practice of informal exclusions of autistic children in educational settings.

**Robert Halfon:**[\[105480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to help ensure that the ongoing work in his Department on behaviour management reflects the needs of autistic children and children with special educational needs.

**Will Quince:**

By their very nature, informal exclusions of any child are unlawful. This is why we already make clear in the suspension and permanent exclusion guidance that 'informal' or 'unofficial' suspensions, such as sending pupils home 'to cool off', are unlawful, regardless of whether they occur with the agreement of parents or carers. Further information of this guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion/changes-to-the-school-exclusion-process-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

Any suspension of a pupil, even for short periods of time, must be in line with the relevant legislation and recorded as a suspension. The department is also clear that off rolling is unacceptable in any form and continues to work with Ofsted to identify and tackle it. The forthcoming special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Review will also set out proposals for improving support for children with SEND in mainstream, which will look to ensure they get the right support in the right place at the right time.

All schools are required to have a behaviour policy which must be lawful, proportionate and reasonable. An initial intervention to address underlying causes of disruptive behaviour should include an assessment of whether appropriate provision is in place to support any special educational needs, including autism, or disability that a pupil may have. The department will be setting this out clearly in the consultation on the revised 'behaviour in schools' guidance and the 'suspension and permanent exclusion' guidance which will be published shortly. These will equip headteachers to create calm, orderly, safe, and supportive school environments where all pupils can thrive and reach their potential in safety and dignity and where exclusions are only ever used lawfully, and when absolutely necessary as a last resort.

#### ■ Pupils: Absenteeism

**Robert Halfon:**

**[105478]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Department is taking to ensure that the estimate 100,000 children who have become severely absent from school following covid-19 lockdowns are returned to the classroom.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

Regular attendance at school is vital for children's education, wellbeing, and long-term development.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, recently established an Attendance Alliance of national leaders from education, children's social care and allied services to work together to raise school attendance and reduce persistent absence.

The Alliance has pledged to take a range of action to remove barriers preventing children attending school. This includes work by Rob Tarn, CEO of the Northern Education Trust, a multi-academy trust serving areas with high levels of disadvantage, to work with other trust leaders to identify and disseminate best practice for reducing persistent absence across schools through a range of webinars, case studies and videos which we will be publishing over the coming weeks.

We also welcome the Children's Commissioner's focus and investigation on children regularly missing school. The Children's Commissioner pledged to do this work at the

inaugural meeting of the Alliance in December 2021. The Commissioner's Office are updating us on their progress which will be reported back to the Alliance.

The department is also committed to a form of register for children not in school. This will help local authorities undertake their existing duties to ensure children receive a suitable education and help safeguard all children who are in scope. We will set out further details on this in the government response to the 'children not in school' consultation, which we will publish in the coming weeks.

We continue to make clear that schools and local authorities should identify children who are persistently absent or at risk of persistent absence and develop plans to support them to return to regular education.

### ■ Pupils: Disadvantaged

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[105745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has plans to change the method by which attainment is measured among disadvantaged pupils in the context of the recent significant increase in pupil eligibility for free school meals.

**Will Quince:**

We are committed to continuing to publish data to show how schools are performing with their disadvantaged pupils both nationally and at school level. Such measures are a vital part of ensuring schools drive social mobility.

Analysis carried out by the department in 2018, following the changes to Universal Credit eligibility, indicated that the impact on schools' disadvantage data was likely to be relatively minor in the context of normal levels of change schools see in their free school meals (FSM) cohorts' year-on-year.

The gap index is designed to withstand changes in the education delivery landscape.

We recognise however, the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and the recent significant increase in the numbers of pupils eligible for FSM. The department will keep its effectiveness, as a measure, under review as the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak becomes better understood.

### ■ Pupils: Vaccination

**Bridget Phillipson:**

[\[94343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions Ministers in his Department have had with Ministers in the Department for Health & Social Care on provision for vaccinating school-age children in (a) July 2021, (b) August 2021, and (c) September 2021.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

Vaccines are the best way we can protect ourselves and help keep children and young people in face-to-face education.

Since 23 October, 12 to 15 year olds have been able to book a COVID-19 vaccination out of school, through vaccination centres. On 20 December, the NHS opened the national booking service for 12 to 15 year olds to get their second COVID-19 jab. School-age immunisation service providers have been running since schools returned in the new year, with second doses also being offered through schools from 10 January. This offer runs in parallel with the in-school vaccination programme and ensures young people eligible for the vaccine can access appointments out of term time in addition to in school.

All eligible staff and students aged 12 and over are encouraged to take up the offer of the vaccine, including boosters, where eligible.

I met with Department of Health and Social Care ministers once over this period and Department for Education ministers and policy officials an additional four times. A number of these discussions touched on vaccinations.

## ■ **Research: Finance**

**Matt Western:**

[\[104389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to increase the value of the Strategic Priorities Grant.

**Michelle Donelan:**

The Strategic Priorities Grant is funding supplied by the government on an annual basis to support higher education providers' ongoing teaching and other related activities. In the 2021/22 financial year the Strategic Priorities Grant was worth £1.4 billion and we asked the Office for Students (OfS), which administers the grant, to prioritise funding towards high-cost, high-value subjects that support the NHS and wider healthcare policy, high-cost science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects and/or specific labour market needs. As a result, the total funding for high-cost subjects, such as medicine, engineering and other high-cost subjects, is 12% (£81 million) higher in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21. We also increased funding for specialist providers by £10 million.

The department is working to finalise funding for the Strategic Priorities Grant for the 2022/23 financial year and we will issue guidance to the OfS in due course.

## ■ **Schools: Assessments**

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[105600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department will make a final decision on school exams going ahead in 2022.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

We are determined to press ahead with examinations this year. We regularly engage with stakeholders throughout the education sector and there continues to be widespread support for examinations to go ahead.

Together with Ofqual, we consulted on and have confirmed a range of adaptations to GCSE and A/AS level exams. By 7 February, exam boards will be releasing advance information about the focus of the content of examinations in most GCSE and A/AS level subjects. Combined with the choice of content or topics in some GCSEs, and a transition year for grading, this package provides unprecedented support, reflecting the disruption caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

We have been clear our intention is for examinations to go ahead, but think it is right that we continue to have contingency plans in place for the unlikely event that examinations cannot go ahead fairly or safely, and have confirmed that students would receive teacher assessed grades instead.

## ■ Schools: Coronavirus

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[106769]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of (a) teaching staff and (b) support staff have been infected with covid-19 compared to the rest of the population.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes the proportion of staff testing positive for antibodies indicative of a prior COVID-19 infection as part of the Schools Infection Survey (SIS). The most recent publication, based on samples from 14 June to 6 July 2021, estimated 23.4% of secondary school staff and 25.2% of primary school staff are testing positive for such antibodies, showing they had been infected with COVID-19 in the past. Such statistics can be found here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/covid19schoolsinfectionsurveyengland/round6june2021>.

There is no immediate comparator, however, as the antibody test used in this study detects antibodies produced following natural infection, which is different to the antibody test used in the ONS COVID-19 infection survey that detects antibodies from vaccination as well as infection.

Since September 2021, the ONS has published analysis of the characteristics of people more likely to test positive for COVID-19 on a fortnightly basis. This can be found here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19infectionsurveycharacteristicsofpeopletestingpositiveforcovid19uk/19january2022>.

From 20 September to 28 November 2021, those working in the education sector were identified as more likely to test positive for COVID-19 than other working adults. This was the first time that the analysis showed those working in education as more likely to test positive and was likely linked to the previously higher Delta case rates in children during the autumn term.

The ONS also analysed infection rates by occupation from 1 September 2020 to 7 January 2021 based on their COVID-19 infection survey. Occupational risk is a continuum. Within this, there are a group of occupations at the upper end of the



continuum, that have no significant difference with the majority of other occupations but show a higher probability of testing positive compared with some of those at the lower end. At the upper end are caring personal service occupations, protective service occupations, teaching and other education professionals, secretarial and related occupations, and other managers and proprietors.

The department estimates that on 6 January 2022, 4.0% of teachers and school leaders, and 3.9% of teaching assistants and other staff, were absent from open schools with a confirmed case of COVID-19. A further 0.8% of teaching staff and 0.9% of support staff were absent due to a suspected case of COVID-19. Updated figures will be published on 25 January 2022.

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[107575]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help ensure comprehensive covid-19 mitigation practices in schools in Newcastle.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

COVID-19 continues to be a virus that we learn to live with and the imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's education remains, balanced with managing transmission risk.

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, has announced that from 20 January, face coverings are no longer recommended in classrooms and teaching spaces for staff, and pupils and students in year 7 and above. They were introduced in classrooms at the start of the spring term as a temporary measure. From 27 January, face coverings are no longer recommended in communal areas for staff, and pupils and students in year 7 and above.

However, a range of a range of protective measures remain in place. Local directors of public health may temporarily advise the use of face coverings in communal areas or classrooms where this is proportionate due to specific local public health concerns.

Testing remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 within schools and colleges. Staff and secondary school pupils should continue to test twice weekly at home, with lateral flow device (LFD) test kits. Schools are encouraged to ask all visitors to take an LFD test before entering the school.

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

People with COVID-19 in England can now end their self-isolation after 5 full days, as long as they test negative on day 5 and day 6.

Every child aged 12 and over is eligible to receive the vaccine. Healthy 12 to 15-year-olds can have a second dose. All 16 to 17-year-olds will be offered the booster vaccination.

Children aged 5 to 11 years in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed are now able to get two doses of the vaccine.

We have provided carbon dioxide monitors backed by £25 million in government funding. Over 99% of eligible maintained schools, further education colleges, and the majority of early years education providers have received a carbon dioxide monitor, with over 350,000 delivered. The government is now making available at least 7,000 funded air cleaning units for poorly ventilated teaching spaces where quick fixes to improve ventilation are not possible.

Schools should regularly review their risk assessments and continue to comply with health and safety law implementing proportionate control measures in line with our guidance. All education and childcare providers should have contingency plans in place in cases of outbreaks within schools, as set out in the contingency framework, to help break chains of transmission. This framework is available here:

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

Regarding Newcastle upon Tyne, the measures in place apply nationally as the department no longer applies different local measures. However, local directors of public health have the discretion to apply some local rules as outlined above.

## ■ Schools: Finance

**Bridget Phillipson:**

**[104323]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the total capital budget was for schools in England in each year between 2002 and 2022.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The department provides annual capital funding to support the education sector. This includes funding to create sufficient school places and to maintain and improve the condition of the school estate. In addition, the department also delivers capital building programmes, including the free schools programme, Priority School Building Programme and the new School Rebuilding Programme. The department's capital budget also supports providers other than schools. This includes post-16 and early years providers, as well as the department's own estate. There is no separate capital budget for schools specifically.

For a breakdown of capital expenditure in each financial year since 2002-03 please see the table below:

FINANCIAL YEAR	CAPITAL DEPARTMENTAL EXPENDITURE LIMITS, £BILLION
2002-03	2.7
2003-04	3.5
2004-05	4.1

<b>FINANCIAL YEAR</b>	<b>CAPITAL DEPARTMENTAL EXPENDITURE LIMITS, £BILLION</b>
2005-06	4.4
2006-07	4.1
2007-08	5.2
2008-09	5.5
2009-10	7.4
2010-11	7.1
2011-12	5.0
2012-13	4.6
2013-14	4.1
2014-15	4.8
2015-16	5.1
2016-17	5.7
2017-18	4.9
2018-19	5.4
2019-20	4.9
2020-21	4.8

Note: Figures have been taken from the department accounts which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dfe-annual-reports>.

The department's capital expenditure limit for the 2021-22 financial year is £5.6 billion. In addition to this, the 2021 Spending Review announced a total of £19.4 billion of capital funding to support the education sector between the 2022-23 and 2024-25 financial years, an average of £6.5 billion per annum.

**Munira Wilson:**

**[107732]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funding his Department plans to provide (a) schools and (b) local authorities for school improvements in financial year 2023-24.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

We have allocated £11.3 billion since 2015 to maintain and improve the condition of school facilities, including £1.8 billion in the 2021/22 financial year. We expect to

publish details of funding allocations for the 2022/23 financial year in the spring this year, and to provide details for the 2023/24 financial year in 2023.

The department allocates condition funding each year to schools and those responsible for school buildings to improve and maintain the condition of the school estate. Local authorities, large multi-academy trusts (MATs) and large voluntary-aided (VA) bodies receive an annual school condition allocation (SCA) to invest in condition priorities across the schools for which they are responsible. Allocations and the methodology for calculating SCA for the 2021-22 financial year can be found online here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-capital-funding>

Smaller or stand-alone academy trusts and VA bodies are instead able to bid into the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF). The CIF is an annual bidding round to apply for capital funding that is usually launched in autumn each year, with outcomes announced in spring.

In June 2020, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, announced a new 10 year rebuilding programme which will deliver 500 projects over the next decade, replacing many poor condition and ageing school buildings with modern designs that will be net zero carbon in operation.

We have confirmed the first 100 schools in the programme. We expect to set out the response to our recent consultation on the approach to prioritising further schools shortly, as well as details of the next round of the programme.

#### ■ Schools: Mental Health Services

**Munira Wilson:** [\[107731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has plans to extend eligibility for senior mental health lead training grants to all schools.

**Will Quince:**

Schools and colleges in receipt of institution-level state funding are eligible for a senior mental health grant. The government does not currently plan to fund senior mental health lead training for education staff in independent settings with fee-paying pupils and students, but they may access the same Department for Education quality-assured training as state-funded schools.

Further information on eligibility and how schools and colleges can assess their specific learning needs and preferences, and select the most suitable quality-assured course is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/senior-mental-health-lead-training>.

#### ■ Schools: Publications

**Paul Girvan:** [\[102752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to ensure that the Pikku Publishing children's book entitled, Amazing Women of the Middle East: 25 Stories from

Ancient Times to Present Day, which deletes Israel from the map, will be denied authorisation for use in schools in the UK.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The content of textbooks is a matter for individual publishers. The department does not play a role in prescribing or authorising the books that schools can use. It is a matter for schools themselves to determine what curriculum resources they use, and we trust them to use their judgement in assessing their quality.

We understand from the publisher that Palestine was included on the map to signify the origin of one of the women in the book, born in the 19th century. The publisher has made clear no offence was intended, and if a new edition is published, they would omit or update the map to address the criticisms. Additionally, the publisher has stated that only a selection of countries from the area are included on the map.

■ **Schools: Ventilation**

**Bridget Phillipson:**

[\[104317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what changes his Department has made to (a) guidance and (b) regulations relating to specifications for new school buildings to improve ventilation in future classrooms.

**Bridget Phillipson:**

[\[104318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department last changed the (a) guidance and (b) regulations on specifications for new school buildings to improve ventilation in future classrooms.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

Schools should always create a healthy indoor environment for occupants, this includes keeping spaces ventilated to reduce the concentration of pathogens in the air, such as SARS-CoV-2. Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the department has emphasised the importance of ventilation and provided guidance to schools, colleges and nurseries on ventilation requirements.

In 2018, the department published Building Bulletin 101 (BB101), guidance for school design on ventilation, thermal comfort and indoor air quality. This includes the World Health Organisation's air quality guidelines and Air Quality Standards Regulation 2010 for indoor air quality.

Further, the department sets environmental standards for centrally delivered new schools and sets a minimum specification for ventilation to address healthy indoor air quality. The current version was updated recently and published in November 2021. It can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/output-specification-generic-design-brief-and-technical-annexes>.

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[106852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of the number and proportion of classrooms in England that have no mechanical ventilation.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The department does not hold data on the number and proportions of classrooms in England that have no mechanical ventilation.

Maintaining adequate ventilation remains the responsibility of individual providers. The law says employers, including education and childcare providers, must make sure there is an adequate supply of fresh air in enclosed areas of the workplace. This has not changed during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Health and Safety Executive provides more information on this here:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation/index.htm>. Providers are expected to plan and prioritise any necessary remedial works within existing budgets. For more substantial capital works, education providers and those responsible for buildings have access to funding to improve the condition of buildings through different routes depending on their size and type.

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

### ■ Supply Teachers: Vetting

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[106845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the total amount of funding paid to supply agencies from schools was in (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020-21.

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[106846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the total amount spent by schools as a proportion of their public funding received on additional staff from supply agencies in (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020-21.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

Local authority and school expenditure is published annually, with the latest available data being the 2020-21 financial year, and is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/la-and-school-expenditure>. Please note that this publication does not include academies.

School level data (including academies) is available at the Schools Financial Benchmarking website, with the latest available data being the 2020-21 financial year for local authority maintained schools and the 2019-20 academic year for academies (to be updated to the 2020-21 academic year in spring 2022): <https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk/Help/DataSources>.

Available data on expenditure in schools on agency supply teaching staff is set out below.

Table 1: Schools in England expenditure on agency supply teaching staff, £million and percentage of total expenditure

2018-19 to 2020-21 <sup>1</sup>

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21 <sup>2</sup>
Local authority maintained schools (£ million)	£425.8	£410.7	£274.6
% of total expenditure	1.8%	1.7%	1.2%
Academies <sup>3</sup> (£ million)	£373.1	£333.2	.
% of total expenditure	1.5%	1.2%	.

Source: local authority maintained schools - Consistent Financial Reporting.  
Academies - academy account returns.

<sup>1</sup> Local authority maintained schools by financial year, academies by academic year.

<sup>2</sup> Information for academies for the academic year 2020-21 will be available in spring 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Includes expenditure by academies and central expenditure by multi academy trusts.

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[106850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many supply agencies did not furlough supply staff during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[106851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many supply staff left the teaching profession as a result of not being furloughed in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The department does not collect or hold the information that has been requested.

Supply agencies providing temporary staff to schools are independent private companies and as such decisions over their use of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme are not reported to the department, but a matter for employees and employers.

The department does not hold data on the general numbers of supply staff, or any data on whether they are active as supply teachers at any time.

## ■ Teachers

**Bridget Phillipson:** [\[104322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) teachers and (b) ex-teachers who were (i) below and (ii) above the state pension age in December 2020.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

Information on the school workforce in England, including the number of teachers and teacher retirements, is published in the annual 'school workforce in England' national statistic at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

As at November 2020 (latest information available) 1,656 (less than 1% of teachers) teachers working in state-funded schools in England were over the state pension age of 66 years old ( **Table 1** ). 316,688 ex-teachers (58% of ex-teachers) who no longer work within state-funded schools in England were under state pension age. This includes not only those teachers who left the profession, but also those who left to work in other countries, in further education, and in private schools. Many of these ex-teachers may now be employed in other sectors and occupations outside of education.

**Table 1: Headcount of qualified teachers and teachers out of service <sup>1</sup> in state-funded schools by age group <sup>2,3</sup>**

November 2020

AGE	TEACHERS	TEACHERS OUT OF SERVICE	TOTAL
Under 66	490,083	316,688	806,771
66 and over	1,656	231,675	233,331
Unknown age	2	534	536
<b>Total</b>	<b>491,741</b>	<b>548,897</b>	<b>1,040,638</b>

Source: School Workforce Census 2020 and Database of Teacher Records 2021

<sup>1</sup> Please note that teachers who no longer work within state-funded schools in England are classed as teachers out of service (ex-teachers) in this response. This therefore includes not only those teachers who left the profession, but also those who left to work in other countries, in further education, and in private schools. This excludes people who are known to have died.

<sup>2</sup> State pension age as at November 2020 was 66 years old.

<sup>3</sup> Age as at November 2020 for teachers, and March 2021 for teachers out of service.

■ **Teachers: Languages**

**Matt Western:**

**[104383]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of the £15,000 tax-free bursary on the number of new modern foreign language teachers.



**Mr Robin Walker:**

The bursaries the department offers for initial teacher training (ITT) are intended to incentivise applications to ITT courses. The department reviews the bursaries on offer each year to take account of several factors, including historic recruitment, forecast economic conditions and teacher supply need in each subject. This provides flexibility to respond to the need to attract new teachers, and means the department is spending money where it is needed most.

To support the recruitment of modern-foreign language (MFL) teachers, the department has increased the languages bursary to £15,000 for the 2022/23 academic year. This is to incentivise candidates to train to teach MFL as the department recognises that recruiting languages trainees will remain challenging. The department will review the need for financial incentives across all subjects before announcing the bursaries for the 2023/24 academic year.

All MFL trainee teachers on tuition fee-funded ITT 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.

**■ Teachers: Migrant Workers****Matt Western:****[104388]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with third-party organisations in setting up the Overseas Teachers acclimatisation service in 2022.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The overseas teacher acclimatisation service is piloting support for newly recruited overseas trained teachers in priority subjects.

Officials from the department discussed proposals for an overseas teacher acclimatisation service with external organisations, including holding a formal market engagement day in July 2021. The procurement opportunity and formal market engagement event were listed on Contracts Finder on GOV.UK. Based on this market insight, services were procured from an existing framework. Eligible framework suppliers, and the wider market engaged, were notified of this decision ahead of running the procurement process in autumn 2021.

The contract was published on Contracts Finder and is available here:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/2541b800-1e4c-45c8-a953-c050f45c9787>

**■ Teachers: Pensions****Alec Shelbrooke:****[R] [104312]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether pension benefits that retired teachers are in receipt of will be protected, in a similar way that pension benefits of retired NHS workers have been since the start of the covid-19 outbreak, in the event that they return to work after being called upon by him in December 2021.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

Generally, retired teachers returning to the classroom following the recent call for ex-teachers to help will not be subject to potential abatement of their teachers' pension. This is because it is expected that they will be employed by supply teacher agencies, which tend not to be participating Teacher Pensions' Scheme (TPS) employers.

TPS abatement rules would currently apply to retired teachers, with a final salary pension, if they were to be employed directly by a participating TPS employer. However, the call for ex-teachers to help in the classroom is expected to involve short-term and/or part-time appointments. Consequently, the amount of earnings involved is unlikely to result in any adjustment to individuals' pension benefits on account of abatement.

We do not, therefore, anticipate there being a compelling need to suspend the abatement provisions in the way that the NHS has done to facilitate the longer-term re-employment of key staff. However, the department is monitoring the situation and, if needed, we will review the policy position.

**■ Teachers: Recruitment****Stephen Morgan:**[\[106847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much schools have paid to supply agencies to bring retired and ex-teachers back to teaching to cover for covid-19-related absences in (a) November 2021 and (b) December 2021.

**Stephen Morgan:**[\[106848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the total amount of funding schools will have pay to supply agencies to bring retired and ex-teachers back to teaching to cover for covid-19-absences in (a) January, (b) February and (c) March 2022.

**Stephen Morgan:**[\[106849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the total cost to schools as a proportion of the public funding they receive of rehiring retired and ex-teachers to cover for teacher absences due to covid-19.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

Schools have continued to receive their budgets in full throughout the COVID-19 outbreak regardless of periods of full or partial closure.

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

School funding remains one of the department's key priorities, which is why this government continues to deliver year on year, real terms per pupil increases to

school funding with the total core school budget increasing to £56.8 billion by 2024-25.

In 2022-23 alone core schools funding will increase by £4 billion compared to 2021-22, a 5% real terms per pupil boost. This will help schools rise to the challenges of COVID-19, increase teacher pay, and meet the cost of the Health and Social Care Levy, while continuing their work to raise attainment.

Local authority and school expenditure is published annually, with the latest available data being the 2020-21 financial year, and is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/la-and-school-expenditure>.

Please note that this publication does not include academies.

School level data (including academies) is available at the schools financial benchmarking website, with the latest available data being the 2020-21 financial year for local authority maintained schools and the 2019/20 academic year for academies (to be updated to the 2020/21 academic year in spring 2022): <https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk/Help/DataSources>.

## ■ Teachers: York

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[104370]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the level of teaching staff available in York during the current phase of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

Our priority is to do everything in our power to protect education. This means making sure that schools and colleges have the teaching staff they need to safely deliver face-to-face education. Schools are adapting and using the right measures for their individual provider.

School leaders are best placed to determine the workforce required to meet the needs of their pupils. The regional schools commissioner's team, covering East Midlands and the Humber, speaks to City of York Council weekly to discuss their COVID-19 response and routinely discuss topics such as pupil attendance, COVID-19 rates and workforce pressures.

The team will continue to liaise with local councils and schools to ensure that key messages, such as workforce challenges, are being fed into the department and that further support is provided, where possible.

## ■ Unemployment: Hounslow

**Seema Malhotra:**

**[104335]**

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

**Alex Burghart:**

The department publishes national statistics on those not in education, employment or training (NEET) for England from the labour force survey for young people aged 16-24, available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/neet-statistics-annual-brief>. However, these are only published at national and regional level due to limitations with sample sizes for lower-level geographies. Therefore, NEET rates for young people aged 16-24 cannot be provided for the areas requested.

Local authorities are required to encourage, enable or assist young people's participation in education or training and return management information for young people age 16 and 17. This data is published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neet-and-participation-local-authority-figures>. It shows that of the 6,110 16 and 17 year olds who were known to Hounslow local authority around the end of 2020 (average of December 2020, January 2021 and February 2021), 210 were NEET or their activity was not known (115 known to be NEET and 95 young people whom the local authority could not confirm their activity). These are not national statistics but published as transparency data so some caution should be taken if using these figures. Data is not available for Feltham and Heston constituency.

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

These statistics refer to the cohort of students leaving state-funded mainstream schools and colleges <sup>1</sup> in 2018/19 and shows their destination in 2019/20:

<b>16-18 DESTINATION MEASURES</b> <sup>2,3</sup> , <b>2019/20</b>	NUMBER IN COHORT	NUMBER NOT IN A	
		SUSTAINED DESTINATION <sup>4</sup>	NUMBER ACTIVITY NOT CAPTURED <sup>5</sup>
Hounslow	2,467	318	147
Feltham and Heston constituency	853	61	30

(1) Covers all state-funded mainstream schools, academies, free schools, city technology colleges, sixth-forms and other and further education sector colleges. Excludes alternative provision, special schools, other government department funded colleges and independent schools.

(2) Individuals are assigned to parliamentary constituencies based on the provider's location. Individuals are assigned to local authorities based on the provider's administrative local authority.

(3) Links to the destination measures statistics quoted in table:

Hounslow local authority: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/f6c537cf-7b79-412a-91d1-ec7862c406bf>.

Feltham and Heston Constituency: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/0196b256-45de-480e-8ad7-32430278ba47>.

(4) Students who had participated in education, apprenticeships or employment during the academic year but did not complete the required 6 months participation.

(5) Students who were not found to have any participation in education, apprenticeship, or employment in England.

## ■ Vocational Education: Environment Protection

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[107474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that there is sufficient provision of technical and practical education in green skills to meet the future demands of the economy.

**Alex Burghart:**

The government is committed to supporting green skills across the country. At the recent Spending Review, we set out investment of £3.8 billion in further education and skills over the course of the Parliament as a whole, to ensure people can access high quality training and education that leads to good jobs, addresses skills gaps, boosts productivity and supports levelling up. This includes funding for programmes to support green skills crucial to the net zero transition.

Building on the skills for jobs white paper, the Net Zero Strategy (published in October 2021) sets out how the government's skills reforms will strengthen links between employers and providers, support workers in high carbon sectors with the transition, and help to build a pipeline of future talent.

Through the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, we are supporting workers to gain the skills they need to transition to the green economy, including through targeted support for retraining. As part of this and through the National Skills Fund investment, we are delivering Skills Bootcamps, which are short, flexible courses covering digital, technical and green skills. Green Skills Bootcamps are available in areas such as housing retrofit, solar, nuclear energy and vehicle electrification.

The Free Courses for Jobs offer has, since April 2021, been supporting adults who do not have a qualification at level 3 or higher to access over 400 level 3 courses for free. The offer currently includes qualifications linked to green sectors such as agriculture, building and construction, engineering, environmental conservation, horticulture and forestry and science. This offer replaces loan funding with grant funding for any adult over the age of 23 looking to achieve their first level 3 qualification. In addition, we have recently announced that, from April this year, any adult in England who is earning under the National Living Wage annually (£18,525),

or is unemployed, will also be able to access these qualifications for free, regardless of their prior qualification level.

At post-16 level, we will continue to build on our apprenticeship reforms, to align the majority of post-16 technical education and training with employer-led standards by 2030. A strengthened system of employer-led standards, underpinning apprenticeships, T Levels and new higher technical qualifications will ensure employers, including in low carbon sectors, have a central role in designing and developing qualifications and training.

High quality apprenticeships give students of all ages the practical skills, knowledge, and behaviours to make an immediate impact across all industries. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute) has convened a Green Apprenticeships Advisory Panel (GAAP) to work with employers to align apprenticeships to net zero objectives. Work is underway to map existing apprenticeship standards against green occupations and identify opportunities to create new standards in areas including retrofit, agri-tech and renewable energy and the GAAP has endorsed existing apprenticeships which support green career pathways.

In 2021, we introduced the first occupational traineeships, in collaboration with sector bodies, to provide a clear, planned transition to an apprenticeship at level 2 to 3 for young people aged 16 to 24. They allow young people to continue in learning with a work-based programme of training. Going forward, we will consider the potential to develop and introduce other occupational traineeships, including in priority and green sectors to ensure that young people secure the jobs of the future.

We are continuing to roll out T Levels that support green careers, providing high quality technical qualifications as an alternative to A levels which are underpinned by the same employer-led approach as apprenticeships. The building services engineering for construction T Level, launched in September 2021, will cover housing retrofit and heat pump installation. From September 2022, new T Levels will be available in engineering, manufacturing, processing and control, with agriculture, land management and production available by September 2023. The Institute is exploring the suitability of potential future T Levels and occupational specialisms, focusing on areas to support green skills.

Our network of Institutes of Technology (IoT) across England specialise in delivering higher technical education and are utilising their state of the art facilities to offer training in green skills. This includes the East London IoT which offers training in green and zero carbon energy production, and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull IoT which focuses on sustainable engineering. The network is supporting increased participation from underrepresented groups, including women, helping to grow the pipeline of individuals with science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) skills needed for green jobs. We are investing £120 million in the second wave of IoTs, to be up and running this year.

Working alongside industry, we will continue to ensure that our existing skills programmes can be directed to support the net zero agenda, and where appropriate identify further opportunities to flex key skills programmes to support green sectors and occupations.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Agriculture

**Dr Kieran Mullan:** [\[105775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress he has made on delivering future farming schemes.

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[107553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made on implementing future farming schemes.

**Victoria Prentis:**

On 2 December 2021, we published a document called [Sustainable Farming Incentive – how the scheme will work in 2022](#). On 6 January 2022, we published more information on [Local Nature Recovery](#), [Landscape Recovery](#), and the [expected outcomes of the three schemes](#). On the same day, we announced that we have reviewed [Countryside Stewardship revenue payment rates](#). We will be increasing payment rates for the majority of revenue options, to reflect changes in agricultural market rates since payment rates were set in 2013.

These new documents build on the information we published in the [Agricultural Transition Plan: June 2021 progress update](#), and provide the next level of detail necessary for farmers to make the right decisions for themselves and their businesses.

We are also offering a range of interventions to help farmers improve their productivity in a sustainable way, support them as we move through the transition, create a thriving agricultural sector, and reward farmers for actions that benefit the environment.

For example, £10.7 million of funding has been awarded through the Future Farming Resilience Fund, to provide business support to farmers and land managers to help them navigate the changes during the early years of the agricultural transition period. This support will help farmers by providing the information and tools required to plan with confidence on the best way forward for their business. The support will be available, free of charge, from onwards and any farmer or land manager currently in receipt of BPS is eligible to apply.

Defra also launched the [new Farming Investment Fund](#), which will offer funding for equipment, technology, and infrastructure that improves farm productivity and benefits the environment. There is also the [Farming Innovation Programme](#), which

encouraged groups of farmers, growers, businesses and researchers to get involved in collaborative research and development.

## ■ **Agriculture Act 2020**

**Mr Steve Baker:**

[\[101705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress he has made on delivering public payments for public goods since the passing of the Agriculture Act 2020.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We are working in partnership with farmers to design our three future schemes that reward farmers and land managers for producing public goods: The Sustainable Farming Incentive; Local Nature Recovery; and Landscape Recovery.

The Sustainable Farming Incentive will pay farmers for actions they take, going beyond regulatory requirements, to manage their land in an environmentally sustainable way. In 2021 we launched the Sustainable Farming Incentive pilot and received over 900 applications. The first agreements have started and will run until 2024. In 2022 we will start to roll-out the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme and intend to expand the scheme over the next 3 years. In December 2021 we published information on the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme - including indicative standards and payment rates. We are also continuing to develop the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway in partnership with farmers and experts, including surveying 300 farms to understand where animal welfare can be improved on farm. In 2022 we will start to roll-out core elements of the pathway and will launch the Annual Health and Welfare Review.

The Local Nature Recovery scheme will pay for actions that support local nature recovery and deliver local environmental priorities; making sure the right things are delivered in the right places. We are currently developing the scheme and plan to make an early version of the scheme available to a limited number of people in 2023 as part of our plans for testing and rolling out the scheme. We will then roll out the scheme across the whole country by the end of 2024.

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

We recently published a summary of what we're learning from our programme of test and trials, where more than 3,000 people are leading projects to test ideas and are being used to develop the schemes.

We have also launched the Farming Innovation Pathways competition for research and development within UK Research and Innovation's Transforming Food Production programme to develop farm-focused innovations. We increased funding



for the programme to £14.5 million due to high demand and quality research projects across farming sectors; projects started from October 2021.

We have in addition:

- Launched the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme of grants.
- Launched the Farming Investment Fund helping farmers invest in technology.
- Begun offering free business planning advice to potentially 10,000 farmers through 19 bodies.

Throughout this time, we have been at the agricultural shows, taking part in Q&A sessions with farmers, and engaging through our regular engagement groups as part of our ongoing dialogue with farmers and other interested parties.

#### ■ **Agriculture: Staff**

**Dr Kieran Mullan:**

[\[105776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure adequate labour supply for farming businesses.

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[107554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure an adequate labour supply for farming businesses.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Defra continues to work closely with industry and other Government departments to understand labour supply and demand, including both permanent and seasonal workforce requirements, and to ensure there is a long-term strategy for the food and farming workforce.

The Government has announced that the seasonal worker visa route will be extended to 2024 to allow overseas workers to come to the UK for up to six months to harvest both edible and ornamental crops. 30,000 visas will be available. This will be kept under review with the potential to increase by 10,000 if necessary.

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

Defra's Review of Automation in Horticulture will be published shortly and will inform a range of policy decisions regarding automation and seasonal labour from 2022 onwards.

In addition, food and farming businesses can continue to rely on EU nationals living in the UK with settled or pre-settled status. Over 5.5 million EU citizens and their families have been granted status under the EU Settlement Scheme.

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

## ■ Chemicals: Regulation

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[105366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will take steps to strengthen regulations on the import of harmful chemicals and substances of very high concern in the next five years.

**Jo Churchill:**

In the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals legislation (UK REACH), we have an effective system for regulating harmful chemicals. It regulates not only the import but also the manufacture and use of potentially harmful chemicals. The system is founded on expert scientific advice, and its future trajectory will evolve alongside this expert advice and our understanding of these substances.

## ■ Fishing Catches

**Dr Kieran Mullan:** [\[105774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure a greater share of the UK-EU catch limits for the UK fleet in 2023.

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[107552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure a greater share of the UK-EU catch limits for the UK fleet in 2023.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) gives the UK a greater share of fishing quota, equal to 25% of the value of the average annual EU catch from UK waters. This will be phased in over five years from 2021, meaning the UK share will continue to increase, year on year, until 2026. The Marine Management Organisation has [published analysis](#) of the share gains for the UK under the TCA.

## ■ Livestock Worrying

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[107557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent livestock worrying by dogs.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Government takes the issue of livestock worrying very seriously, recognising the distress this can cause farmers and animals, as well as the financial implications.

New measures to crack down on livestock worrying in England and Wales are being brought in through the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill, which was introduced in Parliament on 8 June 2021.

The new measures will enhance the enforcement mechanisms available to the police and expand the scope of livestock species and locations covered by the law. Improved powers will enable the police to respond to livestock worrying incidents more effectively – making it easier for them to collect evidence and, in the most serious cases, seize and detain dogs to reduce the risk of further incidents. The scope of livestock species covered by the legislation will be extended to include animals such as llamas, emus, enclosed deer and donkeys. New locations will include roads and paths, as long as the livestock have not strayed into a road.

All reported instances of livestock worrying should be taken seriously, investigated and, where appropriate, taken through the courts and met with tough sentences. The Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill includes a range of ancillary orders available to the court following conviction, such as control, disqualification and destruction orders. These orders are aimed at targeting and reducing reoffending.

Guidance is available to educate owners about handling their dogs responsibly in the vicinity of livestock, in order to prevent the occurrence of attacks or chasing. Natural England recently published a refreshed version of the [Countryside Code](#), which highlights that it is best practice to keep dogs on a lead around livestock. The Code also makes specific reference to keeping dogs in sight and under control to make sure they stay away from livestock, wildlife, horses and other people unless invited. Moreover, the Code helpfully sets out certain legal requirements, encouraging visitors to always check local signs as there are locations where you must keep your dog on a lead around livestock for all or part of the year.

## ■ Livestock: Animal Welfare

**Dr Kieran Mullan:**

[\[105779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to tackle livestock worrying.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Government takes the issue of livestock worrying very seriously, recognising the distress this can cause farmers and animals, as well as the financial implications.

In England and Wales, new measures to crack down on livestock worrying are being brought in through the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill, which was introduced in Parliament on 8 June 2021.

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## ■ Peat: Regulation

**Sir Greg Knight:**

[\[107476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his policy is on banning the (a) importation and (b) professional use of peat; what steps he is taking to encourage the use of green waste alternatives in place of peat; and if he will make a statement.

**Rebecca Pow:**

We are currently consulting on measures to end the use of peat in horticulture in England and Wales. This includes a ban on the retail sale of peat, which would see domestic peat and imports of peat treated alike. In 2020, bagged growing media containing peat from the retail sector accounted for almost 70% of peat sold in the UK.

Our consultation includes a call for evidence on the impacts of ending the use of peat and peat containing products in the professional horticulture sector and is open for responses until 18 March 2022.

We are aware of the potential for waste products to be used as alternatives to peat and peat containing products in horticulture and are exploring where we might unlock the use of waste products as a suitable alternative to peat use in horticulture.

Please follow the link to the consultation:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ending-the-retail-sale-of-peat-in-horticulture-in-england-and-wales>.

## ■ Public Footpaths: Coastal Areas

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[105662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published on 28 July 2021, whether all

stretches of the England Coast Path had opened or had establishment works underway by the end of 2021, unless there are ongoing planning or legal issues.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[105663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published on 28 July 2021, what steps his Department has taken to date to improve access, signage and information on existing national paths and trails.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Establishment works have not yet started on some stretches of the England Coast Path with no legal or planning issues, in part because these had been resolved but the proposals not yet approved. However, to date Natural England has published proposals for more than 99% of the route and 69% to be either open or in the establishment phase.

We are working hard to commence establishment on the remaining stretches and to make the trail as accessible as possible. Examples of recently approved proposals that will improve accessibility include a brand-new wheelchair-friendly ramp to a popular seawall walkway in Essex, a 600m accessible boardwalk on the Wirral and significant improvements to a well-used stretch of the South West Coast Path to improve its width, surface quality and gradient.

The 47-mile Grain to Woolwich stretch opened on 12 January this year, providing high-quality access between London and the outer Thames Estuary. In urban areas, much of this stretch follows existing accessible promenades and walkways. In more rural areas, barriers to access have been reduced wherever practical, such as replacing 18 stiles with gaps or accessible gates and where possible installing signage to show step-free routes.

With regards to the work to improve access, signage and information on existing national paths and trails, National Trails are now working to formalise their commitment to a 'one family' approach through the establishment of a National Alliance. A new charity is being formed as a single, strategic body for all National Trails which could also help ensure consistency in signage and information. We are exploring the role that this charity could play as part of the new national landscapes partnership. This could expand our protected landscapes' collective capacity to plan and promote events, programmes and volunteering opportunities that focus on connecting young people with nature, increasing the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of visitors, and aiding people with disabilities to enjoy our protected landscapes. We are consulting on this new approach as part of the Glover response published earlier this month, which will allow stakeholders to contribute their views.

## ■ River Wye: Pollution Control

**Jim McMahon:**

[\[107663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to improve water quality in the river Wye.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Wye catchment area is internationally important for biodiversity, principally due to the wide range of rare river wildlife. This Government is committed to restoring water quality across the country, which is closely linked with our legally binding target to halt the decline in nature by 2030 under the Environment Act.

Natural England, Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales and other partners are working together to find effective solutions to restore the River Wye Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to a favourable condition. These measures are set out in the Nutrient Management Plan and the Phosphate Action Plan. The Nutrient Management Board meets quarterly to identify and review actions that achieve the phosphorus conservation target of the River Wye Special Area of Conservation, supported by a Technical Advisory Group.

In addition, we are almost doubling funding for the Catchment Sensitive Farming programme. This extra £17 million will allow all farms in England, including those in the Wye catchment, access to free 1-2-1 advice and support farmers to help them reduce water and air pollution through management of farmyard manure and soils, among other things. We have also recently increased funding to the Environment Agency for 50 new farm inspectors. These will be targeted at high-risk catchments such as the Wye. Our future farming programme will further support this, such as the Sustainable Farming Incentive which will open this year and focus on supporting actions that farmers can take to improve soil health and manage their nutrients sustainably.

This Government is also the first to take action to tackle the historic infrastructure issue of sewage overflows by publishing 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.

**■ Rivers: Sewage****Rachael Maskell:**[\[104365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much sewage has been released into rivers (a) nationally and (b) in York since the enactment of the Environment Bill on 9 November 2021.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Environment Agency does not hold the data for the volume of sewage released by storm overflows.

Working with water companies the Environment Agency has concluded a programme to install Event Duration Monitors on the vast majority of storm overflows, just over 80% of the overflows in England, by the end of 2020. These monitors provide a

robust and consistent way of monitoring how often and for how long storm overflows are used but do not measure volume. This underpins the Environment Agency planning, compliance and enforcement work. By the end of 2023, the remaining number will be monitored to provide a complete picture of permitted storm overflows in England. The Environment Act has introduced additional statutory monitoring requirements to improve transparency.

## ■ Wines: Imports

**Ben Lake:**

[\[105694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of exempting organic wine from certificate of organic importation requirements.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We have no plans to exempt organic wine imports from the requirement for Certificates of Inspection that apply to all organic products imported into Great Britain (GB). These regulations exist to ensure that products sold as organic in GB meet the legal requirements and ensure consumer confidence in the integrity of the sector. Granting exemptions to these regulations for specific categories of product would be inappropriate and detrimental to consumer confidence.

Certification of organic products and organic operators (producers, processors, exporters and importers) is a long-established practice across the world. Organics is a method of production set in legislation. Certification of products and operators is an essential element for confirmation of the provenance and organic status of products and adherence of operators to organic requirements. Maintenance of consumer confidence that products marketed as organic are organic is vital.

Any business importing organic products into GB must be registered and certified by a UK control body. Organic imports from non-EU/EEA/Swiss third countries continue to require a GB Certificate of Inspection which must be approved before the organic products leave the third country. From 1 July 2022 organic imports from the EU, EEA and Switzerland will also require a GB Certificate of Inspection.

The Government is working to streamline bureaucratic processes inherited from the EU regulatory system to allow for a more flexible and responsive way to handle our regulatory obligations while reducing costs for producers and the burden on the public purse. For example, Defra has laid new legislation that streamlines updating the lists of recognised third countries and third country control bodies for organics goods being imported into GB. We have further streamlined the import process by accepting electronic (PDF) Certificates of Inspection.

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE****■ Afghanistan: British Nationals Abroad**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[103661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK Nationals have registered their presence in Afghanistan with her Department as of 13 January 2022.

**James Cleverly:**

We strongly encourage all British nationals in Afghanistan to check Travel Advice and Confirm their Presence on the online registration system. As of 13 January, 6,078 UK nationals had registered their presence in Afghanistan, with over 20% of registrations being duplicates.

**■ Afghanistan: Religious Freedom**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[107620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment has she made of the potential risks faced by religious minorities in Afghanistan.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK is committed to protecting the rights of minority faith communities in Afghanistan. FCDO officials regularly raise human rights, including rights of members of minority groups, in discussions with the Taliban. On 15 December the Minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth, the Minister for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Lord Herbert of South Downs held a roundtable with NGOs to discuss the ongoing challenges faced by vulnerable groups, including religious minorities.

**■ Bahrain: Political Prisoners**

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[104308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on which dates the Government has raised the case of (a) Dr Abduljalil Al Singace and (b) Hasan Mushaima with (i) the Government of Bahrain and (ii) the relevant oversight bodies.

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[104309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, further to the Answer of 9 December 2021 to Question 85209, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of the steps the Government has taken to raise the cases of (a) Dr Abduljalil Al Singace and (b) Hasan Mushaima with (i) the Government of Bahrain and (ii) the relevant oversight bodies.



**James Cleverly:**

We continue to monitor and discuss the cases of Dr Abduljalil al-Singace, and Hassan Mushaima, with the Bahraini Government as well as with the independent oversight bodies. We encourage those with concerns to raise them directly with the relevant oversight bodies.

**Colombia: Election Observers****Anthony Browne:**[\[105758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department plans to support UK participation in any international observation mission for the Colombian presidential elections in 2022.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK is committed to building a Network of Liberty that will put us at the heart of economic, diplomatic and security partnerships. Promoting democratic values is a key part of this, and election observation allows us to support democracies and strengthen democratic electoral processes around the globe.

We are considering our approach for the Colombian Presidential elections, and will continue to support ongoing work by existing international election observation organisations, such as the Mission for Electoral Observation (MOE) in Colombia. We are clear that independent election monitoring is vital for credible and inclusive elections.

**Democratic Republic of Congo: Peacekeeping Operations****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[104307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information her Department holds on (a) the reasons for the closure of the MONUSCO peacekeeping mission base in Bibokoboko, South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo and (b) when that base will be reopened.

**Vicky Ford:**

In October 2021, the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) dispatched a standing combat deployment to set up a temporary operational base in Bibokoboko. Its purpose was to assist in the safe and secure return of people displaced as a result of clashes between rival armed groups in Bibokoboko. MONUSCO have since facilitated the deployment of Congolese national security forces to the area. They are therefore shutting the base, which was always intended to be a short term deployment. As a result, we would not anticipate MONUSCO reopening the base unless the situation changed. The UK supports the work carried out by MONUSCO, to protect civilians, humanitarian personnel, and human rights defenders under imminent threat of physical violence, and to support the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in its stabilization and peace consolidation efforts.

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Diaries****Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[106877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will publish in full her predecessor's Ministerial diary for 20 May 2020.

**James Cleverly:**

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

**Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Heathrow Airport****Emily Thornberry:** [\[107506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 January 2022 to Question 100466 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Heathrow Airport, which dignitaries' movements through Heathrow Airport are covered by that contract; and for what reasons those dignitaries are not expected to cover the costs of using the VIP suites themselves.

**Vicky Ford:**

Protocol Directorate of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has an annual contract with Heathrow VIP to manage the arrival and departure movements for foreign dignitaries visiting the United Kingdom at the invitation of Her Majesty the Queen or Her Majesty's Government.

The contract allows the FCDO to provide appropriate airport arrival and departure facilitation for senior dignitaries including Heads of State, Heads of Government or Foreign Ministers visiting the United Kingdom on State or Guest of Government visits. We have a duty not to put these visiting dignitaries at risk and using this service is the safest, most secure way of moving them through the airport. Provision of the VIP suite also allows for the dignitaries to be formally greeted at the airport at the start of their programmes. UK Ministers benefit from similar services when visiting other countries. The FCDO does not provide airport facilitation for Official Visits.

**Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Stonewall****Paul Girvan:** [\[101810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding has been allocated to Stonewall over the last four years; and what his policy is on funding allocations to that charity in 2022 and beyond.

**Amanda Milling:**

The FCDO works closely with a range of civil society organisations, including Stonewall, to defend the human rights of LGBT+ people around the world. Most recently this included work with Stonewall to evacuate LGBT+ people from Afghanistan under threat from the Taliban. Any future funding to Stonewall would be allocated in keeping with FCDO policies. Please refer to the answer of 17 November

2021 to question 72342 for a detailed breakdown of funding provided to Stonewall since 2018.

## ■ Government Departments: Wines

**Layla Moran:** [\[104398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the value of wine from the Government's wine cellar was that was consumed by each Government department in (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22 to date.

**Vicky Ford:**

Government Hospitality (GH), the team within Protocol Directorate that manages the Government wine cellar, does not record the value of wines used at events by department. To do so would incur disproportionate costs and would not offer increased transparency, as GH meets the costs of a substantial proportion of the events it manages for other departments from its own budget.

## ■ Human Rights: Non-governmental Organisations

**Jim Shannon:** [\[103554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the (a) viability and (b) operational capabilities of human rights organisations around the world in the context of recent closures or restrictions on established organisations in Russia and Israel.

**Amanda Milling:**

The UK's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy outlines our commitment to defending human rights. Civic freedom is under threat around the world and human rights organisations - as well as other actors within civic space - increasingly face restrictions and even threat of physical violence. Our annual Human Rights and Democracy Report tracks this trend and details how the UK has responded.

## ■ Iran: Ansar Allah

**Mr David Jones:** [\[106672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of any links between the Iranian government and the Houthis of Yemen.

**James Cleverly:**

There is extensive evidence of Iranian material support to the Houthis, including in reports from UN Panel of Export and open-source reporting, which is in clear breach of UNSCR 2216. This Government regularly assesses the impact of Iran's continued provision of weapons and military support to the Houthis: it has contributed to the Houthis' sustained drone and missile attacks within Yemen, and into Saudi Arabia and UAE. This sustained support has stoked further conflict and undermined UN-led peace efforts.

It is vital that Yemen is not used as a theatre in which to escalate conflict in the region. We therefore urge Iran to fully support the UN Special Envoy's efforts to negotiate a ceasefire and the start of formal peace talks.

#### ■ **Property: Republic of Ireland**

**Fiona Bruce:** [\[107540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether (a) her Department has made an estimate of the number of UK citizens who own properties in Ireland affected by defective concrete blocks used in construction in Donegal and (b) the Government is taking steps to work with the Irish Government on that matter.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Whilst the UK and Ireland cooperate closely on many policy areas, domestic housing in Ireland is a matter for the Irish Government, and the UK Government has not made estimates of affected British nationals or been approached to cooperate on this particular issue.

#### ■ **Russia: Ukraine**

**Layla Moran:** [\[107704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has held recent bilateral discussions with counterparts from (a) NATO, (b) Russia and (c) Ukraine on the security situation involving Russia and Ukraine.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Foreign Secretary spoke with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on 28 December. She also attended a virtual meeting with NATO Foreign Ministers on 7 January. The first NATO-Russia Council (NRC) in two and a half years took place on Wednesday 12 January.

The Prime Minister spoke to President Putin on 25 October, and again on 13 December. The Foreign Secretary met Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov on 2 December.

The Foreign Secretary is in regular contact with her Ukrainian counterpart Foreign Minister Kuleba: as well as hosting him in London on 8 December, they spoke on 26 November, 1 December and most recently on 4 January. She will visit Ukraine in the next few weeks for further discussions. The Prime Minister spoke to Ukrainian President Zelenskyy on 13 January.

#### ■ **Sahel: Foreign Relations**

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[107529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, who is the current UK Special Envoy for the Sahel; and when they were appointed to that role.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK has had a Special Envoy for the Sahel since December 2018.

■ **Summit for Democracy****Alex Norris:**[\[107689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking with civil society to prepare for the 2022 Summit for Democracy.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK Government welcomes the Summit for Democracy. The Prime Minister delivered a statement to the Summit and the UK was also able to field Ministers across a range of summit events, including on Democracy-Affirming Technology and Disability-Inclusive Democracy.

In advance of the summit we engaged with civil society, hosting discussions at ministerial and official level on the main topics of the Summit: Fighting Corruption; Defending Against Authoritarianism, and Advancing Human Rights.

The Summit is an opportunity to advance the Network of Liberty through collaborating on technology, trade, investment and infrastructure so that together, democracies can advance the cause of freedom from a position of strength. We will continue to value the views of civil society and look forward to engaging with them during the "Year of Action" leading to the second in-person Summit.

■ **Tonga: Development Aid****Layla Moran:**[\[106856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which charities operating in Tonga have received Official Development Assistance funding in each of the last five years; and what estimate she has made of the value of that funding.

**Layla Moran:**[\[106857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate she has made of the value of Official Development Assistance funding spent in Tonga in each of the last five years.

**Layla Moran:**[\[106858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the effect of reductions to Official Development Assistance spending on the ability of the Government to respond effectively to the eruption of Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai volcano and subsequent tsunami.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK is deeply concerned by the appalling devastation caused by the recent volcanic eruption and tsunami in Tonga. While full details of the humanitarian impact

are still unknown, HMG has been working with partners on options for support, helping to ensure a coordinated regional response.

The UK is a world leader on International Development; in 2020 we were the third largest donor. Departmental Official Development Assistance (ODA) budgets will be increasing significantly over the Spending Review period, from £10 billion that was allocated in 2020 to at least £12.3 billion by 2024-25. 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, we estimate that Tonga has received over £25.9 million of UK aid through our core funding to multilateral institutions (2015: £2.0 million; 2016: £2.2 million; 2017: £1.8 million; 2018: £8.2 million; 2019: £11.7 million).

## ■ **Tonga: Volcanoes**

**Layla Moran:**

[\[106855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department plans to provide emergency aid funding to Tonga in response to the eruption of Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha’apai volcano and subsequent tsunami.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK is deeply concerned by the appalling devastation caused by the volcanic eruption and tsunami in Tonga. While full details of the humanitarian impact are still unknown, it is estimated that up to 80,000 people will have been affected. HMG has been working with partners on options for support, helping to ensure a coordinated regional response.

On Friday 21 January, the UK sent supplies to support the humanitarian and disaster relief effort on Australia's HMAS Adelaide. 17 pallets are on board, including 90 family tents, 8 community tents and wheel barrows. All of these items were requested by the Tongan Government.

In addition, HMS Spey has now set sail for Tonga, loaded with additional items including fresh water and medical supplies.

The UK is also funding the deployment of crisis experts through the United Nations. They will support the Tongan authorities to coordinate the international response.

The UK-funded International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) has also released £345,000 to support Tonga. The UK has committed a £6 million contribution to the DREF through an annual £1.5 million donation 2020-2023.

## ■ **Ukraine: Electronic Warfare**

**Colum Eastwood:**

[\[107743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to support the Ukrainian Government in tackling a recent rise in cyberattacks.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK is supporting Ukraine with a range of economic, governance, security and defence related assistance, including through the implementation of their cyber strategy. We enjoy close political cooperation on cyber security and provide programme support as part of this.

■ **Ukraine: Visits Abroad****Layla Moran:**[\[107705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to her oral contribution of 6 January 2022, Official Report, volume 706, column 171, on which dates she plans to be in Kiev.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Foreign Secretary plans to visit Ukraine in the next few weeks. A date has not yet been finalised.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ **22q11.2 Deletion Syndrome: Health Services****Dan Jarvis:**[\[107583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on increasing the level of funding to local authorities to support people living with DiGeorge Syndrome.

**Maria Caulfield:**

We have had no recent discussions.

■ **Autism****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[105653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published on 28 July 2021, whether his Department developed an autism public understanding initiative by autumn 2021 working with autistic people and their families and the voluntary sector as planned.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We have been working with stakeholders to develop the autism public understanding initiative, which was announced in the refreshed national autism strategy in July 2021. Work is ongoing and we are aiming to launch the initiative by July 2022.

■ **Care Homes: Coronavirus****Ben Bradley:**[\[104399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy reduce covid-19 restrictions for care homes.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We regularly review and update guidance to ensure it is necessary and proportionate, considering clinical advice and priorities such as maintaining safe staffing levels and ensuring residents have meaningful contact with loved ones. The restrictions are currently in place to keep care home residents safe and will be removed as soon as it is safe to do so.

We are currently reviewing our guidance in light of the lifting 'Plan B' measures and expect to publish updated advice shortly.

**Care Homes: Visits****Brendan Clarke-Smith:**[\[105737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that care homes follow Government guidance and allow visits from essential care givers and up to three nominated visitors.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We expect care homes to facilitate visits wherever possible and residents should be supported to nominate an essential care giver. We monitor how care homes are implementing visiting guidance on a weekly basis and this guidance is kept under review. If a resident or their family have concerns that a care home is not following visiting guidance, it should be raised with the home in the first instance. The Care Quality Commission can also investigate complaints and has powers to respond with an on-site inspection, which could be followed by requirement notices and warning notices where providers do not appropriately support residents to have access to visits.

**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[107609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that residents in care homes in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England can be visited safely and regularly by family members.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We expect providers to facilitate visits wherever possible. To ensure both care home staff and residents are protected from COVID-19 infection, care homes should ask visitors to take steps such as booking appointments, taking a test on the day of their visit, wearing a mask in communal areas and washing their hands thoroughly on arrival.

There may be some local variation as local health protection teams and providers assess the risk to care home residents due to the prevalence of COVID-19 in their area. However, we have been clear that essential care givers should be allowed to visit in almost all circumstances. We are keeping this guidance under review.



## ■ Clinical Commissioning Groups: Reorganisation

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[57369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish his assessment of whether the merging of Clinical Commissioning Groups to be coterminous with the proposed Integrated Care System geographical boundaries will result in savings or additional expenditure on NHS management salary costs.

**Edward Argar:**

The recruitment process for integrated care boards (ICBs) is currently underway. Subject to passage of the Health and Care Bill, there will be a reduction in the number of management boards from 106 clinical commissioning group (CCG) boards to 42 ICBs. Although no formal assessment has been made, we do not expect additional long term management costs as a result of this change. CCGs have been merged in recent years and many already operate at a system level through joint appointments. Focus is already on systems by default and putting these policies onto a statutory footing is not expected to cause a significant upheaval.

## ■ Community Diagnostic Centres

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[\[64622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of new community diagnostic hubs that will be open and operational by (a) 1 December 2021 and (b) 1 January 2022.

**Edward Argar:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement have advised that there were 65 community diagnostic centres (CDCs) operational as of 1 December 2021 and 69 as of 1 January 2022. These figures include early adopter sites, which offer a smaller range of diagnostic services in comparison to other CDCs.

## ■ Coronavirus: Hospital Beds

**John Redwood:**

[\[105324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of NHS hospital beds were occupied by patients admitted solely to treat covid-19 at the last available count.

**Edward Argar:**

The data is not held in the format requested. As of 11 January 2022, 56% of beds occupied by COVID-19 patients were occupied by those admitted solely to be treated for COVID-19.

## ■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

[\[107440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason Astra Zeneca Covid-19 booster vaccines are unavailable to (a) the general public on request and (b) to

those with life threatening allergies who have received medical advice against having Pfizer or Moderna boosters.

**Maggie Throup:**

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that those eligible for the COVID-19 booster vaccine should be offered either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, due to the strong booster effect conferred by these vaccines. In forming their advice, the JCVI reviewed the latest epidemiology of COVID-19 in the United Kingdom, mathematical modelling, data on vaccine safety and vaccine effectiveness and data from trials undertaken to understand the immunological impact of booster vaccination.

Where mRNA vaccines cannot be offered as a booster due to contraindication, such as allergies, the JCVI has advised that the AstraZeneca vaccine may be offered where an individual has received the AstraZeneca vaccine as their primary course.

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

[\[107441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when vaccination certificates in hard copy showing that a booster vaccine has been administered will be made available to those who are eligible.

**Maggie Throup:**

Individuals can request an NHS COVID Pass letter to evidence their booster vaccination for the purposes of international travel. Letters can be requested through 119 or via NHS.UK. Additionally, an offline version of the NHS COVID Pass can be accessed via NHS.UK. Booster doses are not required for domestic certification purposes in England. The NHS COVID Pass is accepted across the United Kingdom for domestic certification purposes.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[107501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the levels of data communication between the Northern Ireland Vaccine Management System and NHS England.

**Maggie Throup:**

NHS Digital has established bi-directional live data flows to share vaccination data between England and Northern Ireland to update both the general practitioner (GP) record and NHS COVID Pass status. Individuals who have received one or more of their primary course or booster doses in Northern Ireland can access these details via the NHS COVID Pass, provided they are registered with a GP in England or otherwise have a National Health Service number. An in-person appointment to update their status is not required. Residents in Northern Ireland who received a vaccination dose in England can access their vaccination records via COVID-19 certification services in Northern Ireland.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[107615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of risk of covid-19 transmission and infection in the context of a reduction of efficacy of the booster vaccine to between 40 and 50 per cent 10 weeks post-vaccination.

**Maggie Throup:**

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has not made a specific assessment. The UKHSA publishes current estimates of the effectiveness of vaccines against circulating variants and supplies this evidence to modelling groups as it becomes available.

## ■ Dental Services

**Rushanara Ali:** [\[106701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has guidelines in place to ensure dental services do not prioritise private patients over NHS-funded patients.

**Rushanara Ali:** [\[106702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department requires dental practices to allocate a specific number or proportion of appointments to NHS-funded patients.

**Rushanara Ali:** [\[106703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has in place to help ensure that dental practices accept NHS-funded patients.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The National Health Service contracts with dentists to provide an agreed level of dental activity each year, measured in units of dental activity. Where a dentist holds a contract with the NHS, they must deliver the agreed activity or if performance is below 96%, the NHS can recover the unused funds. Dentists therefore have a strong financial incentive to deliver the contracted service and not prioritise private patients in cases where they have undelivered NHS activity.

Throughout the pandemic, NHS England and NHS Improvement have set contractual arrangements which support safe increases in access, whilst maintaining compliance with infection prevention and control measures. The Department is working with the NHS to increase delivery of dental care. NHS dental practices have been asked to meet as many prioritised needs as possible, focussing first on urgent care and care for vulnerable groups, including children followed by overdue appointments.

## ■ Department of Health and Social Care: Annual Reports

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[107503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish his Department's annual report and accounts for financial year 2020-21.

**Edward Argar:**

The Department's Annual Report and Accounts for 2020/21 is due to be laid in Parliament on 31 January 2022.

**■ Dermatology: Steroid Drugs****Rachael Maskell:****[105616]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to review the way that steroid-based treatments are prescribed to patients with dermatological conditions to prevent topical steroid withdrawal reactions.

**Edward Argar:**

We have no plans to do so. Decisions on prescribing are a matter for the general practitioner or prescriber with clinical responsibility for that aspect of a patient's care. Prescribing is informed by a range of factors, including any national or local prescribing guidelines but ultimately the decision on the appropriate treatment is made by the prescriber, using their own clinical judgement. Clinicians should also provide information to patients on the medicines they prescribe, including the benefits, risks and any potential side effects.

On 15 September 2021, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency published information on how to reduce the risk of inappropriate use of steroids with information for both healthcare professionals and patients, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/topical-corticosteroids-information-on-the-risk-of-topical-steroid-withdrawal-reactions#background>

**■ Disability****Vicky Foxcroft:****[105652]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published 28 July 2021, whether his Department established a new disability data working group in 2021 for the purposes of looking at health and social care datasets and address priority areas where there are gaps in the data as planned; and if he will publish details of the membership of that working group.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We are in the process of establishing the Disability Data Working Group and will publish details of the membership once agreed. We expect the first meeting of the group to take place in February 2022.

**■ East Suffolk and North Essex Foundation NHS Foundation Trust: Nurses****Dr Dan Poulter:****[105461]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full time equivalent nurses are employed by East Suffolk and North Essex Foundation Trust, and its predecessor trusts, in each year since 2009-10.

**Edward Argar:**

NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups, but not staff working in primary care or in general practice surgeries, local authorities or other providers.

In July 2018, Colchester Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust merged with Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust to form East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust. The following table shows the number of full time equivalent (FTE) nurses employed by Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust and Colchester Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust from September 2009 to September 2017.

	IPSWICH HOSPITAL NHS TRUST	COLCHESTER HOSPITAL UNIVERSITY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST	TOTAL
September 2009	868	833	1,701
September 2010	873	857	1,729
September 2011	865	872	1,737
September 2012	836	903	1,739
September 2013	850	961	1,811
September 2014	872	949	1,821
September 2015	905	1,017	1,923
September 2016	981	964	1,944
September 2017	1,010	940	1,950

The following table shows the number of FTE nurses employed by East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust from September 2018 to September 2021.

SEPTEMBER 2018	2,208
September 2019	2,325
September 2020	2,415
September 2021	2,644

## ■ Eating Disorders: Mental Health Services

**Dehenna Davison:**

[\[105730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps is the government taking to ensure equal access to eating disorder treatment across the country.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We have established the first national standard to improve access to eating disorder services for children and young people across the country, which states that 95% of children with an eating disorder will receive treatment within one week for urgent cases and four weeks for routine cases. We are investing an additional £79 million in 2021/22 to expand children's mental health services, including eating disorder services, to meet this standard. We are also investing £58 million in 2021/22 to support the expansion of community mental health services, including eating disorders.

A four week waiting standard for adult community mental health services, including eating disorder services, has been piloted and considered as part of the clinically led review of National Health Service access standards. This consultation closed on 1 September 2021 and NHS England and NHS Improvement expect to publish the response in due course.

## ■ General Practitioners: Bexleyheath and Crayford

**Sir David Evennett:**

[\[106646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of face-to-face GP appointments in Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency.

**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, with NHS England and NHS Improvement, we set out measures to support general practice during the winter, with an additional investment of £250 million in the Winter Access Fund to improve capacity in general practice.

The Winter Access Fund and local funding have contributed to initiatives to support general practices and Primary Care Networks in Bexley. These include additional sessions for practice staff including administrative staff, development of locum banks, digital booking platforms and funding for additional physicians in practices. Additional funding has been provided for the GP Extended Access Service, which has provided access to more face to face appointments and a primary care communications support package has been developed locally to support practices to provide information to their patients on accessing services.

## ■ Genito-urinary Medicine: Finance

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[105457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding he will allocate to local authorities for sexual health services in 2022-23.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Public Health Grant for local authorities includes funding for sexual health services. The Department does not make a specific allocation for sexual health services. Local authorities' grant allocations for 2022/23 will be published shortly.

## ■ Health Professions: Regulation

**Martyn Day:** [\[105644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the recent IPEM briefing paper entitled A new regulatory framework for clinical technologists and the matter of the potential risk of patient harm by medical professionals who are not statutorily regulated.

**Martyn Day:** [\[105645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the statutory regulation of clinical technologists following publication of the IPEM briefing paper entitled A new regulatory framework for clinical technologists in October 2021.

**Edward Argar:**

We have no current plans to regulate clinical technologists. However, we keep the list of professions subject to statutory regulation under review. On 6 January 2022, we launched a public consultation on the criteria for determining when statutory regulation of a healthcare profession is appropriate. The consultation is open until 31 March 2022 and we will consider its findings in due course.

## ■ Health Services

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[105440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Request for direction on independent sector contracting from NHS England Chief Executive Officer to Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, published on 12 January 2022, what assessment he has made of the long-term impact on (a) staff availability to the NHS, (b) public trust and confidence in the NHS and (c) potential health inequalities linked to increased access to high-quality care of those with the means to pay for access to independent health services of the payments made to the independent health sector referred to in that letter.

**Edward Argar:**

The national contracts agreed between NHS England and independent sector providers are short-term measures aimed to support the National Health Service's response to the spread of the Omicron variant until 31 March 2022. We do not

believe these arrangements will have any significant long-term negative impact on staff availability to the NHS or potential health inequalities.

The arrangements provide additional surge capacity to prevent NHS services from being overwhelmed and to ensure the recovery of elective care can continue. The public can be confident that all those requiring emergency or urgent treatment can continue to receive it.

#### ■ **Health Services: Standards**

**Justin Madders:**

[\[104348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when NHS England and NHS Improvement's response to the public consultation on the five new waiting time standards will be published.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The consultation closed on 1 September 2021. NHS England and NHS Improvement expect to publish the response to the consultation in due course.

#### ■ **Health Services: Waiting Lists**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[102695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of delays to NHS interventions resulting from the covid-19 outbreak on (a) cancer services and (b) the length of time people are waiting for (i) diagnosis and (ii) treatment.

**Maria Caulfield:**

We are not yet able to fully ascertain the impact of the latest wave of COVID-19 on cancer services. However, data on elective services including cancer is published on a monthly basis.

#### ■ **In-FACT**

**Caroline Nokes:**

[\[98265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 15 December 2021 to Question 88708 on INFACT, for what reason his Ministers are not planning to meet the INFACT campaign to discuss the topic of sodium valproate.

**Maria Caulfield:**

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



## ■ James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust: Nurses

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[\[105465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full time equivalent nurses are employed by James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, and its predecessor trusts, in each year since 2009-10.

**Edward Argar:**

NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups, but not staff working in primary care or in general practice surgeries, local authorities or other providers.

The following table shows the number of full time equivalent nurses employed by James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in each year from September 2009 to September 2021.

SEPTEMBER 2009	641
September 2010	645
September 2011	648
September 2012	632
September 2013	674
September 2014	701
September 2015	692
September 2016	687
September 2017	712
September 2018	708
September 2019	709
September 2020	803
September 2021	867

## ■ Mental Health Act 1983

**Sir Mike Penning:**

[\[103529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to introduce primary legislation to reform the Mental Health Act 1983 during the current session of Parliament; and if he will ensure that the needs of children and young people are central to any such legislation.

**Gillian Keegan:**

Legislation to reform the Mental Health Act 1983 will be brought forward when parliamentary time allows. The reforms will ensure that people of all ages, including children and young people, are put at the centre of decisions about their own care and that everyone is treated equally.

**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[106669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) discussions he has had with and (b) assessment he has made of representations received from campaigns, charities and other organisations representing children's interests on the potential merits of reforming the Mental Health Act 1983.

**Gillian Keegan:**

*[Holding answer 21 January 2022]:* As part of the public consultation on the proposed reforms to the Mental Health Act 1983, we received responses from service users, parents and carers and organisations. During the consultation, we engaged with the charities YoungMinds, British Institute of Learning Disabilities and Rethink Mental Illness. We continue to work with children's organisations and young people in developing the draft Bill. We analysed the consultation responses and published a formal report on 15 July 2021. This will inform the development of the planned Mental Health Bill which will be brought forward when Parliamentary time allows.

**Peter Dowd:**[\[106740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy to (a) bring forward legislative proposals to reform the Mental Health Act (1983) during the 2021-22 session of Parliament and (b) ensure that the needs of children and young people are the central objective of that reform.

**Gillian Keegan:**

*[Holding answer 21 January 2022]:* Legislation to reform the Mental Health Act 1983 will be brought forward when parliamentary time allows. The reforms will ensure that people of all ages, including children and young people, are at the centre of decisions about their own care and everyone is treated equally.

**■ Mental Health Services: Finance****Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[105364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the plans for new and improved mental health estates promised in the Hospital Investment Programme adequate; and if he will hold discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on securing funding to improve and build new mental health estates.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The Department is investing in eradicating dormitory accommodation from mental health facilities, in hospital upgrades and operating capital. Following discussions with HM Treasury, we have secured £150 million over the next three years to invest

in National Health Service mental health facilities, including those linked to accident and emergency departments and to enhance patient safety in mental health units. This is in addition to the £300 million to complete the programme to replace mental health dormitories with single en-suite rooms. We have also committed to deliver 48 hospitals by 2030. The 40 hospitals already announced include mental health hospitals and a proportion of the remaining eight schemes to be identified will be mental health hospitals.

### ■ **Mental Health Services: Hertfordshire**

**Bim Afolami:**

[\[104396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle waiting lists for mental health services in Hertfordshire.

**Gillian Keegan:**

To improve mental health waiting lists in the Hertfordshire area, 14 organisations have formed the Hertfordshire Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Autism Collaborative. The Collaborative aims to develop joint working between these organisations to improve outcomes for local people. It will address local mental health demand in Hertfordshire and manage waiting times to ensure people receive the treatment they need as soon as possible.

We have provided an additional £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24 to expanding the provision of mental health services in England. This will allow an additional two million people to access timely mental health care. We have also invested a further £500 million in 2021/22.

### ■ **Mental Health Services: Sheffield**

**Louise Haigh:**

[\[100614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many of the 400 mental health support teams to be delivered by April 2023 will be in Sheffield.

**Louise Haigh:**

[\[100615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding has been allocated to Sheffield for the delivery of mental health support teams in schools and colleges in (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23.

**Gillian Keegan:**

*[Holding answer 13 January 2022]:* The information on the number of mental health support teams and funding allocated for Sheffield is not held in the format requested. Data on mental health support teams will be published as it becomes available at integrated care system (ICS) level. Eleven mental health support teams are planned to be in place across South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw ICS by 2023/24. NHS Long Term Plan funding for the delivery of mental health support teams has been allocated across National Health Service regions using a fair-share model based on weighted population.

**■ NHS: Coronavirus****Andrew Rosindell:****[105396]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of NHS staff that are shielding as of 17 January 2022.

**Maggie Throup:**

We have no plans to do so. The Government ended the Shielding Programme on 15 September 2021. People previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable are advised to follow general guidance, while considering extra precautions to reduce their chance of infection.

We issued updated public health advice on 24 December 2021 for those at higher risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19. This is available at the following link:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk)

**■ NHS: Pensions****Daisy Cooper:****[105743]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on updating pension taxation rules for working hours for NHS staff pensions and before 24 March 2022.

**Edward Argar:**

The pension measures in Section 45 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 allow retired and partially retired staff to return to work or increase their working commitments without the risk of having their pension benefits suspended.

Since March 2020, the 16 hour rule, abatement of 'Special Class' members of the 1995 Section - staff with the reserved right to retire at 55 years old without an actuarial reduction - and abatement of draw down members in the 2008 Section and 2015 Scheme have been suspended. Abatement recognises that 'Special Class' members have a significant benefit not available to other staff in the National Health Service. Once abatement is resumed, staff will still be able to continue working for the NHS, typically at least half time. Other staff are not subject to abatement after taking their pension.

These measures are set to expire on 24 March 2022, with the NHS Pension Scheme rules returning to business as usual arrangements. However, the Department will keep this under review. While there have been no formal discussions, we continue to have a regular dialogue with HM Treasury officials on a range of matters relating to the NHS Pension Scheme.

## ■ Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust: Nurses

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[\[105464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full time equivalent nurses are employed by Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation, and its predecessor trusts, in each year since 2009-10.

**Edward Argar:**

NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups, but not staff working in primary care or in general practice surgeries, local authorities or other providers.

The following table shows the number of full time equivalent nurses employed by Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in September of each year between 2009 and 2021.

SEPTEMBER 2009	1,489
September 2010	1,581
September 2011	1,603
September 2012	1,604
September 2013	1,655
September 2014	1,673
September 2015	1,680
September 2016	1,683
September 2017	1,804
September 2018	1,838
September 2019	1,934
September 2020	2,102
September 2021	2,094

Note:

The data is sourced from NHS Digital's NHS HCHS workforce statistics. Data on the National Health Service workforce is drawn from the Electronic Staff Record (ESR). The ESR is the HR and payroll system for the NHS.

## ■ Nurses: East of England

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[\[105463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full time equivalent nurses are employed by all NHS trusts in the East of England in each year since 2009-10.

**Edward Argar:**

NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups, but not staff working in primary care or in general practice surgeries, local authorities or other providers.

The following table shows the number of full time equivalent nurses employed by all National Health Service trusts in the East of England in each year from September 2009 to September 2021.

SEPTEMBER 2009	25,276
September 2010	25,721
September 2011	25,693
September 2012	24,470
September 2013	24,280
September 2014	24,528
September 2015	24,374
September 2016	25,228
September 2017	25,199
September 2018	25,524
September 2019	26,673
September 2020	28,112
September 2021	29,290

## ■ Parkinson's Disease: Drugs

**Ms Marie Rimmer:**

[\[105604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure that the caretech innovation mentioned in his Department's White Paper on social care reform will include solutions to provide timely medication doses to people with Parkinson's.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We will work with the social care sector and partners to produce a plan for testing the use of technology for care. The role of increased digitisation in adult social care and how this can support the administration of medication is being explored, including the administration of time critical medications for those with Parkinson's.

**■ Pregnancy: Sodium Valproate****Christian Wakeford:**[\[98494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his letter to INFACT of 3 December 2021, in addition to the pregnancy prevention programme, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) the future safety and (b) further support is directly improved for people and families affected by Sodium Valproate.

**Maria Caulfield:**

In addition to the valproate pregnancy prevention programme, future safety of valproate is managed within the Medicines in Pregnancy Valproate Registry, based on a core register comprising routinely collected data. The Registry currently includes all women in England who are receiving National Health Service-prescribed valproate and identifies when they are pregnant and accessing NHS care for that pregnancy. Work is ongoing to extend the registry to include women in the devolved administrations.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency will shortly bring forward legislation to support the implementation of medicines registries and improve systematic collection of data. This will ensure that neurodevelopmental disorders associated with valproate are better characterised and identified earlier if associated with other antiepileptic drugs.

As set out in the Government's response to the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review, published on 21 July 2021, we are working to improve the care pathways for children and families affected by medicines in pregnancy, including valproate. This includes tackling the variation in access to services across NHS regions to ensure that care is co-ordinated.

**■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges****Navendu Mishra:**[\[106905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact on household finances in England of aligning the state pension age and free prescription age threshold; and if he will make a statement.

**Navendu Mishra:**[\[106906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to align prescription charges in England with that of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**Edward Argar:**

No specific assessment has been made. However, the impact assessment which accompanied the consultation document on aligning the upper age exemption for National Health Service prescription charges with the state pension age examined a range of issues for those on lower incomes. The impact assessment is available at the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/996781/impact-assessment-upper-age-prescription-exemption.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/996781/impact-assessment-upper-age-prescription-exemption.pdf)

There are no plans to abolish prescription charges in England, as in the devolved administrations.

**Public Health: Finance****Caroline Lucas:****[105455]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to notify local authorities of their public health grant allocations for 2022-23; and what the reasons are for the delay in that notification.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Local authority Public Health Grant allocations for 2022/23 will be confirmed shortly. The timescale for issuing Public Health Grant allocations reflects the time required to determine and agree individual local authority allocations following the overall Spending Review settlement.

**Social Services: Children****Alexander Stafford:****[104421]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps through the Health and Care Bill to ensure that Integrated Care Partnerships take account of the Home Office Child House Local Partnerships Guidance.

**Gillian Keegan:**

Clinical commissioning groups' existing child safeguarding responsibilities will transfer to the respective integrated care board (ICB), which must continue to have regard to the duties on safeguarding partners. The Government has accepted an amendment to the Bill that will require the joint forward plan for an ICB and its partners to set out proposals to address the particular needs of victims of abuse, whether they are children or adults.

Each ICB and their partner local authorities will be required to establish an integrated care partnership, bringing together health, social care, public health and wider representatives where appropriate. We expect local leaders to have regard to all relevant guidance in planning local services and ensure decisions regarding safeguarding children from abuse are based on the best possible evidence and expertise.



## ■ Surrogate Motherhood

**Neil Coyle:** [\[107601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reform surrogacy law in response to the proposals set out in the Law Commission's 2019 Consultation Paper Building families through surrogacy: a new law; and what plans his Department has to support people currently involved in surrogacy until any changes to surrogacy law come into force.

**Neil Coyle:** [\[107602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that, subject to appropriate safeguards, children born through surrogacy in the UK are legally recognised as their intended parents' children immediately from birth.

**Neil Coyle:** [\[107604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure there is greater clarity and transparency on legitimate expenses paid for UK surrogacy, including (a) compensation paid to a surrogate and (b) a recuperation holiday.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Department is currently sponsoring an independent multi-year joint project of the Law Commissions for England and Wales and Scotland to review and update surrogacy legislation. The Commissions' public consultation covered proposals for greater clarity and transparency around legal parenthood provisions and expenses paid for United Kingdom surrogacy. We expect their final recommendations to include changes in these key areas. The Law Commissions intend to publish a report and draft Bill by autumn 2022.

**Neil Coyle:** [\[107603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent children from being born stateless and parentless in international surrogacy cases because their British parents are not currently recognised as their legal parents by UK law.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Sections 54 and 54A of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 provide for the transfer of legal parenthood from the surrogate to the intended parents by means of a parental order. This route for acquiring legal parenthood is available to residents of the United Kingdom who have undertaken an international surrogacy arrangement. The Law Commissions of England and Wales and Scotland are considering whether the current arrangements require amending as part of their review of surrogacy. Where a child does not acquire British citizenship automatically, because the intended parent is not their legal parent in UK law, there are registration options once the relationship has been formalised.

■ **West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust: Nurses**

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[\[105462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full time equivalent nurses are employed by West Suffolk Foundation Trust, and its predecessor trusts, in each year since 2009-10.

**Edward Argar:**

NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups, but not staff working in primary care or in general practice surgeries, local authorities or other providers.

The following table shows the number of full time equivalent nurses employed by West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust in each year from September 2009 to September 2021.

SEPTEMBER 2009	596
September 2010	609
September 2011	612
September 2012	630
September 2013	670
September 2014	683
September 2015	732
September 2016	759
September 2017	758
September 2018	798
September 2019	877
September 2020	963
September 2021	1,009

**HOME OFFICE****■ Afghanistan: Refugees****Kirsty Blackman:****[105568]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support Afghan nationals applying to the (a) Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy or (b) Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme in sourcing the necessary paperwork.

**Kevin Foster:****Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)**

The ARAP website, on gov.uk, provides extensive guidance on how to submit an application to the scheme and can be viewed at:

[Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy: further information on eligibility criteria, offer details and how to apply - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy)

The MOD also provide casework support to eligible ARAP applications, 7 days a week, which varies in accordance with individual applicant's needs.

**Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)**

There will not be a formal Home Office owned application process for the ACRS. Instead, eligible people will be prioritised and referred for resettlement to the UK in one of the three ways set out in the Afghan Resettlement and Immigration Policy Statement, which can be viewed at:

[Afghanistan resettlement and immigration policy statement \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policy-statements/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement)

**■ Asylum: Applications****Sarah Olney:****[105683]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the target time is for processing an application for asylum.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Office does not currently have a target time for processing application for asylum, but we are committed to ensuring asylum claims are considered without unnecessary delay.

We have already made progress in prioritising claims with acute vulnerability and those in receipt of the greatest level of support, including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. Additionally, we are prioritising older claims and those where an individual has already received a decision, but a reconsideration is required.

Asylum Operations are working to reintroduce a service standard and will be looking to potentially align this with changes being introduced through the Nationality and Borders Bill the passage of which is key to fixing our broken asylum system. Our intention to reintroduce a service standard aligns with the recommendation from the

recent Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's (ICIBI) published report - An inspection of asylum casework (November 2021).

### ■ **Asylum: Detainees**

**Mr Nicholas Brown:**

[\[106645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of community-based alternatives to detention for female asylum seekers in response to the unpublished findings of the Action Access pilot which concluded in March 2021.

**Tom Pursglove:**

*[Holding answer 21 January 2022]:* We have been working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the Action Access pilot and they have appointed the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) to independently evaluate this work. The evaluation report of the Action Access pilot is scheduled for publication this month. The report will include the Home Office's response to the findings.

### ■ **Catalytic Converters: Theft**

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[107588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with the National Infrastructure Crime Reduction Partnership to share intelligence between police forces relating to catalytic converter thefts.

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[107589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on what date she last met the National Vehicle Crime Working Group to discuss the issue of catalytic converter thefts.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The National Vehicle Crime Working Group - chaired by the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for vehicle crime, ACC Jenny Sims - met on 20 September 2021, with Home Office officials in attendance. The group is taking forward work across a number of themes, including working in collaboration with affected manufacturers on how best to tackle catalytic converter theft.

The National Infrastructure Crime Reduction Partnership provides national co-ordination of policing and law enforcement partners to tackle metal theft. It hosts a crime mapping dashboard to share intelligence between police forces to target offenders, and implements crime prevention measures. The Partnership has provided specialist training to police forces, local authorities and Environment Agency officers on metal theft and catalytic converter theft.

## ■ Crime

**Colleen Fletcher:** [\[107606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate she has made of the proportion of crimes committed in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England in each of the last five years that have resulted in charges being brought.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Home Office publishes statistics on the number of notifiable offences recorded by the police in England and Wales and the investigative outcomes including the number resulting in a charge.

This is published at Police Force Area level and the latest statistics can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

## ■ Criminal Investigation

**Steve Reed:** [\[107591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many suspects in criminal cases have been released under investigation in every year since 2017.

**Steve Reed:** [\[107592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what data her Department holds on the average length of time people released under criminal investigation have remained under investigation in each year since 2017.

**Steve Reed:** [\[107593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people released under investigation in criminal cases have subsequently committed criminal offences in every year since 2017.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office collected and published data on the number of individuals released under investigation for the first time in 2021 in the 'Police Powers and Procedures: Other PACE powers' publication which can be found here: [Police powers and procedures: Other PACE powers, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

Data on the length of time an individual was released under investigation, for a subset of police forces who were able to provide data, can be found in Table RUI.01 of the [released under investigation data tables](#). These data are experimental statistics to acknowledge that further development will take place in the future and they should be treated with caution.

The Home Office does not hold data on the number of individuals released under investigation who have subsequently committed criminal offences.

## ■ Domestic Abuse: Victim Support Schemes

**Colleen Fletcher:**

[\[107607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help strengthen support for victims of domestic abuse in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

**Rachel Maclean:**

This Government is committed to supporting all victims of domestic abuse. Our landmark Domestic Abuse Act will strengthen our protection to victims and ensure perpetrators feel the full force of the law. It includes the first legal definition of domestic abuse, improved support for victims in the courts, new offences and strengthened legislation around cruel acts of controlling or coercive behaviour. The majority of the provisions in the Act apply to England and Wales, or England only.

Alongside this, in the coming months we will be publishing our Domestic Abuse Strategy, which will seek to transform the whole of society's response to domestic abuse in order to prevent offending, support victims and pursue perpetrators, as well as to strengthen the systems in place to address it.

In 2021-22, Government will provide just under £151m for victim and witness support services. This includes an extra £51m to increase support for rape and domestic abuse victims; £27m for creating 700 new posts for Independent Sexual Violence and Domestic Abuse Advisers; £20.7m for local, community-based sexual violence and domestic abuse services; and £2m for smaller specialist organisations helping Black, Asian and minority ethnic, LGBTQ+ or disabled victims. The majority of this funding has a national reach across England and Wales and therefore will cover areas such as the West Midlands. Specifically in the West Midlands, the Home Office provides £300,000 to Black Country Women's Aid to provide therapeutic support to children, as part of the 21/22 £3.1m Children Affected by Domestic Abuse Fund.

The Home Office also launched a new Ask for ANI Codeword scheme in January 2021 to enable victims to seek safe and discreet support from participating pharmacies.

## ■ Drugs: Children

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[105790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make it his policy to introduce legislation to make the sale of banned narcotics to people under the age of 16 a specific criminal offence.

**Kit Malthouse:**

We have no plans to introduce legislation to make the sale of drugs to people under the age of 16 a specific criminal offence. Under s.4(1) of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (MDA 1971), it is unlawful to "supply or offer to supply a controlled drug to another". This is expanded upon by s.4(3), which makes it an offence: (a) to supply or offer to supply a controlled drug to another in contravention of s.4(1); or (b) to be

concerned in the supplying of such a drug to another in contravention of s.4(1); or (c) to be concerned in the making to another an offer to supply such a drug (in contravention of s.4(1)).

These provisions do not differentiate between different classes of person based on age or any other characteristic. The offence is made out where a person supplies a controlled drug to another person or offers to supply a controlled drug to another person. It would therefore be an offence under s.4 MDA 1971 to supply a controlled drug to a person under the age of 16 (subject of course to any applicable exemptions and licences held).

Additionally, section 4A of the MDA 1971 sets out the circumstances that a court must treat as aggravating factors in respect of the offence of supply of a controlled drug under s.4. These circumstances are:

(a) When a person supplies a controlled drug on or in the vicinity of school premises when those premises are being used by persons under 18 (and within one hour of any such time); and

(b) When a person causes or permits a person under 18 to deliver a controlled drug to a third person or to deliver a drug related consideration to himself or a third person in connection with the offence of supply of a controlled drug.

The provisions of s.4A are concerned with where the supply took place (e.g. in the vicinity of a school), when the supply took place (e.g. during school hours) and whether a child courier was used to effect the supply.

## ■ Immigration Controls: Northern Ireland

**Colum Eastwood:**

[\[107741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of the requirement for Tier 5 working visas on the ability of the English language schools in Northern Ireland to continue to attract students from across Europe.

**Kevin Foster:**

Following the UK's exit from the European Union and the ending of free movement on 31 December 2020, the UK's points-based system means all seeking entry to the UK are treated on an equal basis, not based on whether they hold an EU or Non-EU passport..

The government has reformed immigration routes to ensure the English language teaching sector can continue to recruit international students, including those from the EU.

The Temporary Work – Government Authorised Exchange visa provides individuals with the opportunity to complete training, a work experience placement, English language course or conduct research for a period of up to two years.

The visitor route was also reformed to allow individuals to undertake a range of activities in the UK, including academics taking part in formal exchange

arrangements and students studying English at an accredited institution in the UK for up to 6 months. Citizens of many countries including all current EU, EEA countries and Switzerland, can visit the UK without a visa. The reform to the visitor route also meant eligible nationals can now use e-gates to enter the UK when arriving for periods of study up to 6 months.

Following the introduction of the new Student route in October 2020, international students can undertake work placements as part of their course. To be able to undertake a work placement, the placement must be an integrated and assessed part of the course and must account for less than 33 percent of the total length of the course (or 50 percent if the student is undertaking a course at a Higher Education Provider with a track record of compliance).

Students undertaking study at an Overseas Higher Education Institution can come to the UK on a Student visa to undertake a short-term study abroad programme as part of their course at degree level or above.

The UK Government is committed to ensuring the UK remains an attractive place to work or study.

## ■ **Integrated Care Systems: Offences against Children**

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[104422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will assess the potential merits of investing in Child Houses to allow Integrated Care Systems to deliver effective joined-up services to victims of child sexual abuse.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The government has recently introduced an amendment to the Health and Care Bill which will require that integrated care boards set out the steps they propose to take to address the particular needs of victims of abuse in their local area, including both adults and children.

The government recognises the merits of the Child House model of support, in which children affected by sexual abuse receive joined-up services in a single, child-friendly setting.

We have provided approximately £7.5m towards a pilot of the UK's first Child House, the Lighthouse, and we are committed to supporting other local commissioners, service providers, and charities to further develop the Child House model.

Building on the learning from the pilot, the Home Office recently published guidance for local partnerships seeking to adopt a Child House approach.

## ■ **Intelligence Services: Registration**

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[105574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government still intends to introduce a foreign agent registration system in order to tackle hostile activity conducted by other states.



**Damian Hinds:**

The Government recently consulted on a range of legislative proposals to counter state threats and is currently considering responses.

**Members: Correspondence****John Spellar:**[\[104298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he plans to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Warley of 22 July 2021 regarding Mr M Yousefian.

**Tom Pursglove:**

I apologise for the delay. The Home Office responded to the correspondence on 17 January 2022.

**Police: Recruitment****Emily Thornberry:**[\[106675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police forces in England and Wales currently operate recruitment procedures for police constables where it is possible for no face-to-face contact with the applicant to take place prior to the offer of a position.

**Kit Malthouse:**

*[Holding answer 21 January 2022]:* New recruits to the Police are subject to a rigorous vetting and assessment process to assess suitability for the role of police officer, including testing against core behaviours and values.

Decisions about police recruitment, including how recruitment and selection processes are run, are a matter for Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners and are managed locally by forces.

The College of Policing sets the standards for recruitment. This is done within a national application, National Online Assessment Process (OAP) and a selection framework, in line with national guidance maintained by the College of Policing.

The College has recently introduced a post assessment interview which is used by some forces as a step to assess their candidate pools further. The College does not collect data on which forces use the post assessment interview. Forces will make independent decisions on whether this is necessary, based on their local needs and recruitment processes. Further opportunities for face to face contact can occur throughout the recruitment process and is managed through local force processes.

**Refugees: Afghanistan****Dan Jarvis:**[\[107585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with stakeholders on the potential merits of introducing a formal application process to the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) commenced on 6 January 2022 and will provide up to 20,000 women, children and others at risk with a safe and legal route to resettle in the UK.

As set out in the policy statement of 13 September, there will be many more people seeking to come to the UK under the scheme than there are places. It is right that we take a considered approach, working with partners to resettle people to the UK. There will not be a formal Home Office owned application process for the ACRS.

Instead, eligible people will be prioritised and referred for resettlement through one of three pathways.

More detail can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [107679]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons the second stream of the Afghanistan Citizens Resettlement Scheme will not open until Spring 2022.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [107680]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential risk to life caused by the delays in opening the Afghanistan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [107681]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Afghanistan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, how many individuals her Department expects to be resettled in the UK from Afghanistan's neighbouring countries.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [107682]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people her Department estimates will be resettled in the UK directly from Afghanistan under the Afghanistan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [107683]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her timeline is for contacting Afghan nationals on their eligibility for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

**Victoria Atkins:**

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

This follows the immediate evacuation of over 15,000 people to safety in the largest and fastest emergency evacuation in recent history. We have continued to bring people to the UK, with around 1,500 people helped to enter since the evacuation.

Some of the people evacuated under Op Pitting will be eligible for the ACRS.

Details of how the ACRS will operate including the referral pathways for those outside and inside Afghanistan are set in the oral statement of 6 January. Given the complex and changing nature of the circumstances in Afghanistan and the region, it is not possible to give estimates of the numbers of people who will be resettled from outside or inside Afghanistan.

Those people in the UK following the evacuation who will be eligible for the ACRS, are being contacted to assist them in obtaining Indefinite Leave to Remain under the ACRS. People eligible for resettlement under pathways two and three of the ACRS will be contacted at the appropriate time.

We are working closely with UNHCR with the ambition of receiving referrals as part of the second pathway for vulnerable refugees in need of protection in year 1 of the ACRS. UNHCR have said that they will be able to do this from Spring.

### ■ **Special Constables: Training**

**Rob Roberts:**

[\[106904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps are in place to (a) enable entry and (b) provide a fast-track process for Special Constables to enter into the regular police force.

**Kit Malthouse:**

*[Holding answer 21 January 2022]:* Specials are an incredibly valuable resource for policing. They provide effective community engagement and for many they will go on to join as a Police Constable.

The College of Policing has designed a Special Constable to Police Constable programme which is currently being piloted across a number of early adopter forces. This pilot will support the service in ensuring the valuable experience of Special Constables can be formally recognised when applying for regular entry routes.

### ■ **Tools: Theft**

**Feryal Clark:**

[\[104406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce tool theft in (a) Enfield North constituency and (b) England.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government is tackling acquisitive crime as a priority and is committed to reducing the ability for criminals to profit. We understand the negative impact theft has on victims who rely on the tools of their trade to earn a living. We have established an expert Stolen Goods Working Group with the police and academia to tackle the markets for stolen goods. The group is examining ways to make property more identifiable and traceable, and are working with partners to increase enforcement.

To ensure the police have the resources they need to tackle crime, the Government is recruiting an additional 20,000 police officers by March 2023. The police have now recruited an additional 11,053 officers towards the target.

### ■ **Visas: Large Goods Vehicle Drivers**

**Stuart C McDonald:** [\[107610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to extend the HGV temporary visa scheme beyond 28 February 2022.

**Kevin Foster:**

We will not be extending this scheme,

This was a temporary provision following exceptional circumstances last year. Applications for the route ended on 1 December 2021, with immigration permission ending on 28 February.

The solution to the long standing recruitment issues in the logistics sector is a focus on offering training, better career options, improved working conditions and offering workers the rewarding salaries they deserve. Immigration Policy cannot provide an alternative to this, not least given the widely reported shortages of HGV drivers in the EEA, USA and across the developed world.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

### ■ **Big Ben: Repairs and Maintenance**

**Alan Brown:** [\[102681\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2022 to Question 96953 on Big Ben: Repairs and Maintenance, what the estimated additional cost is for (a) the four-month site closure in 2020, (b) investment in covid-19 secure measures and (c) the reduced productivity on site until November 2020.

**Sir Charles Walker:**

The total cost to date of covid-19 impacts on the project, including the four-month site closure in 2020, investment in covid-19 secure measures and the reduced productivity on site until November 2020, is £5.7m, including VAT. These costs are met from the approved £9m provision, listed in the answer to [Question 96953](#).

This figure has been scrutinised by independent consultants, who are confident in the financial projections that have been developed by teams in the House Service, recognising the exceptionality of the project and its highly specific requirements.

Parliament's teams have mitigated against the financial impact of coronavirus, working collaboratively and positively with contractors to reduce the impact to the taxpayer, and ensuring that costs paid by Parliament are proportionate to its contractual obligations. The project's teams continue to meet the challenges posed

by this complex conservation and enjoy the support of the leadership of both Houses in their delivery and approach.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### ■ Trade Agreements: Australia

**Sarah Olney:** [\[106826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate her Department has made of the impact on UK GDP of goods traded under the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement over the next (a) five and (b) 10 years.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

Our impact assessment shows that the UK-Australia FTA could increase trade with Australia by around 53% and boost the economy by around £2.3 billion (when compared to projected levels of GDP in 2035). The modelling in our impact assessment assesses the long-run impacts, typically assumed to be around 15 years in the future.

**Sarah Olney:** [\[106827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how her Department will track the value of services sold to Australia under the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA); and how it will assess whether that trade of services would not have occurred without a FTA.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

*[Holding answer 21 January 2022]:* The Department has committed to conducting and publishing a monitoring report two years after entry into force of the UK-Australia FTA, and every two years thereafter.

This will monitor the implementation of the FTA by measuring the evolution of trade flows and utilisation of the agreement. It will also discuss, where possible, the extent to which short-term changes in trade flows can be attributed to an FTA itself rather than wider factors.

The Department has also committed to publishing an evaluation report five years after entry in to force. This will analyse a broad range of impacts, including those relating to trade in services.

### ■ Trade: Brexit and Coronavirus

**Sir Mark Hendrick:** [\[105371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to address the effects of (a) Brexit and (b) covid-19 pandemic on UK trade.

**Mike Freer:**

*[Holding answer 20 January 2022]:* The Department for International Trade (DIT) is working to ensure its International Trade Service best supports DIT's strategic

objectives and HM Government's approach to economic recovery from the pandemic. We announced a refreshed cross-government Export Strategy: Made in UK, Sold to the World on 17 November 2021 at the United Kingdom's first International Trade Week. At its centre is our new Export Support Service (ESS), providing a single point of contact and entry for businesses exporting to Europe, helping businesses to navigate HM Government support.

In addition, DIT has initiatives such as the UK Export Academy and grants from the Internationalisation Fund which enable firms to grow internationally and build their capability to export. We have also agreed trade deals with 70 countries plus the EU, accounting for £766bn of UK bilateral trade in 2020, helping our nation become an open and truly Global Britain.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Courts: Fines

**Steve Reed:**

[\[105552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, (a) how many warrants have been issued in every year since 2016 instructing approved enforcement agents to seize and sell goods belonging to offenders for unpaid court-imposed fines and (a) what was the outcome of each of those warrants.

**James Cartlidge:**

In 2016/17, 590,649 warrants of control relating to criminal cases were issued to approved enforcement agents. We do not have an outcome for each of those warrants and to obtain an outcome would incur disproportionate costs.

Verifiable centralised records do not exist beyond this date and it would incur disproportionate costs, both in respect of the number issued and the individual outcomes, to answer this question.

**Steve Reed:**

[\[105553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have been imprisoned in every year since 2016 for non-payment of court-imposed fines.

**James Cartlidge:**

The data for 'fine defaulter' prisoner admissions each year can be found in Table A2.7 [here](#).

These numbers may also include people who have defaulted on financial penalties other than fines.

**■ Prison Officers: Coronavirus****Ellie Reeves:** [\[104392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 94513 on Prison Officers: Coronavirus, whether private prisons can seek staffing support via the Prison Group Director's Office.

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[104393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 94513 on Prison Officers: Coronavirus, whether private prisons participate in a twice weekly covid-19 call with their relevant PDG office to provide updates and support.

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[104394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 94513, on Prison Officers: Coronavirus, whether private prisons have regime contingency plans in place to respond to significant staff shortages; and whether those plans are agreed with HMPPS.

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[104395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 94513 on Prison Officers: Coronavirus, whether private prisons are covered by the national framework to provide support from outside of region.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Each privately managed prison has a full-time contract management team that is employed by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and report to the HMPPS Head of Privately Managed Prisons. They are accountable for providing assurance that the contracts for each prison are delivered in accordance with agreed contractual delivery indicators, and that the prison provides safe, decent and secure services.

Privately managed prisons can seek staffing support via the HMPPS Head of Privately Managed Prisons if required and, if deemed necessary, by other prison operators.

All privately managed prisons have regime contingency plans in place, which are agreed with the Head of Privately Managed Prisons. They also participate in regular Covid-19 calls, which are chaired by the Head of Privately Managed Prisons.

Privately managed prisons can request support from HMPPS although this is not under the same framework as public sector prisons due to the contractual processes that need to be considered.

**■ Prisoners: Gender Recognition****Tonia Antoniazzi:** [\[107674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many biologically male transgender prisoners housed in the male estate have been subjected to assault and to sexual assault in each of the last five years.

**Tonia Antoniazzi:**

[\[107675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many incidents of self-harm and attempted suicide have been recorded for biologically male transgender prisoners housed in the male estate in each of the last five years.

**Victoria Atkins:**

These figures have been drawn from the HMPPS Incident Reporting System, which records the legal gender of prisoners. They are based on snapshot data collections from March 2018, 2019 and 2021. There was no collection in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data is not available for 2017. This is because legal gender did not form part of the central data collection in that year.

In 2017-18 there were 38 assaults and 14 sexual assaults on legally male transgender prisoners in the men's prison estate. In 2018-19 there were 16 assaults and fewer than 5 sexual assaults. In 2020-21 there were fewer than 5 assaults and fewer than 5 sexual assaults.

In 2017-18 there were 332 self-harm incidents involving legally male transgender prisoners in the men's prison estate. In 2018-19 there were 159. In 2020-21 there were 228. Data on attempted suicide is not available.

We have trained more than 25,000 staff in suicide and self-harm prevention as part of our drive to tackle these issues, and we continue to develop initiatives to better support people in custody.

**Tonia Antoniazzi:**

[\[107677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the OASys Sexual reoffending Predictor (OSP) Guidance for Practitioners, dated December 2021, whether biologically male transgender prisoners (a) with and (b) without a Gender Recognition Certificate who are convicted of sexual offences are risk-assessed using OSP; and if he will make a statement.

**Tonia Antoniazzi:**

[\[107678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the OASys Sexual reoffending Predictor (OSP) Guidance for Practitioners, dated December 2021, what tools are used to assess the risk of biologically male transgender prisoners (a) with and (b) without a Gender Recognition Certificate who are convicted of sexual offences; and if he will make a statement.

**Victoria Atkins:**

OASys Sexual Reoffending Predictor (OSP) was developed for use with legally male offenders and so is not used with offenders who are not legally male. However, transitioning will not result in an offender's risk assessment being less robust.

Whether or not a transgender prisoner is assessed using OSP is not a factor in decisions about whether to allocate them to a men's or women's prison, which are only made after all individual risk factors have been thoroughly assessed.



The most accurate risk assessments combine actuarial methods of prediction with structured professional judgement. The Offender Assessment System (OASys) allows HMPPS staff to undertake actuarial assessments. It also provides a structure to record their assessment of the risks posed by, and needs of, an offender.

Apart from OSP, all actuarial risk assessment tools can be used with men and women. These tools are:

- Offender Group Reconviction Scale version 3 (OGRS3), for risk of any proven reoffending
- Risk of Serious Recidivism (RSR), for risk of serious proven reoffending, which comprises sexual reoffending (using OSP, or a simple base rate for legal females) and serious nonsexual violent reoffending (a separate algorithm)
- OASys Violence Predictor (OVP), for risk of nonsexual violent proven reoffending
- OASys General reoffending Predictor (OGP), for risk of nonviolent proven reoffending

Forensic psychologists also use a range of risk assessment tools with this cohort, which involve using their professional judgement. These are used on an individual basis, as with any offender, taking into account the full range of characteristics of the person being assessed.

## ■ Sexual Offences: Prosecutions

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[104373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reversing the burden of proof in respect of consent in cases of sexual assault.

**James Cartlidge:**

Section 74 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 states that, for the purposes of sexual offences including sexual assault, a person consents if he or she agrees by choice, and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice. As with other elements of the offence, the prosecution is required to prove the lack of consent in sexual assault cases. However sections 75 and 76 of the same Act make provision for certain presumptions around consent which may mean in some cases the prosecution does not need to prove a lack of consent.

Under section 75, where certain facts are proved (including, for example, that the complainant was asleep or unconscious or violence was being used at the time), the complainant will be taken not to have consented *unless* the defendant can provide sufficient evidence to raise an issue, to be put to the jury, as to whether the complainant consented. If the defendant cannot provide sufficient evidence, then the presumption stands and the prosecution will not have to prove an absence of consent.

Under section 76, if it is proved that the defendant intentionally deceived the complainant as to the nature or purpose of the act, or the defendant intentionally induced the complainant to consent by impersonating a person known personally to

them, the complainant will be taken not to have consented. This presumption is irrebuttable so where section 76 applies, the prosecution does not have to prove a lack of consent.

The law in this area is long established and well understood by the courts, police and practitioners. The Government has no plans to amend the law in this area.

### ■ **Television Licences: Older People**

**Justin Madders:**

[\[104347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many fines have been issued to people over 75 for non-payment of TV licences since the removal of the free TV licence concession.

**James Cartlidge:**

Between the removal of the free TV licence concession as of August 2020 and December 2020 (latest published data available), there have been 0 fines issued to people over 75 for non-payment of TV licences.

National statistics on the number of fines issued under TV licence evasion for the calendar year of 2021 are due for publication in May 2022.

## LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

### ■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

**Paul Blomfield:**

[\[905188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent steps he has taken to strengthen renter security and improve protection for private renters.

**Eddie Hughes:**

Throughout the pandemic we have taken unprecedented action to help keep renters in their homes through banning bailiff evictions, extending notice periods and financial support.

We are currently preparing proposals to provide a fairer deal for renters which we will publish in a new White Paper this year.

These include ending Section 21 evictions, driving up the quality of private rented homes and supporting councils to tackle poor practice.

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[905189\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the role of neighbourhood plans in future national planning policy.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Communities are at the heart of the planning system and, by preparing a neighbourhood plan, they can have a greater say over development in their local

areas. We are committed to retaining neighbourhood planning as an important part of the planning system, and we will set out our proposed way forward shortly.

**Sir Robert Neill:** [\[905193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to support people affected by a rise in insurance premiums as a result of living in buildings with unsafe cladding.

**Michael Gove:**

We are working with the insurance industry to address the challenges experienced by leaseholders facing increasing building insurance costs.

Ministers continue to press insurers to take a proportionate approach to pricing insurance.

**Andrew Selous:** [\[905197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions he has had with stakeholders on ensuring general practice capacity increases when large new housing developments are approved.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Local authorities have responsibility for planning for local development and the infrastructure to support it. Our guidance encourages engagement between plan-making bodies and relevant organisations on the provision of health infrastructure. My officials have worked with NHS England and NHS Improvement to ensure there is early engagement in the plan-making process between local authorities and NHS Trusts.

## ■ Community Ownership Fund

**Mary Robinson:** [\[905192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the impact of the Community Ownership Fund on community cohesion.

**Michael Gove:**

Each application we receive to the fund is assessed against its potential for community benefit and how this will be sustained through community ownership.

Each of the 22 bids funded so far will be closely monitored to assess their impact on community cohesion. My department will run a full evaluation of the four-year programme.

## ■ Housing: Energy

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[905191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to increase the energy efficiency of new and existing homes.

**Eddie Hughes:**

The Government remains committed to meeting its target of net zero emissions by 2050. We recognise the important contribution that the energy efficiency of buildings has in meeting this.

In December we introduced an uplift in standards which delivers a 30% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for new homes. This is a stepping-stone to the 2025 Future Homes Standard.

The Heat and Buildings Strategy, which we published in October, sets out our approach to improving the energy efficiency of existing homes in more detail.

**■ INTERREG programme****Ian Murray:**[\[100495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will list the UK-based organisations currently in receipt of Interreg Funding from the European Regional Development Fund.

**Neil O'Brien:**

*[Holding answer 13 January 2022]:* Interreg (or European Territorial Cooperation) programmes are not managed directly by DLUHC, but by independent Managing Authorities who are responsible for making payments to organisations acting as project partners.

**■ Landlord and Tenant****Dan Carden:**[\[R\] \[107693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department plans to publish a the response to the consultation, A New Deal for Renting: Resetting the Balance of Rights and Responsibilities Between Landlords and Tenants.

**Eddie Hughes:**

The Government's consultation, 'A New Deal for Renting: Resetting the balance of rights and responsibilities between landlords and tenants' sought views on how the new system should operate. This received almost 20,000 responses, which we are carefully considering as we develop our response.

We are committed to bringing in a Better Deal for Renters to deliver a fairer and more effective rental market that works for both tenants and landlords. We will publish a response to the consultation as well as a White Paper detailing our plans for reform of the private rented sector later this year.

**■ Levelling Up Fund****Rob Roberts:**[\[100721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, on what date he plans to open the next round of applications to the Levelling Up Fund.

**Neil O'Brien:**

*[Holding answer 13 January 2022]:* The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport and investing in cultural and heritage assets. We will open round two in Spring 2022 and will share further details in due course.

**■ Levelling Up Fund: Sports****Tom Hunt:**[\[905194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using the Levelling Up Fund to support grassroots sport.

**Michael Gove:**

Culture and heritage is one of three investment themes for round one of the Levelling Up Fund. Under this investment theme, places were given the opportunity to come forwards with proposals including around creating new cultural and creative spaces such as sports or athletics facilities.

The first round of the Levelling Up Fund awarded funding to multiple projects which will support grassroots sport in local communities, including the creation of a new community sports hub in Newcastle upon Tyne. The next round of the Fund, opening in spring 2022, will provide further funding opportunities.

**■ Local Government: Buckinghamshire****Greg Smith:**[\[905190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of Buckinghamshire Council's bid for a county deal.

**Neil O'Brien:**

Officials met with all areas that expressed an interest in a County Deal over the summer to discuss their proposals.

We will set out further information on County Deals in the Levelling Up White Paper and officials will be in touch with Buckinghamshire Council – and all other areas that expressed interest – to outline the next steps after it is published.

**■ Park Homes: Sales****Justin Madders:**[\[104350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October 2021 to Question 57080 on Park Homes: Property Transfer, when he will release the report on the effect of the 10 per cent commission fee on the sale of mobile park homes.

**Eddie Hughes:**

We received the report on 12 January 2022. We are considering its findings and will publish it in due course.

**■ Planning Permission****Alec Shelbrooke:****[R] [104313]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to introduce a time limit on the duration of development once a building's work has commenced.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government is clear that developers should build-out permissions as quickly as possible. Where planning permission has been granted for new development, or where sites are stalled or experiencing delays to being delivered, it is for local authorities and developers to work closely together at a local level to overcome any barriers. There are instances where delays in starting or progressing sites may be avoidable and the Government wants to empower authorities with the tools to respond to such cases. Consequently, we are exploring all options to support faster build out as part of the wider package of proposed planning reforms.

**■ Property: Management****Imran Hussain:****[104340]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it the policy of his Department to regulate land management fees for freeholders on private estates.

**Imran Hussain:****[104341]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing a cap on land management fees for freeholders on private estates.

**Imran Hussain:****[104342]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department will take steps to prevent land management companies from increasing land management fees without the agreement of freeholders on private estates.

**Imran Hussain:****[104343]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what measures are in place to enable freeholders on private estates to dispute increases to land management fees made without their agreement.

**Eddie Hughes:**

The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor

service. Where people pay estate rentcharges it is not appropriate that these homeowners have limited rights to challenge these costs.

That is why the Government intends to legislate to ensure that the charges that resident freeholders may pay towards the maintenance of communal area are fairer and more transparent.

To this effect, we will legislate to give freeholders on private and mixed tenure estates equivalent rights to leaseholders to challenge the reasonableness of estate rentcharges, as well as a right to apply to the First-tier Tribunal to appoint a new manager to manage the provision of services.

In addition, we will ensure that where a freeholder pays a rentcharge, the rentcharge owner is not able to take possession or grant a lease on the property where the rentcharge remains unpaid for a short period of time. We will translate these measures into law when parliamentary time allows.

We will also consider the option of introducing a Right to Manage for residential freeholders once we have considered the Law Commission's report and recommendations on changes to the Right to Manage for leaseholders.

## ■ Regional Planning and Development

**Alun Cairns:** [\[98932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has plans to review the criteria for bids to the Levelling Up Fund.

**Neil O'Brien:**

*[Holding answer 13 January 2022]:* The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport and investing in cultural and heritage assets. We will open round 2 in Spring 2022 and will share further details in due course.

## ■ Regional Planning and Development: Local Government

**Clive Lewis:** [\[905196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps the Government will take to ensure that local authorities are adequately supported to deliver policies proposed in the forthcoming levelling up White Paper.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Core Spending Power for local government is expected to rise from £50.4 billion in 2021-22 to up to £53.9 billion in 2022-23. The forthcoming Levelling Up White Paper will set out our plans for strengthening accountable local leadership. This is alongside recent investments including the Levelling Up Fund, UK Community Renewal Fund and Towns Fund where Government is working closely with councils right across the United Kingdom.

## ■ Regional Planning and Development: Rural Areas

**Jim McMahon:**

[\[107662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what progress his Department has made in levelling up rural regions of the UK.

**Neil O'Brien:**

Levelling up the whole of the United Kingdom, including rural areas, is at the heart of the Government's agenda. Levelling up means empowering local leaders and communities to drive real change; boosting living standards, particularly where they are lower; spreading opportunity and improving public services, particularly where they are weaker; and restoring local pride across the UK, whether in a large city, town or rural area. That is why the Government has put in place a range of support for rural areas, which includes the £1 billion agreement with the industry to deliver the Shared Rural Network which will see 4G mobile connectivity increase to 95% geographic coverage across the UK.

Rural areas are also able to access support from a range of dedicated growth funds put in place by this Government. For example, the £4.8 billion Levelling up Fund and the upcoming UK Shared Prosperity Fund, worth over £2.6 billion, will help people access opportunity in places in need, such as rural and coastal communities, and for people in disadvantaged groups across the UK.

## ■ Renters' Reform Bill (Draft)

**Dan Carden:**

[R] [\[107694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department plans to publish a white paper for the Renters' Reform Bill announced in the Queen's Speech in May 2021.

**Eddie Hughes:**

The Government will publish a White Paper later this year to set out our plans to introduce once-in-a-generation reforms to create a fairer private rented sector. We are working with the sector to develop and deliver a balanced package of reforms that reflects the needs of tenants and landlords, while also learning from the pandemic and its impact on the sector.

## ■ Students: Accommodation

**Matt Western:**

[\[104382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of the number of student accommodation settings containing flammable cladding.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Data on the remediation progress of high-rise student accommodation buildings in England identified with ACM cladding systems unlikely to meet Building Regulations



is published in the Building Safety Programme data release. The latest data is available [here](#).

The Department's External Wall Systems data collection concerns residential buildings 18 metres and over, including student accommodation. The collection is ongoing, and we are working to improve the quality of data before publishing further summary information in due course.

We have begun a pilot data collection project for 11-18m residential buildings to identify those with unsafe cladding. We will publish further details in due course.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### ■ Common Travel Area: Northern Ireland

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[102771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he has discussed with Cabinet colleagues the potential merits of writing the Common Travel Area into domestic UK law.

**Conor Burns:**

The Government is committed to the Common Travel Area (CTA), and the reciprocal rights and privileges it provides to British and Irish citizens. The CTA is an administrative arrangement that is already underpinned by domestic legislation, which will be updated as and when required so that the associated rights and privileges continue to be ensured.

### ■ Irish Language

**Conor McGinn:**

[\[105605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what his timeframe is for (a) introducing and (b) implementing legislation to establish a Commissioner for the protection and enhancement of the Irish language in Northern Ireland as set out in New Decade, New Approach.

**Conor Burns:**

*[Holding answer 20 January 2022]:* The Government remains committed to delivering on the package of identity and language measures set out in New Decade, New Approach and to introducing the necessary legislation soon. In accordance with the commitments negotiated by the parties in New Decade, New Approach, the two new Commissioners and the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression provided for through the Bill will be for the Northern Ireland Executive to establish, support and fund. It is the Government's intent that these commitments are implemented in full, and the forthcoming legislation will make provision to this effect.

**Conor McGinn:**

[\[105606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on Irish language as announced by the Government in June 2021;

and if he will bring forward those legislative proposals before the Northern Ireland Assembly mandate ends in March 2022.

**Conor Burns:**

*[Holding answer 20 January 2022]:* As the Northern Ireland Executive has not progressed the carefully balanced package of legislative commitments negotiated in New Decade, New Approach in respect of identity and language, the Government intends to do so soon. The legislation that the Government plans to introduce will benefit everyone in Northern Ireland, including Irish language speakers and those of the Ulster Scots/Ulster British tradition.

■ **Northern Ireland Office: Consultants**

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[101602\]](#)

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

**Conor Burns:**

The Northern Ireland Office has not held any financial or consultancy contracts with the suppliers listed in each of the last five years.

**PRIME MINISTER**

■ **Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests: Correspondence**

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[107598\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, whether he plans to respond to the letter of the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests of 23 December 2021.

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[107599\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, with reference to the letter from the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests of 23 December 2021, when he plans to present the Independent Adviser on with detailed proposals to ensure the highest standards are maintained; and whether he plans to publish those proposals.

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[107600\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, with reference to the letter from the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests of 23 December 2021, what assessment he has made since that date of (a) the staffing necessary to support the work of the Independent Adviser and (b) potential merits of widening the remit and powers of the Independent Adviser.

**Boris Johnson:**

The Independent Adviser's letter of 23 December concluded the correspondence, which was published soon after on 6 January. The correspondence sets out the timescales for further consideration and discussion of these matters. That work is

underway and the Independent Adviser indicated that he would expect to be able to describe any changes to his role by the time of his next Annual Report in April.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Bus Services and Railways

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[106780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has for commissioning work on the development of an integrated transport system bringing rail and bus travel together

**Wendy Morton:**

The National Bus Strategy has set out Government plans for bus and rail transport to be better integrated with other modes and with each other. Our Bus Service Improvement Plan guidance to local authorities, published in May 2021, is clear that more bus routes and demand-responsive services should serve railway stations and that bus services should be timed to connect with trains.

### ■ Department for Transport: Diaries

**Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[106889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish in full his Ministerial diary for 20 May 2020.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

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 Transport: Location

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[105705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent progress he has made on his Department's policy to create a second headquarters in Birmingham and a northern hub in Leeds.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The department has opened its new hubs in Birmingham at 2 Snow Hill and in Leeds at 7/8 Wellington Place. All core Department jobs, across all grades and professions, are being advertised in our new hubs with very limited exceptions. As of the end of 2021, 134 roles have been filled in Birmingham and 128 in Leeds, including Senior Civil Service roles.

**■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Standards**

**Andrea Leadsom:** [\[107566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make a statement on the recent performance of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's customer enquiry system.

**Andrea Leadsom:** [\[107567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make a statement on the backlog of enquiries to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency from constituents of Northamptonshire; and what steps he is taking to resolve that matter.

**Andrea Leadsom:** [\[107568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he plans to take to help ensure that people seeking HGV licence renewals from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency receive them in a timely manner.

**Andrea Leadsom:** [\[107569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of poor service complaints made to the Driver and Vehicle License Agency in the last six months; and if he will make a statement.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The quickest and easiest way to make an application to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is by using its extensive suite of online services. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their documents within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application and the DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day. To help reduce waiting times for paper applications, the DVLA has introduced additional online services, recruited more staff, increased overtime working and has secured extra office space in Swansea and Birmingham.

Information on the number of enquiries made to the DVLA by parliamentary constituency or geographical location is not held. Throughout the pandemic, the DVLA's contact centre has flexed its services for customers in line with the available resources. An additional building has been procured and more staff continue to be recruited to answer calls and enquiries. The DVLA has also increased resource on the team that deals with enquiries from honourable members on behalf of their constituents.

The DVLA has prioritised the processing of applications for vocational driving licences (including HGVs) to support the Government's response to the driver shortage. There are no delays in straightforward applications for vocational licences, which are being processed within normal turnaround times of five working days. It may take longer to process applications where medical investigations are needed.

Information about the number of complaints specifically about poor service is not held.

## ■ Electric Vehicles: Grants

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[105542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending the Plug-in Car Grant beyond March 2023 to support SMEs with their transition to net zero vehicles.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Since 2010, the plug-in car grant has provided over £1.3 billion to support the early market for ultra-low emission vehicles. The grant provides up to £1,500 for those making the switch to eligible electric cars. Both businesses and private customers are eligible to benefit from the grant discount as long as they are based in the UK. In 2021 industry statistics show that battery electric vehicles were 11.6 per cent of the new car market, up 76.3 per cent on 2020.

The increasing choice of new vehicles, growing demand from customers, and rapidly rising number of chargepoints means that while the level of funding remains as high as ever, we are re-focusing our vehicle grants on the more affordable zero emission vehicles – where most consumers will be looking and where taxpayers' money will make more of a difference.

Building on the £1.9bn from Spending Review 2020, the Government has committed an additional £620m to support the transition to electric vehicles. The additional funding will support the rollout of charging infrastructure, with a particular focus on local on-street residential charging, and targeted plug in grants.

There are also incentives in the tax system to stimulate uptake of zero emission vehicles. The March 2020 Budget extended the favourable benefit in kind tax rates for zero emission vehicles to 2025: company car tax is 1 per cent in 2021/22 and 2 per cent in 2022/23 through to 2024-25. Further, all zero emission cars are exempt from vehicle excise duty (VED) and zero emissions vans pay a nil rate of tax on the van benefit charge.

We have been clear since 2018 that the plug-in grants will eventually end and that we keep all grants under review to ensure the best value for taxpayers' money.

## ■ Govia Thameslink Railway: Standards

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[106903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department holds data on the number of commuters whose employment was terminated as a result of being unable to attend work due to the disruption on the Southern Railway network between 2016 and 2019.

**Wendy Morton:**

The Department does not hold this information.

## ■ International Transport: Environment Protection

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[105675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to encourage a transition towards greener modes of international transportation.

**Robert Courts:**

In July 2021 the department published its Transport Decarbonisation Plan that sets a credible pathway to achieving net zero emission in UK transport by 2050, and sets out our ambitions to achieve net zero in the international transport sectors of aviation and maritime. In aviation, we recently consulted on our vision for the sector to reach net zero by 2050 covering both international and domestic aviation, which focused on the rapid development of technologies in a way that maintains the benefits of air travel whilst maximising the opportunities that decarbonisation can bring to the UK. We will be publishing our final strategy later this year.

We continue to work closely with fellow Member States at the International Civil Aviation Organization and International Maritime Organization to reduce emissions from both sectors. To further drive the transition to net zero we have set the sixth carbon budget to include international aviation and shipping emissions, as recommended by our independent climate advisors, the Climate Change Committee.

## ■ London North Eastern Railway: Sportsgrounds

**Alan Brown:**

[\[105611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much it cost to secure the LNER naming rights for the York City football stadium.

**Wendy Morton:**

The Department does not hold that information.

The agreement between London North Eastern Railway (LNER) and York City Council is a commercial matter between those parties.

LNER operates on a commercial basis. DFT OLR Holdings Ltd, an arms-length body of the Department for Transport, oversees the strategic approach of the LNER business, but within this, commercial decisions, such as the marketing decision to sponsor York Community Stadium, are for LNER to make.

## ■ Railways: Coronavirus

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[105682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to coordinate with train operators on the eventual lifting of (a) work from home instructions and (b) other Plan B covid-19 measures to help ensure that there will be enough trains running to meet the anticipated demand.

**Wendy Morton:**

Throughout the pandemic, the Department has worked with operators as they manage their timetables to ensure that services meet the demand for travel and deliver good value for money. The Department will continue to engage with operators on changes to guidance and other Plan B measures to ensure that services meet demand as staff absence pressures ease.

**Railways: Disability**

**Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[105657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published on 28 July 2021, (a) what work his Department has done to date to work closely with rail companies to further develop the Passenger Assist Programme for disabled passengers and (b) whether it introduced a passenger assist app in 2021 as planned.

**Wendy Morton:**

The Department continues to work closely with the Rail Delivery Group on the Passenger Assist Improvement programme. The Department provided £700k from the 'First of a Kind' fund in 2018 and 2019 and made a further contribution of £250k in May 2020. We have also agreed an allowable cost of £770k for the further development of the Passenger Assist programme.

The passenger assist app was successfully introduced in May 2021.

**Railways: Fares**

**Louise Haigh:** [\[106782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what analysis the Government has conducted on the impact on income levels of the planned 3.8 per cent rise in rail fares.

**Wendy Morton:**

Regulated fares will be capped at the level of inflation from last July, which is below the level of inflation for more recent months.

**Railways: Passengers**

**Louise Haigh:** [\[106783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what analysis has been conducted on the number of passengers travelling at peak times on the rail network in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2022.

**Wendy Morton:**

The Department publish annual national statistics on rail passenger numbers arriving into selected major cities during peak-times in England and Wales.

Statistical releases and associated tables for (a) 2019 and (b) 2020 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/rail-statistics#rail-passenger-numbers-and-crowding-statistics>

Peak-time rail travel counts for (c) 2022 will be undertaken in the autumn.

## ■ Road Traffic Control

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**

**[107665]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 1 July 2021 to Question 23300 on Road Traffic Offences, when he plans to bring into effect (a) the provisions of Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act allowing local authorities in England to introduce School Streets and other measures and (b) accompanying statutory guidance; whether he has issued guidance to local authorities on the exercise of those powers; and what estimate he has made of when local authorities will be able to exercise those new powers.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The regulations giving effect to the moving traffic enforcement powers under Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 are scheduled to be laid on 27 January, and planned to come into force on 1 June. Local authorities wanting to undertake civil enforcement of moving traffic contraventions, including prescribed traffic signs for use at school street schemes, will need to apply to the Secretary of State for an Order to be made designating the council as the enforcement authority in their area.

To assist local authorities in preparing their applications in the meantime, the Department wrote to local authorities in August 2021 with an Advice Note and sent out supplementary advice in September 2021, including a list of traffic signs subject to moving traffic enforcement. Subject to Parliamentary approval of the regulations, we plan to publish statutory guidance in late March 2022.

Depending on initial uptake, it may be necessary to deliver Designation Orders in tranches. We plan to lay the first Designation Order as soon as practicable after the regulations mentioned above come into force to enable enforcement to commence in practice.

## ■ Rolling Stock

**Sarah Olney:**

**[105687]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of trains operating on London commuter routes each week are (a) diesel, (b) hybrid and (c) fully electric.

**Wendy Morton:**

The overall fleet break down of all the operators utilising a London Terminal is 83% electric, 9% bi-mode and 8% diesel-only.



## TREASURY

### ■ Child Benefit

**Martyn Day:**

[\[105646\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many taxpayers had opted out of receiving the Child Benefit payment as of August 2021.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

The number of taxpayers that have opted out of receiving Child Benefit at August 2021 is not currently available.

As of August 2020, 623,900 families in the United Kingdom had opted out of receiving Child Benefit. This number is published in official statistics release, 'Child Benefit Statistics: Annual Release, August 2020' within Table 9 of the Main Tables found here:

[Child Benefit Statistics: Annual Release, August 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/child-benefit-statistics-annual-release-august-2020)

### ■ Cryptocurrencies

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[105673\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the current (a) rules and (b) regulations governing the (i) buying and (ii) selling of cryptocurrencies in the UK.

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[105674\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of taxation on (a) purchasing, (b) selling and (c) trading of cryptocurrencies in the UK.

**John Glen:**

The Government established a Cryptoassets Taskforce in 2018, consisting of HM Treasury, the Bank of England and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). The Cryptoasset Taskforce is responsible for assessing developments in the cryptoasset market, and deciding what, if any, regulation is required in response.

HM Treasury and UK authorities have taken a series of actions to support innovation while mitigating risks to stability and market integrity. These include launching a new anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing regime for cryptoassets in 2020; and consulting on a proposal to ensure cryptoassets known as 'stablecoins' meet the same high standards expected of other payment methods. The Government will issue its response to this consultation shortly. On 18 January 2022, the Government announced its intention to legislate later this year to bring certain cryptoassets into the scope of financial promotions regulation, requiring them to be fair, clear and not misleading. This is aimed at improving consumers' understanding of the risks and benefits associated with cryptoasset purchases, and ensuring that cryptoasset promotions are held to the same high standards as broader financial services products.

Profits from trading in and gains from disposing of cryptoassets are taxed in the same way and at the same rate as those from other assets. HMRC's Cryptoassets Manual, one of the most detailed publications from any tax administration, explains the tax consequences of different types of transactions involving cryptoassets for both businesses accepting them and individuals using them.

## ■ Duty Free Allowances

**Paul Girvan:** [\[105696\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what economic advice he has received from (a) his officials and (b) independent sources on the potential merits of introducing duty-free shopping at UK ports and airports.

**Paul Girvan:** [\[105697\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of (a) the proportion of UK regional airport revenue derived from non-aeronautical activity and (b) the potential effect of introducing duty-free shopping to UK airports on non-aeronautical revenues.

**Paul Girvan:** [\[105699\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what comparative assessment he has made of the effect on revenue generating opportunities of the increase to duty free personal allowances, which came into effect in January 2021, on (a) UK airports and (b) airports in other jurisdictions.

**Helen Whately:**

Following a consultation in Spring 2020, the Government announced on 11 September 2020 that duty-free sales at UK ports and airports would be extended to EU-bound passengers for the first time in over 20 years from 1 January 2021. This is a significant boost to all ports, airports and international rail terminals in England, Scotland and Wales, including smaller regional airports and rail hubs, which have not been able to offer duty-free to the EU before.

The Government also announced that personal allowances would be introduced for passengers entering Great Britain from the EU. During the consultation stakeholders expressed concerns about this change, particularly those that deal with large volumes of EU passengers travelling to Great Britain in a vehicle by ferry or train, given many passengers were used to bringing back unlimited amounts of goods from the EU. The Government therefore used its freedoms from EU rules to significantly increase alcohol allowances for all passengers. This will now enable visitors to bring in, for example, three crates of beer, two cases of wine and one case of sparkling wine, without having to pay the relevant taxes, with Great Britain having one of the most generous allowances in the world.

The possible introduction of duty free on arrival raises a number of complex issues. For example, duty-free on arrival could undermine the UK high street and run counter to public health objectives. The Government would also need to consider the cost

and any revenue and legal risks of introducing such a scheme. Any new tax relief will impose additional pressure on the public finances, to which excise duty makes a significant contribution. Duty on alcohol and tobacco raises over £22 billion and plays a key role in funding vital public services like the NHS and addressing harms caused by these products. Any loss in tax revenue would have to be balanced by a reduction in public spending, increased borrowing or increased taxation elsewhere. HM Treasury officials have held meetings with a number of stakeholders on this issue and continue to keep this under review.

## ■ Economic Policy: Females

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[106788\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that its policies do not discriminate against (a) new mothers and (b) pregnant women.

**Helen Whately:**

The Treasury carefully considers the equalities impacts of policies on individuals with protected characteristics, in line with both its legal obligations and its commitment to fairness and equality of opportunity.

Under the Equality Act 2010, pregnancy and maternity is one of a number of protected characteristics covered by the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires ministers and others to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination.

Our policies support the Government's ambition of creating a fairer and more equal society. For example, at the Autumn Budget, the Government announced £500m funding to transform start for life and family help services for parents and babies, and carers and children, including mothers during pregnancy and maternity, in half of the council areas across England.

## ■ National Insurance Credits

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[104296\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of including information directed at people eligible to receive Specified adult Childcare Credits on the Child Benefit (CH2) form; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

Guidance on Specified Adult Childcare (SAC) credits is already provided on gov.uk. We think that including SAC credits information on the Child Benefit form could distract from the key message on the importance of claiming Child Benefit as SAC credits gives access to benefits such as National Insurance credits.

**■ NHS: Private Sector****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[105441\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Request for direction on independent sector contracting from NHS England Chief Executive Officer to Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, published on 12 January 2022, what discussions he has had with Ministerial colleagues in the Department for Health and Social Care in relation to the value for public money of the payments made to the independent health sector referred to in that letter.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

The government is fully committed to supporting the NHS to respond to the Omicron variant.

As Chief Secretary to the Treasury, I regularly meet with Ministerial colleagues in the Department for Health and Social Care to discuss a wide range of issues, including spending within the NHS. HM Treasury works to ensure that taxpayer money is spent responsibly and delivers value for money for them.

**■ Non-domestic Rates: Barnsley Central****Dan Jarvis:**[\[107581\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of business rates on small and medium businesses in Barnsley Central constituency.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The review of the business rates system concluded at Autumn Budget 2021 with the publication of the Final Report.

The Final Report reaffirmed the importance of business rates for raising revenue for essential local services, introduced substantive interventions to the business rates system, and announced a package of measures worth £7 billion over the next 5 years.

The review set out new measures to reduce the burden of business rates on firms, including further relief for high street businesses, including extending Transitional Relief for an additional year, restricting bill increases to 15 per cent for small properties (up to £20,000 Rateable Value), and 25 per cent for medium properties (up to £100,000 Rateable Value), subject to subsidy control limits.

Local authorities have discretion to determine how much funding they provide to businesses and have the flexibility to target local businesses that are important to their local economies.

## ■ Soft Drinks: Taxation

**Munira Wilson:** [\[107730\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the revenue raised from the soft drinks industry levy is ringfenced for use by the Department for Education.

**Helen Whately:**

The Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) is not formally linked to any individual spending programme.

However, the Government will continue to invest in supporting public health and tackling obesity. This includes over £200m a year to continue the Holiday Activities and Food programme, announced at Spending Review 2021, and the £320 million per year Physical Education (PE) and Sport Premium.

The money allocated to these causes exceeds the revenue raised by the SDIL.

## ■ Treasury: Equality

**Owen Thompson:** [\[105643\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department has taken to conduct equalities impact assessments on its policies.

**Helen Whately:**

The Treasury carefully considers the equalities impacts of its fiscal decisions on those with protected characteristics, in line with both its legal obligations and with its strong commitment to promoting fairness.

The Treasury has rigorous processes in place to ensure that it complies with its legal requirements under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in the Equality Act 2010. Every policy is different, so the level of work will vary accordingly. What matters is that equality considerations are placed side-by-side with all other pressing circumstances.

In interests of transparency, the Treasury has published an equalities impacts in summary form for tax and welfare measures in Tax Information and Impact Notes (TIINs). We have also published an Equalities Annex alongside other documentation for the Budget and Spending Review 2021, which provides illustrative examples of what the Treasury is doing for those with protected characteristics.

## ■ Venture Capital: Females

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[105487\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support his Department provides to help female entrepreneurs to access venture capital finance.

**Helen Whately:**

The government provides three tax-advantaged venture capital schemes: The Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS), the Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme (SEIS) and Venture Capital Trusts (VCTs).

The schemes provide a range of tax reliefs for investment into small and growing companies. They are designed to encourage investment in higher-risk, early-stage companies which face the biggest challenges in accessing growth capital.

The schemes are popular and well-established with stakeholders and are world-leading in terms of their generosity with over £2.7bn of funds raised across the three schemes in 2019-20.

## WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

### ■ Conversion Therapy

**Darren Jones:**

[\[107673\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what recent progress her Department has made on banning conversion therapy.

**Mike Freer:**

The Government is committed to banning the practice of all coercive so-called 'conversion therapy' in this country, strengthening existing criminal law provisions and introducing an offence which protects under-18s and those who are unwillingly subjected to these abhorrent practices.

The Government is currently consulting on our proposals to legislate for a ban on conversion therapy. The question is how, not whether, we will ban conversion therapy. We are engaging with a wide range of relevant stakeholders, victims and professionals to ensure that the ban is effective in ending different forms of conversion therapy. The consultation runs until Friday 4 February and I would encourage anyone with an interest who has not yet done so to respond at:

[www.gov.uk/government/consultations/banning-conversion-therapy](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/banning-conversion-therapy).

The consultation responses will be used to further refine the Government's policy proposals on banning conversion therapy and inform the process of developing legislation. We will prepare a Bill for this Spring to be introduced as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Complaints

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[104297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints her Department has received from people who did not claim child benefit and were unaware of the link between child benefit and pension payments, in each of the last five years; and if she will make a statement.

**Guy Opperman:**

Information on this specific category of complaint could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

The Government has encouraged families who are responsible for a child under 12 to claim Child Benefit regardless of household income to help them build qualifying years of National Insurance for future State Pension entitlement. Information on what parents should do to protect their future State Pension entitlement is clearly provided on the Child Benefit claim form.

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

## ■ **Guaranteed Minimum Pensions**

**Kim Leadbeater:**

**[105784]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason the start date for GMP equalisation is 17 May 1990; and what comparative assessment she has made of the potential merits of that start date being (a) 17 May 1990 and (b) the 1986 date of the UK's ratification of The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

**Guy Opperman:**

The date relates to the court case that determines this matter. On 17 May 1990, the European Court of Justice ruled in the Barber Judgment <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A61988CJ0262> that private occupational pensions constituted 'deferred pay' and were therefore subject to Article 119 of the EEC Treaty (now in Article 157 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU). This means that these pensions are subject to the provisions of Article 157 on equal treatment between men and women. While the Barber Judgment was not specifically about Guaranteed Minimum Pensions, it meant that the impact of the different Guaranteed Minimum Pension rules for men and women have to be corrected.

The Court restricted the application of the Barber judgment so that it would not have effect prior to 17 May 1990, except in very limited circumstances concerning litigation existing at that time.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

#### ■ Covid-19 Update

**Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Sajid Javid):** [\[HCWS556\]](#)

As part of our commitment to reducing the cases of hospitalisation and serious illness due to COVID-19, the Government accepted the JCVI's recommendation on the 29th November that all young people aged 12-15 years old should be offered a second dose of COVID-19 vaccination a minimum of 12 weeks after their first.

To ensure that 12-15 year olds were able to demonstrate their COVID Status for international travel prior to the Christmas holidays, on the 13th December the Government launched the NHS COVID Pass letter service for children who are double vaccinated.

From 3rd February, the Government will ensure that all children aged 12 and over will also be able to get a digital NHS COVID Pass for international travel to support our efforts to open up travel. The digital NHS COVID Pass will provide a record of COVID-19 vaccinations received and will show evidence of having recovered from COVID-19 up to 180 days following a positive NHS PCR test. The steps that the Government has taken ensures that families are not prohibited from travelling where countries require children over the age of 12 to be able to digitally demonstrate their vaccination status or proof of prior infection.

The COVID Pass will be available via the [NHS.UK](#) website for those aged 12 and over and via the NHS App for those aged 13 and over. To request an NHS COVID Pass, the child will first need to register for an NHS login, which will require them to verify their identity using their passport.

The Government has also sought to ensure that this solution can be used by children in both Wales and the Isle of Man. In Wales, 12-15 year olds will be able to generate a digital pass via [NHS.UK](#). In the Isle of Man, they will be able to use both [NHS.UK](#) and the NHS App. Further information will be available shortly from the Department of Health for Citizens in Northern Ireland. Paper youth passes are already available for citizens in Scotland and further information on the digital solution will follow in due course.

### HOME OFFICE

#### ■ Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules

**The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Safe and Legal Migration (Kevin Foster):** [\[HCWS552\]](#)

My Rt Hon friend the Home Secretary is today laying before the House a Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules.



The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) is undertaking a review into the impact of the ending of free movement on the social care sector. Whilst the MAC are not publishing their full report until the end of April 2022, they felt they had sufficient evidence with which to make a recommendation in their Annual Report to add care workers to the Health and Care visa and the Shortage Occupation List. Their recommendation was made in the context of increased demand for adult social services, increasing vacancies and issues with staff retention. They have re-asserted their position of the underlying cause of recruitment and retention problems being mainly due to pay, terms and conditions, and lack of progression in the sector. This is now coupled with pay in other competing sectors (such as catering, retail and cleaning) catching up to the adult social care sector, due to the rise in the National Living Wage.

In light of the clear evidence which the MAC have presented and the important role the sector is playing in face of the exceptional situation during the pandemic, the Government announced on 24<sup>th</sup> December we were agreeing to their recommendation. As recommended by the Migration Advisory Committee, the salary threshold will be in line with the rest of the Shortage Occupation List – with a reduced minimum salary threshold of £20,480 in place (compared with a general threshold of £25,600 for non-shortage occupations) and applicants will need to meet all of the other requirements, such as having a job offer from an approved Home Office sponsor and meeting English language requirements.

Taken together with the wider package of support measures for the adult social care workforce announced since September – including the £462.5m to help local authorities and care providers retain and recruit staff over winter, on top of the £500m for workforce training, qualifications and well-being announced as part of the Health and Social Care Levy, they will help us ensure sustainability and success for our long-term vision for this sector.

As the MAC does not believe immigration can solve all, or even most, of the problems associated with social care recruitment, but can help to alleviate difficulties in the short term, we are therefore creating an initial 12-month application window whereby workers can apply for visas in this occupation. During this time, successful applicants will have all the same rights, benefits and obligations as other Health & Care visa holders – including the right to bring dependents and to settle permanently in the UK. This decision will be reviewed by Government later this year to determine the success of this change in relation to wider changes in the sector to attract and retain staff, the position with regard to the impact of the pandemic and whether it remains appropriate for this occupation to remain on the Shortage Occupation List.

This does not signal a departure from the RQF 3 threshold and the Points-Based System more broadly, which the MAC agrees strike the right balance between access to international talent and resident labour. Employers must continue to invest in training, opportunities and wages for the resident workforce to ensure the UK's hard-working care workers get the type of rewarding packages they deserve and which are common in other sectors.

**TRANSPORT****■ Active Travel England****Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Trudy Harrison):**  
**[[HCWS553](#)]**

I am pleased to inform the House that the Department for Transport is to create a new Executive Agency, Active Travel England, with its headquarters in York. This builds on the Government's commitment to level up the country and locate more Civil Service roles outside of London and the South East, as well as its commitment to boosting cycling and walking.

This Government is investing a record amount in active travel to help deliver our priorities for a healthy, safe and carbon-neutral transport system. Active Travel England will work to ensure that this, and wider transport investment, is well spent, and will help raise the standard of cycling and walking infrastructure.

Active Travel England will manage the national active travel budget, awarding funding for projects which meet the new national standards set out in 2020. It will inspect finished schemes and ask for funds to be returned for any which have not been completed as promised, or which have not started or finished by the stipulated times.

ATE will also begin to inspect, and publish reports on, highway authorities for their performance on active travel and identify particularly dangerous failings in their highways for cyclists and pedestrians.

In these regards, the commissioner and inspectorate will perform a similar role to Ofsted from the 1990s onwards in raising standards and challenging failure.

As well as approving and inspecting schemes, ATE will help local authorities, training staff and spreading good practice in design, implementation and public engagement. It will be a statutory consultee on major planning applications to ensure that the largest new developments properly cater for pedestrians and cyclists.

ATE's establishment follows the Government's unprecedented commitment of £2bn for cycling and walking over this parliament and comes in the wake of our ambitious "Gear Change" strategy to transform active travel.

The agency will become fully operational later in 2022.

I am also pleased to confirm the appointment of Chris Boardman MBE as the first Active Travel Commissioner for England. He will take the helm on an interim basis to spearhead the establishment of Active Travel England.

This underlines this Government's ongoing commitment to boosting cycling and walking and to building back greener from the pandemic.

**■ Draft Legislation: The Air Navigation (Amendment) Order 2022****Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Robert Courts):**

**[[HCWS555](#)]**

I have today published the draft Air Navigation (Amendment) Order 2022 and an accompanying Explanatory Memorandum. This draft instrument amends the Air Navigation Order 2016 (S.I. 2016/765) (“the Air Navigation Order”) to update references to Regulation (EC) No 216/2008 on common rules in the field of civil aviation, which has been repealed and replaced.

The Air Navigation Order implements the UK’s obligations under the Convention on International Civil Aviation and regulates aspects of aviation safety. It provides regulatory and enforcement powers for the Civil Aviation Authority needed in respect of retained aviation safety legislation. In a number of places, the Air Navigation Order cites provisions of the “Basic Regulation”, which is defined in Schedule 1 of the Air Navigation Order as *Regulation (EC) No 216/2008*. However, *Regulation (EC) No 216/2008* was repealed and replaced by *Regulation (EU) 2018/1139*, which has been retained in UK domestic law.

Therefore, the Air Navigation Order currently contains outdated references to repealed legislation, which need to be amended. The draft instrument published today will ensure that the Air Navigation Order is able to operate as intended, by accurately citing the correct retained legislation.

This instrument is an Order in Council and will follow the negative (annulment) procedure. Paragraph 14 of Schedule 8 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 requires a draft of this instrument to be published at least 28 days before it is laid. This is because the Air Navigation Order was originally made under powers that included the European Communities Act 1972. The draft instrument and accompanying Explanatory Memorandum can be found on gov.uk.

**■ High Speed Rail (Crewe-Manchester) Bill and associated documents**

**Minister of State for Transport (Andrew Stephenson):**

**[[HCWS551](#)]**

Today the Government will introduce the High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill - a key part of Building Back Better after the Covid-19 pandemic. Alongside the High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill and accompanying Environmental Statement, the Government is also publishing:

- the Government’s response to the second Design Refinement Consultation; and
- an update on the Strategic Outline Business Case.

The Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands (IRP) set out the Government’s commitment to invest in rail infrastructure across the North and Midlands. Delivering the Western Leg of HS2 is a vital part of this commitment. This includes plans for the Crewe Hub and Crewe Northern Connection, allowing HS2 trains to call at Crewe and Manchester and enhancing connectivity to north-west England, Wales, and Scotland.

This next stage of HS2 from Crewe to Manchester will increase passenger capacity, improve connectivity, and reduce journey times. It is integral to delivering on the Government’s commitment to level-up the country. HS2 will join up the North, Midlands,

and London by effectively halving the journey times between the centres of the UK's three largest cities. The scheme will contribute towards sustainable growth in towns, cities, and regions across the country, spreading prosperity and opportunity more widely. It will act as a catalyst for job creation, the development of new homes and ultimately, the regeneration of major cities and towns along the HS2 route.

HS2 will help provide a cleaner and greener form of transport, offering significantly lower carbon emissions per passenger kilometre than long distance car journeys or domestic air travel. HS2 has the potential to deliver world-class low-carbon transport to bring our biggest cities closer together, spread opportunity and support the UK's transition to a 'net zero' economy.

The Bill includes the powers necessary to construct and operate the HS2 route between Crewe and Manchester. It is accompanied by an Environmental Statement which describes the railway, alternatives considered, the environmental effects that are likely to arise from its construction and operation, and the measures proposed to avoid or reduce the negative effects. It has been informed by the consultation on the working draft Environmental Statement held in Autumn 2018 as well as through engagement with stakeholders. An Equalities Impact Assessment is also being published.

The Government's response to the Western Leg Design Refinement Consultation is an important part of introducing this Bill. The October 2020 consultation set out four technical refinements to the Western Leg of Phase 2b: a new Crewe Northern Connection to support the vision for a Crewe Hub; changes to the rolling stock depot at Crewe; expansions to both Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport High Speed stations; and a new train depot at Annandale in Dumfries and Galloway. Having considered the feedback from all the respondents, the Government has decided to confirm these four changes.

The update on the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) sets out the clear, strategic case for the HS2 Crewe-Manchester scheme, together with up-to-date cost range for the programme of between £15bn and £22bn (2019 prices). This SOBC contains the first cost estimate that has been produced specifically for the scheme between Crewe and Manchester. As the project progresses in design maturity, the cost estimate will be further refined and will inform the Full Business Case, which will be presented to Parliament in due course.

Copies of the Government's response to the second Design Refinement Consultation will be placed in the libraries of both Houses and are also publicly accessible online through the gov.uk website.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Supporting Terminally ill Claimants

**Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work (Chloe Smith):**

[\[HCWS554\]](#)

Today the Department for Work and Pensions is introducing an amendment to the Universal Credit (UC) Regulations 2013 and the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Regulations 2013 to exempt people who are terminally ill from the requirement to accept a claimant commitment to be eligible for benefits.

A claimant commitment sets out what an individual agrees to do in return for benefit, including any work search requirements and a duty to report any changes in their circumstances. Anyone claiming benefits under the Special Rules for Terminal Illness would already be exempt from work search requirements. However, there is currently no blanket exemption for terminally ill claimants from the requirement to accept a claimant commitment more generally. This means that the requirement to accept a claimant commitment can only be waived on a case by case basis.

To streamline the process and provide certainty to those approaching the end of their lives, the Statutory Instrument laid on the 24 January will therefore create a specific exemption from claimant commitments for terminally ill people.

The Regulations will apply in Great Britain and will come into force on 15 February 2022. The Northern Ireland Assembly intend to mirror the regulations and are in the process of putting this into place.

We are committed to ensuring the benefit system supports people nearing the end of their lives. Further to the changes we are making today, we will be bringing forward regulations shortly to replace the current 6-month rule for determining eligibility for the Special Rules for Terminal Illness with a 12-month, end of life approach in Universal Credit and Employment and Support Allowance with changes to Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance being made when parliamentary time allows.