

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 25 January 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 25 January 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business: Investment

Seema Malhotra:

[\[105544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the levels of business investment in Q3 of 2021 reported by the Office for National Statistics; and what steps his Department is taking to support business investment.

Paul Scully:

The ONS data to which the member is referring shows a 2.6% increase in business investment versus the same quarter the previous year, which shows that the Government's approach is delivering a strong economic recovery.

BEIS works to support business investment through a range of different measures including several sector focused funds, such as the £1.4bn Global Britain Investment Fund, which provides grant support to businesses within the automotive, life sciences and offshore wind sectors. The department has laid out a strategy to deliver Net Zero by 2050, which includes leveraging £90bn in private investment. At the last Budget and Spending Review the Government made a £1.6 billion commitment to a new generation of regional funds via the British Business Bank's programmes. The Government will also provide funding for 33,000 Start Up Loans over the next three years.

■ Coal Fired Power Stations

John Redwood:

[\[105320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will ensure that the coal power stations currently used when there is little wind will be kept available until the UK has more reliable domestic generating capacity to cover a shortage of wind energy.

Greg Hands:

The Government is committed to phasing out unabated coal generation by October 2024. The Government is confident that the Capacity Market will ensure there is sufficient capacity to offset the retirement of the remaining coal plants. The most recent Capacity Market auctions have already secured the majority of Great Britain's capacity needs out to 2024/25.

National Grid Electricity System Operator has the ability to manage electricity supply and demand, including at times of low wind generation. It can call on a wide range of technology types to do this, including gas, batteries, interconnectors and demand-side response.

■ Conditions of Employment

Julian Knight: [\[105580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the timeframe is for bringing forward the Employment Bill, proposed in the Queen's Speech of December 2019.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to building a high skilled, high productivity, high wage economy that delivers on our ambition to make the UK the best place in the world to work and grow a business. We will bring forward reforms to our employment framework when Parliamentary time allows. In the meantime, we will continue to take necessary action to support businesses and protect jobs.

Justin Madders: [\[108539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress the Government has made on drafting the Employment Bill.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to building a high skilled, high productivity, high wage economy that delivers on our ambition to make the UK the best place in the world to work and grow a business. We will bring forward reforms to our employment framework when Parliamentary time allows it. In the meantime, we will continue to take necessary action to support businesses and protect jobs.

Justin Madders: [\[108540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many officials are working on the Employment Bill.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to building a high skilled, high productivity, high wage economy that delivers on our ambition to make the UK the best place in the world to work and grow a business. As this is complex and cross-cutting, officials in the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy have been working closely with officials across other Government Departments on developing measures. For instance, we have recently concluded a consultation containing proposals to reform flexible working regulations (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/making-flexible-working-the-default>) and have published a Government response to a consultation regarding the establishment of a single enforcement body for employment rights (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/good-work-plan-establishing-a-new-single-enforcement-body-for-employment-rights>).

Justin Madders: [\[108541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what consultation his Department has conducted with (a) relevant stakeholders and (b) other Government Departments on the forthcoming Employment Bill.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to bringing forward reforms to our employment framework to make the UK the best place in the world to work and grow a business. It is important we consult widely on proposals for change and ensure stakeholders have the opportunity to share their views. For example, we have recently concluded a consultation containing proposals to reform flexible working regulations

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/making-flexible-working-the-default>) and have published a Government response to a consultation regarding the establishment of a single enforcement body for employment rights (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/good-work-plan-establishing-a-new-single-enforcement-body-for-employment-rights>).

We will carefully consider all consultation responses, which will help inform decisions around how we take forward measures. As this is a complex cross-cutting topic, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has regular dialogue with other Government Departments with an interest.

Justin Madders:**[108542]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans for pre-legislative scrutiny of the Employment Bill.

Paul Scully:

It is important that any legislative reforms to our employment framework are fully informed by stakeholder engagement and scrutiny. That is why we have consulted in detail in most measures proposed and have carefully considered responses. We also have regular stakeholder engagement across the proposed measures. Due to this scrutiny already applied to these measures, we do not currently propose to undertake pre-legislative scrutiny.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Public Appointments**Kevin Brennan:****[108473]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department seeks references for candidates appointed to public positions which fall under the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

George Freeman:

The Governance Code on Public Appointments sets out that advisory assessment panels must satisfy themselves that all candidates for appointment can meet the Seven Principles of Public Life and adhere to the Code of Conduct for board members of public bodies.

In accordance with the Governance Code, BEIS requires that candidates declare relevant interests at the point of application and these are discussed at interview. Where appropriate, BEIS has on occasion sought references for candidates appointed to public positions which fall under the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. We also provide the panel with other information, for example open source material, that they may wish to consider in reaching a judgement in a fair and open way.

■ Electricity Generation

John Redwood:

[\[105322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of trends in electricity demand in the UK up to 2030.

Greg Hands:

The table below shows the Department's latest published projections of total electricity supplied by UK generators from the year 2021 up to 2030, net of storage and imports. Supply is modelled to meet projected demand and takes account of demand trends.

YEAR	TOTAL ELECTRICITY SUPPLIED (NET OF STORAGE & IMPORTS), TWh (TERAWATT-HOURS)
2021	313
2022	313
2023	312
2024	313
2025	315
2026	319
2027	323
2028	328
2029	334
2030	340

These figures are based on central estimates of economic growth, fossil fuel prices and contains all agreed policies where decisions on policy design were sufficiently advanced to allow robust estimates of impact as of August 2019.

Further details can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/energy-and-emissions-projections>.

Figures provided are extracted from *BEIS Energy and Emissions Projections: Net Zero Strategy baseline (partial interim update December 2021) Annex J, Total electricity generation by source*.

■ Energy Company Obligation

Ben Lake:

[\[105692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of impacts to the wider supply chain and delivery of fuel poverty measures if proposals to temporarily delay the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) are implemented.

Greg Hands:

The Government recognises the importance of the Energy Company Obligation scheme in tackling fuel poverty and maintaining the supply chain. In July 2021, the Government consulted on extending the scheme from 2022-26 and expanding it to £1 billion per year, supporting low income and vulnerable households across Great Britain. The Government will issue a response to the consultation in due course.

Ben Lake:[\[105693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to not amend the Energy Company Obligation Scheme (ECO) as energy prices rise.

Greg Hands:

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

Sarah Olney:[\[108588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department plans to publish the final design for the Energy Company Obligation ECO4: 2022-2026.

Greg Hands:

The Government will issue a response to the ECO4 consultation in due course.

Energy: Meters**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[\[105388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what data is available on the smart meter installation rate in Scotland.

Greg Hands:

The smart meter rollout is making good progress, with 26.4 million smart and advanced meters in homes and small businesses across Great Britain as of the end of September 2021.

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

Energy: Prices**Dehenna Davison:**[\[105734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to mitigate the effect of rising energy prices on the cost of living.

Greg Hands:

The energy price cap is currently insulating millions of domestic customers from high global gas prices this winter, protecting 15 million families from increasing gas prices. The Government is also supporting low income and fuel poor households with their energy bills. The Warm Home Discount provides eligible households with a £140 rebate off their winter energy bills. The Winter Fuel and Cold Weather payments will help ensure those most vulnerable are better able to heat their homes over the colder months.

Foreign Companies: Property**Daisy Cooper:**[\[105739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 10 November 2021 to Question 68469 on Property: Ownership, and with reference to Written Statement on Register of Beneficial Owners of Overseas Entities Update, of 2 November 2021, HCWS366, if he will provide an urgent update on his plans to introduce a public beneficial ownership register of overseas entities that own UK property, in response to threats of Russian aggression towards Ukraine.

Paul Scully:

As indicated in the previous answer, the Government remains committed to establishing a new beneficial ownership register of overseas entities that own UK property. This register will help combat money laundering and achieve greater transparency in the UK property market. The Government has been exploring how best to implement the recommendations of the Joint Committee and when we introduce the Register it will be more effective, thanks to the broader powers we are now planning to give Companies House. This will also require primary legislation and we will legislate when parliamentary time allows.

Fuels: Prices**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[105404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to mitigate the impact of the rise in the cost of fuel on consumers.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[105406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of offering Government backed loans for fuel costs spread over a number of years.

Greg Hands:

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

The Government is committed to protecting energy customers, especially the most vulnerable. The Energy Price Cap will continue to protect consumers,

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

■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Geraint Davies: [\[105334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Climate Change Committee's UK Health Expert Advisory Group's report, Sustainable Health Equity: Achieving a Net Zero UK, published 6 November 2020; and when that assessment was made.

Greg Hands:

The Government is grateful to the Climate Change Committee for the wide range of advice it provides government, which is considered on an ongoing basis. In June 2021, the published impact assessment for the sixth carbon budget considered a range of relevant evidence to provide a solid basis for the government's decision on the budget level, including the Climate Change Committee's UK Health Expert Advisory Group's report, 'Sustainable Health Equity: Achieving a Net Zero UK'. The Net Zero Strategy, published in October 2021, then set out the Government's vision for making the transition to net zero, which can bring significant benefits for physical and mental health.

■ Hospitality Industry: Carbon Emissions

Seema Malhotra: [\[105541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will provide a list of the support and guidance documents and memoranda that his Department has provided to businesses in the hospitality sector to reduce scope 3 carbon emissions in the last three years.

Greg Hands:

The Government published the first ever hospitality strategy in July 2021, through which it also outlined its commitment to decarbonise the hospitality sector and its supply chains. The recently formed Hospitality Sector Council was set up to work with the sector, by co-creating solutions and delivering the commitments set out in the strategy, such as developing a greener sector.

The Government also encourages all UK businesses, including those in the hospitality sector, with 500 employees or fewer to visit the [UK Business Climate Hub](#), and sign up to the globally recognised small business climate commitment. Businesses gain access to a range of resources to help them achieve net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest.

In addition, the Government is also working closely with major trade associations in these sectors who have industry-wide net zero strategies. These include the Zero Carbon Forum who have released their Net Zero Roadmap, which is endorsed by UK Hospitality, and WRAP.

■ **Mineworkers' Pension Scheme**

Michael Fabricant: [\[105346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will conduct a review into the operation of the coal miners' pension scheme and the transfer of surpluses from the pension fund to HM Treasury.

Greg Hands:

The BEIS Select Committee carried out an inquiry into the Mineworkers Pension Scheme last year. The Government was unable to accept the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee's report and continues to believe that the existing arrangements work well for all parties. Following the publication of the report, the former Minister of State for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change, the Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan, met the MPS Trustees on 21 June to discuss the report and options for the way forward. She asked the Trustees to consider whether they would be willing to include the Government Guarantee in any future discussions around surplus sharing and the Investment Reserve. The Government awaits their response.

■ **Natural Gas**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[105405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential effect of a national retrofit strategy on the level of the UK's reliance on gas.

Greg Hands:

Natural gas will have an ongoing role to play as the UK decarbonises, however achieving net zero by 2050 means the Government will need to stop burning unabated natural gas in homes and business for heating purposes.

The Government's recently published retrofit strategy, the Heat and Buildings Strategy, signalled its ambition to phase out new natural gas boilers from 2035, with decisions to be taken in 2026 about the potential role of hydrogen boilers as an alternative.

The Government has also committed £3.9 billion of funding over the next 3 years to retrofit UK homes and buildings and is extending the Energy Company Obligation Scheme until 2026.

■ **Natural Gas: Production**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[105403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the impact of harnessing the UK's domestic energy potential for gas on levels of domestic energy production.

Greg Hands:

The UK has a robust domestic supply of gas from the UK Continental Shelf. It has been operating at 90% or more of its potential capacity for gas production throughout the current winter. This Government, through the North Sea Transition Deal, is ensuring that there is a strong role for the sector in making sure resilience is maintained.

■ New Businesses**Seema Malhotra:**[\[105534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to provide support to people seeking to start a new business.

Paul Scully:

We are committed to providing support to people seeking to start new businesses. We provide access to finance to people who want to start a business through the British Business Bank (BBB). The Start Up Loans Company, part of the BBB, has delivered 89,934 loans across the UK with a value of more than £811.67 million since the Start Up Loans programme's launch in 2012 to the end of November 2021.

Our network of 38 Growth Hubs across England, provides key services to new businesses offering free information and 1-1 advice, alongside our free Business Support Helpline. Growth Hubs offer triage, diagnostic and signposting services to make sure that all businesses know what support is available and know how to apply.

The Government's business advice pages on GOV.UK also provide information and guidance relevant to starting, growing and maintaining a business, as well as their statutory rights and obligations, and links to support provided by devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. All details can be found online: www.gov.uk/browse/business.

■ Nuclear Power Stations: Decommissioning**John Redwood:**[\[105321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to make up for the reduction in energy derived from nuclear power in this decade as the current fleet of nuclear stations close.

Greg Hands:

This Government is committed to nuclear power in our future diverse energy mix:

- Hinkley Point C will supply 3.2GW of secure, low carbon electricity for around 60 years, meeting around 7% of GB's current electricity requirements. Hinkley has roughly the equivalent output to three of its predecessors.
- The Government are progressing negotiations over Sizewell C in Suffolk.

- Our £385m Advanced Nuclear Fund, the Government have awarded £210m to Rolls-Royce SMR to develop their SMR design and are supporting AMR development.
- The Government also announced a new £120m Nuclear Enabling Fund to provide targeted support to address barriers to entry for future nuclear,
- Later this year the Government will publish a nuclear roadmap setting out the government's strategy in more detail.
- The Nuclear Energy (Finance) Bill will reduce the obstacles to financing new nuclear projects.

■ Offshore Industry: Licensing

John Redwood:

[\[105318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to grant permits to allow companies to develop new gas and oil fields that have investment plans and proven reserves; and what the timetable is for the granting of those permits.

Greg Hands:

The UK offshore oil and gas sector is important; it continues to heat homes, fuel cars and underpin security of supply while the Government grows its renewables sector and develops its low carbon infrastructure. As the Government moves to a low carbon future, the sector needs a managed transition, to avoid losing the employment and expertise which will help us achieve the energy transition.

Before proceeding to consent, proposals for field development are subject to extensive scrutiny by regulators: the Oil and Gas Authority and the Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning. The Government does not comment on individual projects undergoing the regulatory process. Any decisions made by these regulators are published in due course.

■ Parental Leave

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[105588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2021 to Question 32423, on Parental Leave, when he plans to publish the report of his Department's evaluation of the Shared Parental Leave scheme.

Paul Scully:

Evaluating Shared Parental Leave and Pay is an important part of the policymaking process.

As part of the evaluation, we commissioned large, representative surveys of parents and employees which asked about a range of parental leave and pay entitlements as well as their experience of Shared Parental Leave specifically. We also consulted on high-level options for reforming parental leave and pay.

We are currently analysing this information and will publish our findings in due course.

■ Postal Services: Standards

Dawn Butler:

[\[108482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what arrangements have been made for regular delivery of letters in the NW10 area in response to Royal Mail delivery delays.

Paul Scully:

Royal Mail has publicly stated that it is aware of the reduction in service levels in some areas and is taking action to reduce delays to deliveries. Its contingency plans to mitigate disruption to postal services are overseen by the Office of Communications (Ofcom) as the independent regulator for the sector.

Ofcom continues to monitor Royal Mail's performance to ensure it is providing the best service it can to customers and has powers to investigate and take enforcement action if Royal Mail fails to achieve its performance targets.

■ Regional Planning and Development

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[105485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing conditions so that retrofitting the existing building stock contributes to the Department's levelling up agenda.

Greg Hands:

The Government is committing a further £3.9 billion for retrofitting buildings with energy-efficiency measures over the next three years. This takes total commitment to decarbonising buildings to £6.6 billion in this Parliament. In the Heat and Buildings Strategy, the Government sets out how decarbonising buildings can support growth and levelling up. This work is predicted to support 175,000 green skilled jobs by 2030 and 240,000 by 2035. This will result in £6 billion additional gross value added by 2030, with a focus on the areas that most need investment.

■ Renewable Energy: Finance

Alan Brown:

[\[105612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the estimated additional cost is to consumer bills of the financial commitments aligned with the Contracts for Difference Round 4 auction.

Greg Hands:

The Government is committed to minimising energy costs for businesses and consumers. Contracts for Difference offer value-for-money to consumers and continue to deliver low prices. For example, between the first allocation round in 2015 and the most recent round in 2019, the price per unit (MWh) of offshore wind fell by around 65%.

Competitive auctions are proven to be effective in helping to keep costs down, and this year's auction has been designed to keep the allocation process

highly competitive. The impact will be dependent on the outcome of the competitive auction process, its expectation is that this year's round will have a relatively small impact on household bills.

■ **Small Businesses: Carbon Emissions**

Seema Malhotra: [\[105540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what (a) support and (b) guidance his Department is providing small businesses to help reduce carbon emissions in their supply chains.

Greg Hands:

The Government continues to support UK businesses in meeting their net zero commitments. The former Net Zero Business Champion, my Hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs, led the Race to Zero campaign targeting small and medium businesses,

Businesses can visit the [UK Business Climate Hub](#) to sign up and get advice on how to reduce emissions, including sector-specific guidance. Upon climate commitment, businesses gain [access in reducing their emissions](#), including a carbon calculator tool, a modular, interactive education course and CDP's new standard reporting framework. All small businesses making a climate commitment receive monthly communications from the Department, which signpost the latest policy and regulatory changes in addition to the "Together For Our Planet" digital toolkit.

■ **Utilities: Fraud**

Bim Afolami: [\[105791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure full checks are carried out to corroborate applicants are the occupiers at an address before utilities' contracts are transferred to a new account holder; and if he will take steps to help tackle incidents of fraudulent misrepresentation of utility contract holders.

Greg Hands:

Gas and electricity supply licences enforced by the independent regulator, Ofgem, require energy suppliers to take all reasonable steps to ensure they have a valid contract with the customer before making a transfer request to switch their energy supply to avoid erroneous transfers.

■ **Zoo Animals Fund**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[108480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2022 to Question 105377 on Northern Powergrid: Storms, how many compensation payments (a) have and (b) have not been processed by Northern Powergrid in relation to Storm Arwen and Storm Barra.

Greg Hands:

The Government has been informed that a significant proportion of compensation cases have been paid by Northern Powergrid. Any remaining cases remain under investigation or in progress.

CABINET OFFICE**■ 10 Downing Street: Government Procurement Card****Emily Thornberry:**[\[108508\]](#)

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

Michael Ellis:

No.

■ Duchy of Lancaster: Finance**Tommy Sheppard:**[\[108552\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government receives financial information from the Duchy of Lancaster beyond that published in their annual public accounts.

Michael Ellis:

The Government does not receive financial information beyond that published by the Duchy in their annual public accounts.

■ Life Expectancy**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[108538\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of trends in life expectancy in (a) Coventry North East, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England in the last ten years.

Michael Ellis:

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

Attachments:

1. PQ108538 - UKSA Letter Response [2022.01.25 - PQ108538 - UKSA Letter Response.pdf]

■ Lord Brownlow of Shurlock Row**Angela Rayner:**[\[108526\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2021 to Question 90430 on Lord Brownlow of Shurlock Row and with reference to the correspondence between the

Independent Adviser of Ministers' Interests and the Prime Minister, whether his Department holds the messages that were on the Prime Minister's former phone.

Michael Ellis:

The exchange has been published in Lord Geidt's correspondence, which is available on GOV.UK and in the Library of the House.

COP26

■ Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action

Alex Norris:

[\[108603\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, whether the Government plans to sign up to the International Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action.

Alok Sharma:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to [PQ 73892](#) on 22 November 2021.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and War Pensions

Owen Thompson:

[\[108579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many applications for payments under the (a) War Pensions and (b) the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme were made in each year from 2010.

Leo Docherty:

The number of disablement claims registered under the War Pension Scheme (WPS) and the number of injury/illness claims registered under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) in each financial year from 2009-10 to 2020-21 is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Registered Disablement ¹ claims under the War Pension Scheme and Registered Injury/Illness claims under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, by financial year ², numbers- 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2021

FINANCIAL YEAR	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	
War Pension Scheme	13,819	12,330	11,840	11,878	12,149	11,043	
Armed Forces Compensation Scheme ^{3,4}	5,302	6,527	7,305	7,774	8,699	8,964	
Financial Year	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Total

FINANCIAL YEAR	2009-						
	10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	
War Pension Scheme	10,496	9,065	8,998	8,865	8,441	4,774	123,968
Armed Forces Compensation Scheme ^{3,4}	9,246	9,087	9,457	8,842	8,059	5,300	94,562

Source: War Pension Computer System (WPCS) and Compensation and Pension System (CAPS)

1. Disablement claims include both First and Second/Subsequent claims.
2. By financial year of claim registered.
3. Injury/Illness claims registered by the service person. Survivors' Claims are not included in this response.
4. These figures exclude registered events which end up being cancelled or withdrawn. However, there were 1,703 registered initial injury/illness claims which were pending as at 31 March 2021, many of which may end up being removed.

Owen Thompson:

[\[108580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of applications for payments under the (a) War Pensions and (b) Armed Forces Compensation Scheme have resulted in (i) a financial award, (ii) a full award and (iii) a partial award.

Leo Docherty:

Between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2021:

Of the 107,882 disablement claims cleared under the War Pension Scheme (WPS), 63,665 (59%) resulted in a financial award.

In addition to those who received a financial award, 8,741 first and second/subsequent claims were accepted but received no financial award.

Of the 94,562 injury illness claims registered under the AFCS, 53,785 (57%) resulted in a financial award (tariff level 1-15).

In addition to those who received a financial award, as at 31 March 2021 11,909 claims were accepted but no financial award was made and, 1,703 initial claims were still pending, which had yet to be attributed an outcome.

Awards are normally made on a full and final basis although the scheme rules allow for "fast payments" where part payment can be made and if certain criteria are met. Additionally sometimes it is not possible to determine the level of award because a condition is not stable so interim awards are made.

Owen Thompson: [\[108581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of applications for payments under the (a) War Pensions and (b) Armed Forces Compensation Scheme have resulted in the applicant (i) withdrawing or (ii) not taking steps to progress their claim.

Leo Docherty:

This information is not held in the format requested and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Owen Thompson: [\[108582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of applications for payments under the (a) War Pensions and (b) Armed Forces Compensation Scheme are declined at the (i) initial application stage, (ii) the appeal stage, and (iii) at the tribunal stage.

Leo Docherty:

Between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2021:

Of the 107,882 disablement claims cleared at initial review under the War Pension Scheme (WPS), 34,965 (32%) were declined. During this period 11,748 tribunal decisions were made. 7,016 (60%) of which were rejected by the Tribunal and found in the Department's favour.

Declined initial reviews include rejected first and second/subsequent disablement claims and maintained assessments at second/subsequent claim. Declined tribunal decisions include disallowed disablement entitlement appeals and maintained assessment appeals. Both exclude reduced assessments.

Please note, there is no internal appeals process under the WPS and as such an answer to question (ii) cannot be provided.

Of the 94,426 injury/illness claims cleared under the AFCS, 29,615 (31%) were initially rejected. Of the 18,921 reconsiderations cleared under the AFCS, 13,993 (74%) were declined. During this period 7,550 tribunal appeals were cleared. 3,561 (47%) of which were rejected and found in the Department's favour.

Declined reconsiderations and tribunal appeals includes disallowed and maintained claims but excludes reduced awards.

■ Armed Forces: Cadets**Stuart Anderson:** [\[106871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to support cadet units in (a) state schools and (b) wider community settings.

James Heappey:

The Cadet Forces are a key part of the Government's youth agenda and receive cross-party support. They help young people broaden their horizons, unlock their potential, and enable them to feel they can be part of something rewarding. The Ministry of Defence is continuing to invest in the Cadet

Expansion Programme to sustain and grow cadet units in schools, particularly those in the state sector, as part of our commitment to Levelling Up. We are also committed to support cadet units in the wider community across the UK, to bring this fantastic opportunity to even more young people.

■ **Armed Forces: Deployment**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[106661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the deployment of UK forces overseas.

James Heappey:

Defence has successfully maintained its core and most important outputs throughout the pandemic, reacting with agility and flexibility to mitigate the risks posed by COVID-19. Defence will continue to take a risk management approach and adopt appropriate Force Protection measures to enable the overseas deployment of UK Armed Forces personnel during the pandemic.

■ **Armed Forces: Firearms**

Stephen Kinnock: [\[108529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the Government plans to announce the replacement for the SA80 assault rifle.

Jeremy Quin:

The requirements for a replacement to the SA80 family of weapons are currently being investigated. The Army, working with the other services, is leading on this process.

Stephen Kinnock: [\[108530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the replacement for the SA80 assault rifle will be manufactured in the UK.

Jeremy Quin:

A decision has not been taken on where the replacement will be manufactured, as consideration of the replacement options has not yet completed.

Stephen Kinnock: [\[108531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the SA80 assault rifle go out of service in 2025; and whether he is planning to extend its service life.

Jeremy Quin:

The SA80's current Out of Service Date is 2030.

■ **Boxer Vehicles**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[107482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which British Army infantry battalion is due to be the first to receive the Boxer AFV.

Jeremy Quin:

Following the Integrated Review, the Boxer fleet will be an integral part of the new Armoured Brigade Combat Teams. The decision on which British Army infantry battalion will be the first to receive the vehicles is yet to be confirmed.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[107483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the anticipated date is of first deliveries of the Boxer AFV to the first unit.

Jeremy Quin:

As confirmed by the Secretary of State in the future soldier announcement, units will start to receive their first vehicles from 2023.

■ Defence: Finance**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[108481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how his Department calculates the total DEL cost for a defence programme.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 24 January 2022 to Question 105379.

Attachments:

1. Referred PQ 105379 [Question 105379.docx]

■ European Fighter Aircraft: Radar**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[105378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the TDEL costs of the AESA radar upgrade.

Jeremy Quin:

The total financial approval for the AESA radar is £818.9 million and this is intended to deliver a prototype European Common Radar System (ECRS) Mk2 radar ready for flight trials and critical design review for the ECRS Mk2 production radar.

The strategic intent to continue ECRS Mk2 development and integrate the radar onto Typhoon was confirmed in the Defence Command Paper. However, the investment required to do so is subject to final approval.

■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[107484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many hours the 617 Squadron F-35Bs flew on the Carrier Strike Group 21 operation.

James Heappey:

F-35B Lightning aircraft from 617 Squadron accrued some 930 flying hours during the course of their deployment with Carrier Strike Group 21.

■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft: Air Pollution

Alex Sobel:

[\[108609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the level of pollution caused by a F-35 fighter jet (a) taking off and (b) landing; and what powers he has to regulate those pollution levels in the context of the Government's commitments made at COP26.

Jeremy Quin:

The F-35 Lightning uses Aviation Fuel at a similar consumption rate to comparable Combat Aircraft. However, it offers large advantages over legacy aircraft fleets like Tornado GR4, and a far greater proportion of routine training can now be achieved in highly realistic simulators, that for previous legacy fleets would have required additional reliance on live flying. The RAF continues to work to enhance this Synthetic Operational Training environment through Next Generation Operational Training (NGOT) and Programme Gladiator, further reducing its reliance on live flying to meet routine training goals.

Working closely with the Defence Strategic Fuels Authority, industry and academia, the RAF is also leading research and trials of the next generation of Sustainable Aviation Fuels and future Synthetic Fuels.

■ LE TacCIS Programme: Costs

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[105383\]](#)

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

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence is not able to release financial information regarding forecasted TDEL (whole life costs) for the MORPHEUS 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:

[\[107480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many flight hours has each P-8 aircraft flown since being delivered.

James Heappey:

Poseidon MRA1 aircraft have completed some 2,340 flying hours in RAF service which commenced in late 2019.

■ Maritime Patrol Aircraft: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[105384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to Question 100453, for what reason the whole life costs of the P-8 programme has fallen.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 20 January 2022 to Question 105386.

Attachments:

1. Maritime Patrol Aircraft; Procurement [105386 - Maritime Patrol Aircraft.docx]

■ Military Aid: NHS**Mr Kevan Jones:****[107485]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Royal Navy/Marines, (b) British Army, and (c) RAF personnel are officially held on short notice to move periods in support of the NHS.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence maintains a force at readiness of 30 days or less for a range of winter resilience tasks and contingent operations, including for support to the COVID response across the UK, and to help to alleviate pressures within the NHS.

Mr Kevan Jones:**[107486]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total cost has been of holding armed forces personnel in readiness to support the NHS since March 2020.

James Heappey:

There has been no financial cost for holding UK Armed Forces personnel at readiness to support the NHS since March 2020. When forces deploy under the Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) system, the MACA activity is typically not funded from the MOD budget and is conducted on a repayment basis.

■ Ministry of Defence: Freedom of Information**Justin Madders:****[105590]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many requests made under the Freedom of Information Act have been declined under the grounds set out in section 26 of that Act in each of the last five years.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence publishes this information quarterly and annually through the Cabinet Office. The quarterly and annual information for 2017-2020 is available on the gov.uk website. The annual Freedom of Information Statistics for 2021 will be published in spring 2022. However, the first three quarters for 2021 are available on gov.uk.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/government-foi-statistics>.

■ Multi Role Ocean Surveillance Ship: Procurement

Luke Pollard: [\[107714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the Multi-Role Ocean Surveillance Ship that will replace HMS Scott will (a) be ordered and (b) enter service.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 25 November 2021 to Question 76874 to the right hon. Member for North Durham (Mr Kevan Jones).

Attachments:

1. Multi-Role Ocean Surveillance Ship; Procurement [UIN 76874.docx]

■ Navy: Shipping

Luke Pollard: [\[107719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has plans to adopt hydrogen propulsion for the Royal Navy's small vessel fleet to reduce carbon emissions.

Jeremy Quin:

All future shipbuilding programmes will consider alternative fuel options and sustainability efficiencies within their designs as well as technologies for measuring and optimising power consumption. At this stage, there are no plans to adopt hydrogen propulsion for the Royal Navy's existing small vessel fleet.

■ Norway: Maritime Patrol Aircraft

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[106655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the UK currently has an agreement with the Royal Norwegian Air Force to share facilities to maintain their respective P-8 fleets.

Jeremy Quin:

The Royal Air Force and Royal Norwegian Air Force maintain strong links, especially in respect of P-8A Poseidon. However, there are no arrangements currently in place between the Royal Air Force and the Royal Norwegian Air Force to share facilities to maintain their respective P-8A Poseidon Fleets, and none are currently planned.

■ RAF College Cranwell: Heating

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[108478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January 2022 to Question 93929, what assessment he has made of the extent to which the restoration of the heating at RAF Cranwell is a sustainable solution to the restoration of heat.

Jeremy Quin:

The repair to restore the heating in the College Hall Officers' Mess at RAF Cranwell is a long-term solution. Additional work is planned to mitigate against future pipework issues, which, in turn will ease any future maintenance.

■ UK Border Force: Shipping**Luke Pollard:**[\[107716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has control, ownership and management of Border Force vessels as part of its operational control of the Royal Navy's cross channel migration operation.

James Heappey:

Under Operation ISOTROPE, Defence will assume command and control responsibilities for Border Force vessels assigned to the operation and will have the ability to task them accordingly.

■ Ukraine: Russia**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[106659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of potential strategic coordination between China and Russia on the future and security of Ukraine.

James Heappey:

We are watching the situation in Ukraine closely, alongside wider factors which may have a destabilising effect or play into Russia's decision-making calculus. Russia's aggressive posturing is not acceptable; we urge President Putin to withdraw his forces from the Ukrainian border and defuse this situation immediately.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[106660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his policy is on NATO's pledge to deploy troops to Ukraine if that country is invaded by Russia; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

NATO has not pledged to deploy troops in Ukraine in the event of an invasion by Russia. NATO has been clear however that any further military incursion into Ukraine by Russia would be a very serious strategic mistake and would be met with significant consequences, including severe economic costs through coordinated sanctions by Allies and partners. Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military build-up in and around Ukraine undermines Euro-Atlantic security. NATO and the UK are united in support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Alliance remains open to dialogue but Russia must de-escalate.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

John Healey:

[\[106625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what date the Government decided to give the Royal Navy primacy in tackling illegal Channel crossings; and which Minister took that decision.

James Heappey:

[Holding answer 21 January 2022]: Defence initiated planning for the Royal Navy to take primacy over counter migration operations in the English Channel on 30 December 2021. Efforts to tackle illegal Channel migration are cross-Government and include the work of the Cabinet Office taskforce led by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, with Ministerial decision making vested in the Cabinet and its sub-committees.

John Healey:

[\[107453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what tactics will the Royal Navy plans to use to deter migrants from crossing the Channel illegally.

James Heappey:

Defence's contribution will focus on efficient command and coordination of cross-Government assets to improve surveillance, detection and interception capabilities. Operation ISOTROPE aims to prevent all uncontrolled arrival of migrants, with all migrant vessels intercepted before, or as, they land, on UK shores.

John Healey:

[\[107456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Navy will have (a) command and (b) control powers over the (i) Border Force and (ii) UK coastguard vessels in its role of preventing illegal Channel crossings.

James Heappey:

Operation ISOTROPE will see Defence have operational control of all cross-Government assets in the Channel involved in counter-migration operations.

John Healey:

[\[107458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Navy will be given additional powers in order to assist in their role of primacy in preventing illegal Channel crossings.

James Heappey:

The Royal Navy's role will focus on efficient command and coordination of cross-Government assets to improve surveillance, detection and interception capabilities. No new legal powers for the Navy are envisaged at this time.

John Healey:

[\[107459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether any additional funding will be provided to the Navy for taking primacy of deterring illegal Channel crossings.

James Heappey:

The Government is committed to delivering a step change in countering irregular and uncontrolled migration in the English Channel. Planning for

Operation ISOTROPE is underway and Defence will be engaging with the Home Office and Treasury, as needed, regarding the potential costs involved.

John Healey: [\[107460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of total cost to the Navy of taking primacy for deterring illegal Channel crossings.

James Heappey:

The Government is committed to delivering a step change in countering irregular and uncontrolled migration in the English Channel. Planning for Operation ISOTROPE is underway and Defence will be engaging with the Home Office and Treasury, as needed, regarding the potential costs involved.

John Healey: [\[107461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether Navy ships will be used to transport migrants from the English channel to (a) the UK, (b) France or (c) an offshore process centre.

James Heappey:

Under Operation ISOTROPE, Defence's role is to enhance the UK's ability to respond to all irregular immigration and safety of life at sea incidents in the English Channel. Our planning assumptions are for persons intercepted in the Channel to be escorted to the UK in a safe and controlled manner, for onward processing.

John Healey: [\[108457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether Navy ships will be deployed in the Channel to tackle illegal migrant crossings.

James Heappey:

There may be a requirement for the deployment of Royal Navy vessels to help to counter illegal migrant crossings, and Defence has a range of capabilities that may be called upon to contribute to this objective. Detailed planning for Operation ISOTROPE is underway and further detail will be announced in due course.

John Healey: [\[108458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he discussed his proposals for the Navy to take primacy for tackling illegal Channel crossings with his French counterpart.

James Heappey:

The Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary remain responsible for engagement and negotiations with the French on our future relationship with regards to stemming irregular migration between Europe and the United Kingdom. The defence relationship with France remains strong, and Ministers engage with their French counterparts regularly on areas of joint interest.

John Healey: [\[108459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on defence and security cooperation between the UK and France of his decision to give the Navy primacy in tackling illegal Channel crossings.

James Heappey:

The UK and France enjoy a strong defence and security relationship with many areas of shared interest, from operations in the Sahel to tackling the criminal networks behind people trafficking. The decision to give our Navy primacy over countering illegal Channel crossings will contribute to the common goals of both the UK and France to tackle this abhorrent activity.

■ **Veterans UK: Email****John Healey:**[\[108460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2022 to Question 105352 on Veterans UK: Telephone Services, how many emails asking for support Veterans UK has received each year since 2010.

Leo Docherty:

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

FINANCIAL YEAR	EMAILS
2015-16	26,340
2016-17	23,906
2017-18	20,110
2018-19	21,676
2019-20	24,003
2020-21	54,882
2021-22	39,419

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **Broadband: Optical Fibres****Chi Onwurah:**[\[106698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of encouraging all communications providers to offer services across existing incumbent and independent fibre networks.

Julia Lopez:

It is the government's view that the best way to achieve nationwide gigabit coverage is to create a competition-friendly environment in areas where deployment is commercially viable.

Regulations set by the independent regulator Ofcom on operators with significant market power - Openreach and KCOM - enable other operators to access their networks to deploy services in certain circumstances. In addition, networks which are rolled out due to government subsidy regimes including Superfast and Project Gigabit are required to offer wholesale access.

As a result of this approach, there is now a thriving market of over 80 providers rolling out gigabit broadband all over the UK across many existing incumbent and independent fibre networks.

However, where network operators choose to deploy their services and over which networks Internet Service Providers choose to offer their services is ultimately a commercial matter.

Chi Onwurah: [\[106699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what incentives BT has to utilise independent fibre networks to provide BT retail customers with broadband where no Openreach fibre exists.

Julia Lopez:

It is the government's view that the best way to achieve nationwide gigabit coverage is to create a competition-friendly environment in areas where deployment is commercially viable.

Alternative networks may allow service providers to reach additional customers and compete on price and quality of service standards, improving overall consumer outcomes.

However, as a service provider, it is for BT to choose where to deploy its services and which networks it chooses to offer its services over, including in areas where the Openreach network is not available, given this is ultimately a commercial matter.

Chi Onwurah: [\[107574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has taken steps to prevent BT from exclusively using Openreach fibre infrastructure following the legal separation in 2017.

Julia Lopez:

Ofcom's reforms of the BT Group's governance structures in 2016 and 2017 were designed to address concerns that Openreach's decisions were favouring BT and insufficiently considering the needs of other operators. Ofcom has since established the Openreach Monitoring Unit to monitor Openreach's compliance with these reforms and publishes a report each year. The most recent report from December 2021 is available on Ofcom's website [here](#).

The government has not taken steps to mandate BT's use of other networks, and as a commercial internet service provider, it is for BT to choose where to deploy its services and over which networks it chooses to offer these services.

■ National Lottery: North of England

Chi Onwurah:

[107573]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made a comparative estimate of the (a) contribution of Camelot to the North and (b) amount spent by people in the North on lottery sales.

Chris Philp:

The operation of the National Lottery and the distribution of good cause income are two separate processes. 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 of 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.

Since 1994, the National Lottery has raised over £45 billion for good causes. Over 660,000 individual grants have been awarded since the National Lottery started - the equivalent of more than 235 lottery grants in every UK postcode district. More detailed information about National Lottery grants can be found at the National Lottery grants database [website](#). Due to technical limitations, this database does not incorporate more recent National Lottery grant data. We hope to have this resolved in the Spring.

Camelot publishes aggregated National Lottery sales data two months in arrears on their [website](#). More granular data, for example analysed by region, not published due to commercial sensitivities.

■ Public Sector: Staff

Rachael Maskell:

[107628]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will ensure that public sector workers who have to work over the extended Jubilee Bank Holiday will be in receipt of Bank Holiday pay.

Chris Philp:

This year, the UK celebrates Her Majesty The Queen's 70th anniversary as monarch. As with previous Jubilee celebrations the first weekend in June has been chosen to celebrate this truly historic moment for the country.

The Government's policy is to encourage employers to respond flexibly to any requests for leave bearing in mind business needs, and this would include Bank Holidays designated to mark the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty The Queen.

Legislation does not give employees a right to time off or extra pay on bank holidays, but employers may include bank holidays as part of a worker's leave entitlement. Any right to time off or extra pay for working on a bank holiday depends on the terms of an employee's contract of employment. Time off may be taken at a later date as some individuals have to work on a bank holiday

■ Sports: Government Assistance

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[106726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what (a) financial and (b) other steps her Department is taking to help support grassroots sports initiatives in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Nigel Huddleston:

All generations and communities should be able to enjoy the physical and mental health, wellbeing, social and other benefits of being active.

Since 2018, the department has invested £308,544 into a wide range of grassroots sport projects within the Coventry North East constituency through Sport England. This is part of the £2,468,509 invested in Coventry, and over £87 million invested in the West Midlands during the same period. In addition, the Football Foundation, a charity jointly-funded by Sport England, has granted over £2.3m to the West Midlands to develop football and multi-use grassroots sports facilities in 2021/22.

In 2020 alone, Sport England distributed over £340 million of Exchequer and Lottery funding to support the development of grassroots sport in England, in addition to £100 million through the National Leisure Recovery Fund.

As well as the above funding, the government is also making significant investments in the region as part of preparations for the upcoming Commonwealth Games in Birmingham; and will be investing £205m across the UK over the next three years to further develop quality local sports facilities for community use.

■ Television Licences

Andrew Percy:

[\[106679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many black and white TV licences have been paid for in each of the last five years.

Julia Lopez:

The BBC is responsible for administration of TV licences and, therefore, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport does not hold this information. However, the below figures from the BBC's Annual Reports show the number of monochrome TV licences in force for each of the last five financial years, to the nearest thousand.

2020/21: 4,000

2019/20: 5,000

2018/19: 5,000

2017/18: 6,000

2016/17: 6,000

■ **Television Licences: Fees and Charges**

Sarah Champion:

[\[106713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what impact the freezing of the licence fee will have on funding for the BBC World Service.

Julia Lopez:

The BBC will continue to receive billions in public funding every year.

The government recognises the vital role that the BBC World Service plays across the globe.

The Secretary of State has made it clear to the BBC that it should continue to make a substantive investment from the licence fee into the World Service to ensure that it continues to effectively reflect the United Kingdom, its culture and values to the world - in English and through its language services.

■ **Tourism: West Midlands**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[106727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of trends in the level of public funding for tourism in (a) Coventry and (b) the West Midlands in each of the last three years.

Nigel Huddleston:

VisitBritain and VisitEngland are responsible for promoting the UK as a tourist destination, through a range of different initiatives and campaigns. In each of the last three years, VisitBritain has been receiving grant-in-aid totalling ca £19.9 million and VisitEngland ca £7.1 million from DCMS, as well as additional funds. For example, almost £2 million across 20/22 and 2022/23 to promote the Birmingham Commonwealth Games taking place in Summer 2022.

While the department does not hold information on individual local authorities' public funding for tourism, the government has continued to support the tourism sector in Coventry and the West Midlands throughout the past three years. In addition to the £45 million Discover England Fund England's Waterways project, Coventry City of Culture, and the Commonwealth Games, the government has provided over £37 billion of grants, loans and tax relief to the UK's leisure, hospitality and tourism sectors since March 2020

Last September we published Nick de Bois' review of Destination Management Organisations in England, which looked specifically at how tourism is structured, organised and funded at a local level in England. We are now carefully considering the recommendations made by Nick de Bois and hope to publish a response in the coming weeks.

EDUCATION**■ Children: Day Care****Mike Amesbury:****[106865]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made over the number of women at risk of unemployment due to (a) lack of available childcare spaces and (c) the rising costs for childcare.

Will Quince:

In terms of the availability of childcare spaces, we know from findings from the 2021 Childcare and early years providers survey that there is some spare capacity in the system. 7 in 10 (70 per cent) group-based providers reported having spare places in their full day provision and almost half of childminders (49%) reported having spare capacity on average across the week. The survey can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-and-early-years-providers-survey-2021>.

We continue to monitor sufficiency of childcare and liaise regularly with local authorities through telephone calls and regular surveys. They are not currently reporting any substantial sufficiency or supply issues and we have not seen a substantial number of parents unable to secure a childcare place, either this term or since early years providers re-opened fully on 1 June 2020.

This government is committed to making childcare more affordable and more accessible. In terms of the costs of childcare, this includes 15 hours free early education for all three and four year olds and disadvantaged two year olds, as well as an additional 15 hours for eligible working parents (also known as '30 hours'), which can help save families over £6,000 per child a year.

The tax-free childcare offer is also available for working families. This scheme means that for every £8 parents pay their provider via an online account, the government will pay £2, up to a maximum contribution of £2,000 per child each year (up to £500 every 3 months).

Additionally, Universal Credit childcare reimburses up to 85% of childcare costs for working parents on a low income. This is subject to a monthly limit of £646 for one child or £1,108 for two or more children, payable in arrears

Findings from the department's parent survey (published in December 2019) highlights the positive impact the 30 hours free childcare entitlements can have on parents' working patterns, with a third (33%) of parents saying that in the absence of 30 hours they would be working fewer hours and the majority of parents (70%) reporting that 30 hours had given them more flexibility in the hours they could work. It also showed that a small but notable proportion of mothers reported that accessing the 30 hours had led them to enter work (6%) or increase their hours (17%). The survey can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-and-early-years-survey-of-parents-2019>.

The department continues to explore what more can be done to help parents access childcare which suits their lives, including out of hours childcare or before or after school. We are committed to working together across

government to make our current suite of offers work as effectively as possible and ensure it delivers for those parents who need it.

■ **Coronavirus: Protective Clothing**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[105397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for its policies of the figures from Scotland on the reduction of transmission of covid-19 connected with mask wearing in schools.

Mr Robin Walker:

Each of the devolved administrations has a Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and a Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA). They work with Sir Chris Whitty, the CMO to the UK government, and Sir Patrick Vallance, the government CSA, to provide co-ordinated advice to government departments in all 4 nations.

Expert scientific advisory groups are convened at a UK level and provide advice to the CMOs of the 4 nations, to health authorities in the devolved administrations, and to the devolved governments directly.

The UK government has worked closely with the devolved administrations throughout the COVID-19 outbreak and continues to do so. However, education and health are devolved, and each nation of the UK has its own guidance to support education providers. It will be for the Scottish government to respond regarding its figures and face covering policies and the reduction of transmission of COVID-19 connected with mask wearing in schools in Scotland.

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

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) provides independent, evidence-based advice and guidance to other government departments, including the Department for Education, in the context of the response to COVID-19. The advice provided is based on critical appraisal of the most up-to-date evidence available and has changed depending on the epidemiological picture and emerging evidence. It is based on this advice that the department's recommendations are made.

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, announced on 19 January that Plan B is to end. This decision comes in response to national infection data showing the prevalence of COVID-19 to be on a downward trajectory. Whilst there are some groups where cases are likely to continue rising, it is likely that the Omicron wave has now peaked nationally. There remains significant pressure on the NHS, but hospital admissions have stabilised, and the number of patients in intensive care units remains low and is falling.

Therefore, it is right that we remove the most stringent restrictions around wearing face coverings in schools, but the virus is still with us and continuing with proportionate protective measures remains vital to protect education.

As a result, face coverings are no longer advised for pupils, staff and visitors in classrooms. From 27 January, face coverings are no longer advised for

pupils, staff and visitors in communal areas. This advice remains subject to change as the situation develops. A link to our guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

On 5 January 2022, the department published its evidence summary on the use of face coverings in education providers which is available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1044767/Evidence_summary_-_face_coverings.pdf.

The UKHSA critically assesses and reviews the current global evidence on a range of risk mitigations, including face coverings, in publicly available evidence reviews. The most recent review was published in November 2021 and can be found at: <https://ukhsa.koha-ptfs.co.uk/cgi-bin/koha/opac-retrieve-file.pl?id=35a32498205a656d9a849736b4037314>.

■ Department for Education: Diaries

Wendy Chamberlain:

[106887]

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

Michelle Donelan:

Ministers regularly meet with departmental officials and external stakeholders. Details of ministerial meetings with external organisations are published quarterly and can be found on <https://www.gov.uk/>.

■ Disability and Special Educational Needs: Children and Young People

Dan Carden:

[R] [107698]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what mechanisms are in place to encourage effective cross-department working to help ensure that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities receive the relevant support for their needs.

Will Quince:

Working across government to ensure the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are met, is a priority for this department.

In July 2021 the government published the National Disability Strategy, setting out our vision to improve the everyday lives of disabled people. We gave a range of commitments over supporting children and young people with disabilities in their education and preparation for adulthood.

One of the most frequently occurring types of SEN recognised in children and young people is autism. We are working closely with partners across government to improve support for autistic people of all ages.

In July 2021, we published jointly with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) the new 'Autism Strategy', which extended to children and young people for the first time, with funding in its first year of £74 million. In it, we set out how we will continue our programme of developing training and

resources for education staff. We also committed to working in collaboration across government, with autistic people and their families, the NHS, local government, and the voluntary sector, to implement the strategy, and we are continuing to do so.

Focusing on the health and care needs of children and young people with SEND, the department contributes to the cross-system, cross-government building the right support delivery board which is responsible for driving further progress in reducing the number of autistic children, young people, and adults, with a learning disability in mental health inpatient settings. We are a key partner in the children and young people's workstream, which is one of the board's core priorities.

Working closely with DHSC, the department has lent its support to the Down's Syndrome Bill, currently moving through parliament, and proposed by my right hon. Friend for North Somerset, which seeks to improve services and life outcomes for people with down's syndrome. The bill would place a new duty on my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, to issue guidance in England to certain health, social care, housing and education authorities on meeting the specific needs of people with down's syndrome.

■ Education: Assessments

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[105400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department taking to ensure that provision for exams will be made for the 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.

The department recognises that students taking exams this year will have experienced disruption to their education caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. That is why, together with Ofqual, we consulted on and have confirmed a range of adaptations to GCSE and A/AS level exams. Exam boards will be releasing advance information about the focus of the content of exams in most GCSE and A/AS level subjects by 7 February. Other adaptations include a choice of content or topics and the provision of exam aids in some GCSEs. A range of adaptations are also available for awarding organisations to use for vocational and technical qualifications.

Additionally, Ofqual have confirmed that 2022 will be a transition year for grading. Grades will be set around a midpoint between 2021 and pre-pandemic grades.

This package of adaptations, combined with Ofqual's approach to grading, provides unprecedented support to maximise fairness and help students reach their potential.

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

■ Education: Autism

Robert Halfon:

[105482]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of autistic children and young people that have yet to return to full-time education following the periods of school closures as a result of covid-19.

Will Quince:

We do not collect data on the attendance of children and young people broken down by specific conditions. Statistics on attendance can be found here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, we have published and updated guidance for special schools, special post-16 providers and alternative provision to provide additional information and support for delivering education in these settings, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>. This is clear that regular attendance at

school, both special and mainstream, is vital for children's education, wellbeing and long-term development and school attendance has been mandatory since the end of the last national lockdown.

To support this, we recommend that leaders in education work collaboratively with families to reassure them and to help their child engage with their everyday activities. Discussions should have a collaborative approach, focusing on the welfare of the child or young person and responding to the concerns of the parent, carer or young person.

Any families with concerns about their child's health should speak with their child's GP or health care team for advice and guidance.

■ Education: Coronavirus

Vicky Foxcroft:

[106799]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an estimate of the number of (a) autistic children and young people and (b) other pupils in Lewisham Deptford that have yet to return to full-time education as a result of covid-19.

Will Quince:

We do not collect data on the attendance of children and young people broken down by specific conditions. Statistics on attendance during the COVID-19 outbreak can be found here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

The department collects data on the total number of children that are absent each day from school due to any reason relating to COVID-19. As we collect the total number of students absent from school, we are unable to determine if the same pupil is absent on consecutive days, so are unable to provide a total for the number of pupils that are yet to return to full-time education because of COVID-19.

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, we have published and updated guidance for special schools, special post-16 providers and alternative provision to provide additional information and support for delivering education in these settings. This is clear that regular attendance at school, both special and mainstream, is vital for children's education, wellbeing and long-term development and school attendance has been mandatory since the end of the last national lockdown. Our guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>.

To support this, we recommend that leaders in education work collaboratively with families to reassure them and to help their child engage with their everyday activities. Discussions should have a collaborative approach, focusing on the welfare of the child or young person and responding to the concerns of the parent, carer, or young person.

Any families with concerns about their child's health should speak with their child's GP or health care team for advice and guidance.

■ Education: English Language and STEM Subjects

Munira Wilson:

[108627]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many teaching hours per week, on average, are spent on (a) Maths, (b) English and (c) Sciences for children in Key Stage (i) one, (ii) two and (iii) three.

Mr Robin Walker:

Information on the school workforce in England, including the curriculum taught in secondary schools, is published in the annual 'School Workforce in England' national statistic here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

As at November 2020 (latest information available) around 15% of reported taught teaching hours were in each of mathematics, English and sciences in state-funded secondary schools in England (Table 1). To produce this information, data on subjects taught is collected from a large sample of secondary schools, and this is then weighted and grossed to provide national totals.

Table 1: Hours taught in a typical week in state-funded secondary schools¹ for key stage 3², by subject, number and percentage³

November 2020

SUBJECT	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Mathematics	272,435	14.9%
English	283,896	15.5%
All Sciences	271,082	14.8%
Total	1,830,688	100.0%

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

1 - Collected from secondary schools that use electronic timetabling software that can produce data in the format required

2 - Teaching in years 7, 8 and 9.

3 - Percentage of all hours taught.

The information requested is not collected centrally for key stages 1 and 2. Some information is available from the Omnibus Survey (2017). The information collected through this survey provides information on the amount of time, in minutes per week, spent teaching subjects within primary schools (key stage one and two) (Table 2). Information from this survey was published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-voice-omnibus-may-to-july-2016-survey-dfe-questions>

Table 2: Minutes per week spent on curriculum subject-specific lessons in primary schools, by subject, median and percentage of time taught

May 2016

SUBJECT	MEDIAN	PERCENTAGE
Mathematics	300	30%
English	300	30%
Science	60	6%
Total	995	100%

Source: Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey May 2016 and Senior Leader booster June 2016

Number of responses = 469

All state-funded schools are required to offer a balanced and broadly based curriculum which promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development; and prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.

■ Home Education

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[108534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children are home-schooled in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department does not collect data on the number of electively home-educated children as there is no statutory requirement for local authorities to maintain such a register. Such data as is currently collected is held by local authorities.

However, the government is committed to a form of a register for children not in school, which would include home educated children. This would improve data collection and sharing, as well as help local authorities undertake their existing duties 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.

■ Schools and Universities: Confucius Institutes

Neil Coyle:

[\[105576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department monitors the activities of Confucius Institutes in English schools and universities.

Michelle Donelan:

A number of education providers in England host Confucius Institutes (higher education) or Confucius Classrooms (schools) and they are responsible for ensuring their partnerships are managed appropriately with the right due diligence in place.

The department does not monitor the activities of these partnerships but takes seriously any concerns regarding the operation of international organisations at UK education providers. We will continue to support education providers to promote mutually beneficial international collaborations. We will look carefully at this important issue and if any provider has concerns regarding their international collaborations, they should inform the government.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[106636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many primary school (a) children and (b) teachers and staff have been diagnosed with covid-19 in each month in (i) 2020 and (ii) 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department does not hold the primary data source of COVID-19 cases. This is accessible from the 'Coronavirus in the UK' dashboard. COVID-19 case data can be found here:

https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/?_ga=2.91108568.335840232.1603021384-1347302696.1578321854.

The department publishes daily school attendance data on a fortnightly basis. This helps with the monitoring of the COVID-19 impact on school attendance. Absence due to suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 is available from the 23 May 2020 to 6 January 2022 and information can be found on Explore Education Statistics. The most recent national, regional and local authority data can be found here:

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

National level pupil data can be found in Table 1B of the underlying data files, whilst teacher data can be found in Table 1D. For dates where any local authority is on half term, a holiday methodology is applied and the national data for both pupil and teachers can be found in Table 1A.

■ Schools: Discipline

Darren Jones:

[108600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to recruit more private applied behaviour analysis tutors nationally.

Will Quince:

Autism is a spectrum condition where children have a range of strengths and difficulties. There is no well-founded research to show that any one intervention for children with autism (such as Applied Behaviour Analysis) is more effective than all the other interventions or which interventions are best for which children on the spectrum. The government believes that intervention decisions should be taken by professionals locally, in consultation with parents and young people, after a thorough assessment of the child or young person's needs.

All schools are required to identify and address the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) of the pupils they support and to use their best endeavours to make sure that a child or young person gets the support they need.

High needs funding, which is specifically for supporting children with SEND, will be increasing by £1 billion in financial year 2022-23 and will bring the overall total of funding for high needs to £9.1 billion. This unprecedented increase of 13% comes on top of the £1.5 billion increase over the last two years. Decisions about how funding is used, including for the employment of specialist tutors or the use of specific interventions, are made by local authorities and schools.

■ Schools: Disclosure of Information

Kate Green:

[105506]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent guidance he has issued to (a) local authorities and (b) academy trusts on using non-disclosure agreements for school staff.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department has issued no new advice to local authorities or schools in relation to non-disclosure agreements (NDAs). Our position remains as set out in paragraph 5.29 of the Staffing and Employment Advice for Schools, that any settlement agreement between a school and a member of staff that includes a confidentiality clause must adhere to the provisions set out in the Employment Rights Act 1996.

Advice in relation to NDAs has recently been focused on higher education providers. On 18 January 2022, my right hon. Friend, the Minister for Higher and Further Education launched a new pledge alongside Maria Miller MP and Can't Buy My Silence, which commits universities to not using 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 the campaign group, Can't Buy My Silence, and hosted on their website.

Harassment of any sort is abhorrent and cannot be tolerated at schools, colleges or universities. Education providers have a responsibility to ensure that they provide a safe and inclusive environment for all students and staff.

■ Schools: Finance**Daisy Cooper:****[105740]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 14 January to Question 98444 on Schools: Finance, how many schools have contacted the Educational Skills and Funding Agency on the matter of financial difficulties in each year since 1 April 2017.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department trusts schools to manage their own budgets. The latest published data shows that financial health has held up well and that most academy trusts and maintained schools are in surplus. At the end of the 2019/20 academic year, 96% of academy trusts were in surplus or broke even compared to 94% the previous year. At the end of 2020/21 financial year, 92% of local authority maintained schools were in cumulative surplus or broke even compared to 88% the previous year.

For academies, the department is the primary regulator. Academy trusts' Funding Agreements, the Academy Trust Handbook and the Academies Accounts Direction set a clear regulatory framework. The academy trust financial support framework provides trusts, and the public, with greater clarity on the circumstances in which we would offer financial support to financially vulnerable trusts, available to view here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/financial-support-for-academy-trusts-in-financial-difficulty/financial-support-for-academy-trusts-in-financial-difficulty>. It sets out more information about our expectations and

requirements for receiving this support, and the conditions we may apply to ensure any support is managed effectively. As part of this activity, we work with trusts to develop and monitor a plan to return to a sustainable, well-managed position and helping them build their capacity. The department is transparent and publishes annual data on the financial support given academy

trusts in financial difficulty, and to trusts supporting schools in financial difficulty. The data for academic years 2018-19 and 2019-20 can be found on GOV.UK, here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-trusts-receiving-esfa-financial-support-in-2018-to-2019> and here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1041460/Annex_9_additional_funding.pdf. Data for academic year 2020-21 will be published later this year alongside the 2020-21 Academies Sector Annual Report and Accounts.

The primary responsibility for maintained schools and the management of their finances, including schools in financial difficulty, rests with their local authority. Local authorities are required to publish schemes for financing schools, setting out the financial relationship between them and the schools they maintain. Each scheme will be different and tailored to local authority. The department's role is to support local authorities in their efforts to strengthen the financial accountability and efficiency of the maintained schools' sector.

The department also provides a range of information, tools, training, and guidance to help schools and trusts save money on day-to-day costs through the school resource management programme, available to view here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/schools-financial-health-and-efficiency>.

■ Schools: Visual Impairment

Dan Carden: [R] [107699]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many Qualified Teachers of the Visually Impaired were working in schools in England in each of the last five years.

Dan Carden: [R] [107700]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many specialist habilitation workers were working within school settings in England in each of the last five years.

Dan Carden: [R] [107701]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to increase the number of specialist professionals supporting children and young people with a vision impairment, including specifically habilitation professionals and qualified teachers of the visually impaired.

Will Quince:

The department is firmly committed to ensuring that children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND), including visual impairments, receive the support they need to achieve in their early years, school and college.

Information on the number of qualified teachers of the visually impaired, and specialist habilitation workers, is not collected by the department.

It is a legal requirement for qualified teachers of classes of pupils who have sensory impairments to hold the relevant mandatory qualification in sensory impairment (MQSI). To offer MQSIs, providers must be approved by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education.

We intend to develop a new approval process to determine providers of MQSIs from the start of the academic year 2023/2024. Our aim is to ensure a steady supply of teachers of children with visual, hearing, and multi-sensory impairment, in both specialist and mainstream settings.

High needs funding, which is specifically for supporting children with more complex SEND, will be increasing by £1 billion in the financial year 2022-23 and will bring the overall total of funding for high needs to £9.1 billion. This unprecedented increase of 13% comes on top of the £1.5 billion increase over the last two years.

Decisions about how funding is used, including for the employment of specialist teachers for visually impaired children and specialist habilitation professionals, are made by local authorities and schools.

■ Social Services: Children

Thangam Debbonaire:

[105789]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans the Government has to improve provision of social services to protect vulnerable children.

Will Quince:

Local authorities children's social care spending on the most vulnerable children – those needing a social worker, children in care, and care leavers – has increased by over £3 billion since financial year 2012-13.

The department takes robust action when an authority does not meet its requirements to protect all children and young people. Local authorities rated inadequate by Ofsted receive comprehensive support from the department. Those performing well are supported to share best practice.

In this financial year, 2021-22, we have invested £5.7 million to expand our sector-led improvement (SLI) programme so that 19 of our strongest performing local authorities are able to work with their peers, to improve children's social care services. Since July 2021, SLI partners have worked with 42 local authorities, the majority of which are judged to be inadequate or require improvement by Ofsted, and have delivered around 5,500 days of support to the sector.

We are investing over £4 million over the three years to March 2024 to support the development of corporate and political leadership across children's services, working closely with the Local Government Association. 146 local authorities out of a total of 151 have benefited from the programme to date.

We have also invested £22.2 million in the COVID-19 Regional Recovery and Build Back Better Fund this year, which seeks to support local authorities to

work together to address COVID-19 pressures, where a regional approach would be beneficial in addressing issues that face the sector.

Looking to the future, this government is committed to making a real difference to the needs, experience and outcomes of vulnerable children and families supported by children's social care. To do this, we need to make fundamental changes to the current system. That is exactly why this government launched the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, a bold and broad review with the aim of contributing to ambitious and deliverable reforms.

The review will share its final recommendations in spring 2022 and the government will then consider and respond to them. Further, the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes's death and the Joint Targeted Area Inspection of Solihull will make sure we learn what needs to be changed nationally, and that we can understand and strengthen local work to safeguard children.

■ Special Educational Needs: Autism

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[106797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for SEN support in schools for the purposes of ensuring that autistic children who do not have an education health and care plan are supported.

Will Quince:

The majority of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) do not have an education, health and care plan and are supported by their schools from the allocations of funding they receive for all their pupils. We have announced that significant additional funding is being made available for schools.

In financial year 2022-23 alone, core schools funding will increase by £4 billion compared to financial year 2021-22, a 5% real terms per pupil boost. This total includes a £2.5 billion increase in mainstream school funding for 5 to 16 year olds in financial year 2022-23, compared to this financial year 2021-22. This is equivalent to an average 5.8% cash increase, or £300, per pupil – with each local authority forecast to see at least a 4.7% increase per pupil for the mainstream schools in their area.

The national funding formula continues to distribute this funding fairly, based on the needs of schools and their pupil cohorts. It is provided to cover mainstream schools' core spending, including support for pupils with low to mid-level SEND. Regulations require local authorities to identify such an amount within each school's budget, and to calculate that amount using a sum of £6,000 (per pupil) as the threshold below which the school will be expected to meet the additional costs of pupils with special educational needs from its core budget, before accessing further high needs top-up funding from the local authority. It remains for individual schools to determine the best use of the funds available to them, to support all their pupils, including those with SEND.

Alongside additional funding, we have made significant progress with the SEND Review and my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, committed, at the 3 November 2021 Education Select Committee, that in the first three months of this year we would publish proposals for full public consultation.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Private Sector**

Darren Jones:

[108599]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of current regulations for private special educational needs providers in ensuring that the level of education provided is adequate.

Will Quince:

Independent schools must have meet the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 which set out the standards for the education, welfare and safety for pupils attending an independent school, including pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Ofsted and the Independent Schools Inspectorate inspect all independent schools against these standards.

Local authorities are responsible for securing the provision specified in the education, health and care plans (EHCPs) they maintain, including for those placements in private providers. They are required to conduct reviews of all EHCPs that they maintain at least annually. If a review finds that elements of the provision specified in the plan are no longer appropriate, then the local authority should review the EHCP and consider whether the provision should be amended and/or a different institution named.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Visual Impairment**

Dan Carden:

[R] [106841]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to actively engage children and young people with a vision impairment in the upcoming SEND Review.

Dan Carden:

[R] [106842]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has for engaging the parents and carers of children and young people with a vision impairment in the upcoming SEND Review.

Will Quince:

Throughout the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Review, we have engaged extensively with children and young people with a range of SEND, and their parents, to ensure we have heard their views directly about how the system needs to improve, including for those with a visual impairment

The outcome of the Review will be published in the first three months of this year as a Green Paper for full public consultation. We will ensure that our subsequent public consultation is accessible to a wide audience and provide a range of alternative formats to support those with vision, motor, cognitive or

learning difficulties and deafness or impaired hearing engage fully in the consultation.

■ Special Schools: Ventilation

Helen Hayes: [\[106813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2022 to Question 100627, on Special Schools: Ventilation, how many CO2 monitors were offered to special schools.

Helen Hayes: [\[106814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2022 to Question 100627, on Special Schools: Ventilation, how many CO2 monitors were offered to nurseries and early years settings.

Mr Robin Walker:

The CO2 monitor roll out began in September 2021 to all state-funded education providers, including early years, schools and further education providers. This included all special schools and alternative provision, who were prioritised to receive their monitors first given their higher-than-average numbers of vulnerable pupils.

As of 14 January 2022, the department has delivered 22,859 CO2 monitors to special schools, including post-16 special and alternative provision education providers, and 42,665 CO2 monitors to nurseries and early years education providers.

The programme provided state-funded education providers, including special schools, nurseries, and early years education providers, with sufficient monitors to take representative readings from across their estate assessing all spaces in a relatively short space of time. All education providers have received roughly one monitor for every two teaching rooms. Precise numbers vary according to different provider types. CO2 monitors are portable and so schools and other education providers can move them around to test their full estate, starting with areas they suspect may be poorly ventilated.

The department has also provided guidance on how to use CO2 monitors. This is available on the ventilation document sharing platform that all providers have access to.

■ Universities

Andrew Rosindell: [\[105401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that universities return to face-to-face teaching and in person learning.

Michelle Donelan:

Face-to-face teaching is a vital part of getting a high-quality student experience. With the removal of the Plan B measures, there are no COVID restrictions that apply to higher education (HE) and providers should ensure that they are delivering the full programme of face-to-face teaching and learning that they were providing before the COVID-19 outbreak.

We know that, in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, HE providers have delivered new and innovative approaches to teaching and learning and some providers continue to use some of these approaches alongside in-person provision. However, online learning should only be offered to enhance the student experience, not to detract from it, and it should not be used as a cost-cutting measure. The Office for Students (OfS) will be monitoring to ensure this is the case, and that universities are being open about what students can expect.

The government expects all universities to continue to deliver excellent learning, in line with guidance from the OfS. On 29 October I wrote to all English HE providers to make clear that we expect them to be offering a high-quality face-to-face student experience and, on 17 January, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education wrote an open letter to students about face-to-face teaching, setting out what they can do if they feel they are not getting the teaching they signed up for, details of which can be found here: <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/01/17/face-to-face-teaching-is-a-vital-part-of-getting-a-high-quality-student-experience-education-secretary-nadhim-zahawi-writes-to-students/>. In addition, I have been speaking with some university Vice Chancellors to ensure they are offering students the amount of in-person teaching they should expect.

If students have concerns, they should first raise them with their HE provider. If their concerns remain unresolved, students at HE providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for higher education to consider their complaint.

■ Vocational Education: Coastal Areas

Sally-Ann Hart: [\[105761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on improving the provision of technical education in coastal towns; and if he will make a statement.

Sally-Ann Hart: [\[105762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on improving the provision of technical education in coastal towns; and if he will make a statement.

Sally-Ann Hart: [\[105763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on improving the provision of technical education in coastal towns; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Burghart:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, and officials within his department meet with counterparts in other government departments regularly to discuss education and skills matters.

In 2021 the department worked with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and other government departments, by contributing to its work on the Future of Seaside Towns and setting out the department's proposals to boost skills and technical education around the country, including in coastal towns.

We are investing £3.8 billion more in further education and skills over 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 more investment for apprenticeships and employers in coastal communities can access funding for apprenticeships to meet their skills needs.

We have also launched T Levels, which are world-class programmes developed with over 250 leading employers to the same quality standards as apprenticeships and will ensure more young people gain the skills and knowledge demanded by employers. T Levels are already being delivered across the country, including in coastal areas such as Scarborough and Blackpool.

The government is rolling out Local Skills Improvement Plans, which will set out the key changes needed to make technical education and training more responsive to local labour market skills needs. They will be developed by local employer representative bodies working closely with further education colleges, other providers and key local stakeholders, and will be tailored to the challenges and opportunities most relevant to local areas. We have started by trailblazing these Plans in eight local areas across England in 2021-22, including in Cumbria, Kent, Sussex and Tees Valley, which have coastal towns.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Air Pollution

Geraint Davies:

[\[105335\]](#)

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

Jo Churchill:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 20 January 2022 to PQ UIN [102535](#).

■ Animal Welfare

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[106816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing an animal welfare commissioner to produce an annual report on the state of animal welfare in England.

Jo Churchill:

This Government is committed to high levels of animal welfare, and we have set out over 40 areas in the Action Plan for Animal Welfare, published in May 2021.

The Animal Welfare Committee is a non-statutory expert committee which advises Defra and the Scottish and Welsh Governments on the welfare of animals, and would be the most appropriate body to produce reports on the state of animal welfare. The Animal Welfare Committee considers the welfare of farmed animals, companion animals and wild animals kept by people.

In 2020, the Animal Welfare Committee published a report on 'The Animal Welfare Issues Related to Covid-19 – Short Term', followed by a second report on 'The Animal Welfare Issues Related to Covid-19 – Medium to Longer Term'. The Animal Welfare Committee's reports are available on its website: [Animal Welfare Committee \(AWC\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).

■ Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks: Conservation

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[105772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to safeguard England's protected landscapes.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[107550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to safeguard protected landscapes.

Rebecca Pow:

Our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are more important than ever for the nation's health and wellbeing, as well as nature recovery and climate action.

The Government response to the Landscapes Review was published on Saturday 15 January and sets out measures to safeguard protected landscapes. The response is accompanied by a consultation that will run for 12 weeks until Saturday 09 April. For more information please see the official Government response page which also links to the consultation: [Landscapes review \(National Parks and AONBs\): government response - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

■ **Businesses and Litter: Costs**

Ruth Jones: [\[101833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the cost to consumers of including business and litter collection costs within the reformed Extended Producer Responsibility system.

Ruth Jones: [\[101834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy for the costs of collecting business and litter waste to be redeemed from businesses and litterers rather than consumers.

Jo Churchill:

The Government will publish the response to its recent consultation on Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging in early 2022 which will set out the Government's final policy position and analysis. Initial analysis showed a limited effect on prices for consumers. We will continue to talk to all the Devolved Nations, as a consistent approach would be best for everyone.

■ **Climate Change: Research**

Mr Andrew Mitchell: [\[105375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support research on (a) the effect of climate change on nature and (b) the carbon capture potential of woodland; and if he will hold discussions with the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research on the implications for his policies of research on the rate of photosynthesis in mature woodland exposed to artificially raised levels of CO₂.

Mr Andrew Mitchell: [\[105786\]](#)

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

Jo Churchill:

I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave on 19 January 2022 to PQ [101646](#) and PQ [101647](#).

■ **Countryside: Access**

Alex Norris: [\[108606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if the Government will make it its policy to ensure access to the countryside as part of the Environmental Land Management regime.

Victoria Prentis:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Huddersfield on 19 January 2022, PQ UIN [100429](#).

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

■ Fly-tipping**Dr Kieran Mullan:**[\[105780\]](#)

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

Jo Churchill:

We are taking firm action to tackle fly-tipping. Our proposals on electronic waste tracking will replace outdated paper forms with a robust online system. Our proposed reforms to licencing for waste carriers and brokers will allow us to clamp down hard on rogue waste operations and make it easier than ever to detect unlicensed operators. These build on enhanced enforcement powers in last year's Environment Act, and on £350,000 of Defra grant funding for local council projects to tackle areas of persistent fly-tipping. I am resolved to do all we can to relentlessly increase the pressure on fly-tippers and other waste criminals, until we end their blight on our streets and countryside.

■ Forests**Dr Kieran Mullan:**[\[105781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to create new woodlands.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government has committed to bring tree planting rates across the UK up to 30,000 hectares per year by the end of this parliament. The England Trees Action Plan set out how we intend to at least treble woodland creation in England over the same period to contribute to this, and we will continue to work with the Devolved Administrations to deliver a UK-wide step change in tree planting and establishment.

The Plan is supported by £500 million from the Nature for Climate Fund. Furthermore, in the recently published Net Zero Strategy, we announced we will boost the Nature for Climate Fund with a further £124 million of new money, ensuring total spend of more than £750 million by 2025 on peat restoration, woodland creation and management.

The England Trees Action Plan sets out 90 measures to reach our tree planting targets. Since publishing the Plan, we have launched the ground-breaking England Woodland Creation Offer, which will pay land managers to plant the right trees in the right places; supported the existing network of Community Forests across the country, and launched three new Community

Forests, in Cumbria, Devon and the North-East; and launched the Woodlands for Water partnership, which will use tree planting to reduce pollution in hundreds of miles of rivers.

■ Green Recovery Challenge Fund

Gill Furniss:

[\[108585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to open the next round of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund for applications.

Rebecca Pow:

The £80 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF) formed part of the Government's green economic recovery, jobs and skills package. Through its funding of 159 projects across England, the Fund has supported environmental charities and their partners to recover, restore nature, tackle climate change and connect people with the natural environment. There are no plans at present for future rounds of GRCF.

We are, however, boosting the existing £640 million Nature for Climate Fund with a further £124 million of new money, ensuring total spend of more than £750 million by 2025 on peat restoration, woodland creation and management - above and beyond what was promised in the 2019 manifesto.

In addition, we are introducing three schemes that reward farmers and land managers for the delivery of environmental benefits: the Sustainable Farming Incentive; Local Nature Recovery; and Landscape Recovery. These schemes will pay for sustainable farming practices, improving animal health and welfare, reducing carbon emissions, creating and preserving habitat, and making landscape-scale environmental changes. This is an important step towards achieving our 25 Year Environment Plan ambitions and our net zero goal.

■ Nature Conservation

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[105782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to protect native species and wildlife in England.

Rebecca Pow:

This Government has set a world leading target to halt the decline in species by 2030, under the Environment Act 2021. This will drive action to recover native species, such as the hedgehog and red squirrel. My department will publish a Green Paper early this year which will look at how the regulatory framework can help drive the delivery of our 2030 target and reverse declines of species.

Our Environment Act establishes Local Nature Recovery Strategies which will help identify local biodiversity priorities in order to improve co-ordination of conservation. We are also taking action, through the net gain provisions in the Act, to support the role of new development in helping to protect, improve and create the habitat that our native species need to thrive.

We are creating a Nature Recovery Network across the country. At the core of the network will be our existing protected sites and existing areas of high value for biodiversity, which we will strengthen by creating and restoring new habitat to provide both the space and ecological connectivity across the country that we know species rely on to thrive. This will be supported by our new environmental land management schemes, which will deliver the Prime Minister's 10 point plan commitment to create the equivalent of well over 30,000 football pitches of wildlife rich habitat.

In addition, we continue to invest in our native species. The £80 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund is enabling nature recovery across England, from North Northumberland to the tip of Cornwall. Through this funding, we have supported 159 projects, ranging from new 'insect pathways' in our countryside to tree planting projects in deprived urban areas.

We are also establishing an England Species Reintroductions which will bring together statutory bodies, experts and stakeholders to provide independent advice on potential species for conservation translocation and reintroduction in England.

■ Pigs: Livestock Industry

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[106911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on a compensation package for the English pig farmers in regard to the culling of healthy pigs due to capacity restraints at abattoirs.

Victoria Prentis:

The Secretary of State and I have frequent discussions with the pig sector on the unique challenges the sector has faced this past year and in response, we have provided a package of measures. These include temporary work visas for up to 800 pork butchers, and Private Storage Aid (PSA) and Slaughter Incentive Payment (SIP) schemes to facilitate an increase in the throughput of pigs through abattoirs. Together with the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board, we are working to identify new export markets for pork. In addition, in England and Scotland, the two meat levy bodies, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board and Quality Meat Scotland, suspended the statutory levy for pig farmers and producers during November 2021.

The Government does not provide financial support for the culling of animals. Responsibility for animal welfare on the farm remains with the owner/keeper, who should have contingency plans in place to ensure the welfare of their animals.

The Government will continue to monitor the evolving situation and work closely with the industry through this challenging period.

■ Plastic Bags: Fees and Charges

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[105363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that UK retailers are transparent in their accounting of how they spend revenue raised from the plastic bag levy and demonstrate how the revenue is used to support good causes.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[105785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking through discussions with Britain's major retailers to ensure that the proceeds from the plastic bag levy are redistributed into good causes.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[106629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure that retailers direct all revenues raised through the plastic bag levy to charitable causes.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[106630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps is he taking to help ensure transparency in how supermarkets report how revenues raised through the plastic bag charge are spent.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[106631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps is he taking to ensure transparency in how supermarkets report how revenues raised through the plastic bag charge are spent.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[106632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps is he taking to help ensure that the plastic bag charge meets its objective to redirect revenue raised into good causes.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[106633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with major retailers regarding the proportion of revenues that they have raised through the plastic bag levy going back into good causes.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[106634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential incentives that can be put in place to help encourage retailers to invest revenues from the plastic bag levy into good causes.

Jo Churchill:

The carrier bag charge has been very successful in reducing the number of single-use carrier bags used - which have fallen by 95% for major retailers. Retailers with over 250 staff must keep three years of records, including how many single-use bags have been sold, and how the proceeds have been used. Whilst there is no legal obligation on retailers to donate the charge,

Defra encourages doing so and publishes a summary including the amounts of money given to good causes:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/carrier-bag-charge-summary-of-data-in-england>

Retailers have donated nearly £190 million to good causes from the charge since its introduction.

■ Shellfish: Inshore Fishing

Paul Girvan:

[\[101811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reason nearshore clam dredging and trawling is permitted; and what assessment he has made of the impact of those activities on basic marine systems.

Victoria Prentis:

Fisheries management is devolved.

In England, inshore clam dredging, and trawling fisheries are managed and monitored by the Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authorities (IFCAs). IFCA byelaws include a variety of measures including permitting schemes to control fishing effort. Byelaws are accompanied by an Impact Assessment which sets out the anticipated costs and benefits of the proposed measure, including the environmental, social, and economic impacts. The Fisheries Act includes a commitment to develop domestic Fisheries Management Plans which will be a key mechanism to delivering sustainable and well-managed fisheries.

■ Territorial Waters

Paul Girvan:

[\[102755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of re-establishing the three mile limit.

Victoria Prentis:

Fisheries management is largely devolved. In England, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities manage fisheries in the 0-6 nautical mile zone. In future, fisheries management will increasingly be delivered through Fisheries Management Plans.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Armed Conflict

Paul Bristow:

[\[105753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment her Department has made of the situation for the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan.

James Cleverly:

We understand that the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan has been less active militarily since it was reported that the Taliban had largely taken control of Panjshir province on 6th September 2021. We are aware of talks held between Taliban and Ahmed Massoud, one of the co-founders of the

National Resistance Front, in Tehran on 10th January. We will continue to monitor the situation.

■ **Afghanistan: Humanitarian Aid**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[108465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps her Department has taken to aid Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis during the winter months.

James Cleverly:

The UK has been at the forefront of efforts to address the situation, working with the UN Security Council, the G20, the G7 and countries in the region. The Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and other Ministers have all been working extensively with world leaders.

In August 2021, the Prime Minister announced that the UK would double its assistance for Afghanistan to £286 million this financial year, and we have now disbursed over £145 million. That will support over 3.4 million people in Afghanistan and the region, providing emergency food, healthcare, shelter, water and protection. We are working at pace to allocate the remaining funding in response to the crisis and the new UN appeal. I thank the British people for donating to the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) appeal launched in December, which has raised a total of £28 million so far, including £10 million provided by the UK Government through the UK Aid Match scheme.

■ **Afghanistan: Intelligence Services**

Dan Jarvis:

[\[106705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the UK delivered training to the National Directorate of Security under the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund's Security and Justice programme.

James Cleverly:

Before the fall of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the UK Government supported efforts to build the capacity of Afghan institutions, including the National Directorate of Security, Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army to help counter security threats to Afghanistan and the United Kingdom but the details of our work remain sensitive on national security grounds.

■ **Afghanistan: Refugees**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[105437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2022 to Question 98335 on Afghanistan: Refugees, how many of those 3,400 people have been supported to exit Afghanistan itself since the end of Operation Pitting; and what forms that support has taken.

James Cleverly:

The UK has supported over 3,400 individuals to leave Afghanistan since the end of Op Pitting, this includes over 1,200 British nationals and eligible Dependents. The forms of support for these 3,400 individuals has been varied and on a case-by-case basis.

■ Africa: Coronavirus**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[107528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 14 January 2022 to Question 98897 on Africa: Coronavirus, whether £7,000 is the entire planned budget for the Africa Vaccine Confidence Campaign.

Vicky Ford:

Communication plays a central role in instilling vaccine confidence. The Africa Vaccine Confidence Campaign is producing social media content to tackle vaccine hesitancy. The total amount allocated to the Campaign is £8,500.

The Africa Vaccine Confidence Campaign is only part of the UK's work to address vaccine hesitancy. The UK-convened G7 Global Vaccines Confidence Campaign is sharing best practice in increasing vaccine confidence and establishing partnerships across G7 and non-G7 countries and with key academic institutions. It is also creating a platform through which relevant data, insight and effective strategies are shared with non-G7 partners. To help countries tackle the Omicron COVID-19 variant, we are also providing an additional £20 million to our existing work with Unilever to promote vaccine uptake alongside messaging to reduce COVID-19 transmission such as handwashing.

■ Australia: Foreign Relations**Virginia Crosbie:**[\[905245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps she has taken to help strengthen the UK's economic and security relationship with Australia.

Amanda Milling:

The Foreign Secretary has just returned from Australia, where she met her counterpart, Foreign Minister Payne, and joined the annual Australia and UK Foreign and Defence Ministers' meeting - AUKMIN, together with Defence Secretary Wallace. The visit strengthened economic, diplomatic and security ties. Working with Australia – a close partner in building a network of liberty – the UK is supporting stability in the Indo-Pacific region, and making our own country safer and more competitive.

■ **Bosnia and Herzegovina: Politics and Government**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[108463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of recent events in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their geopolitical implications on the Western Balkans.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The UK supports Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) territorial integrity. Threats from within the Republika Srpska to withdraw from State institutions are dangerous, and amount to an attempt at de facto secession. We condemn Russian interference in the crisis, which undermines EU and NATO accession ambitions, sows division, and undermines stability. We work closely with partners in the Western Balkans (WB) region to strengthen stability, democracy and rule of law, and to tackle organised crime and corruption. The Foreign Secretary convened a meeting of WB Foreign Ministers in London on 13 December, to discuss strengthening economic and security ties and supporting freedom and stability in the region. The appointment by the Prime Minister of a Special Envoy to the Western Balkans, Sir Stuart Peach, clearly demonstrates the UK's ongoing commitment to the region's stability. The Special Envoy has already visited BiH and Albania.

■ **British Overseas Territories: Coronavirus**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[107498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress has been made on delivering covid-19 booster vaccines to the Pitcairn islands, Tristan de Cunha and the staff at the British Antarctic territories.

Amanda Milling:

The FCDO have been organising the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines to the Overseas Territories, reaching all of the inhabited Territories, South Georgia and the British Antarctic Territory. Deliveries of booster doses are well underway. Booster vaccines were delivered to the British Antarctic Territory on 12 January, boosters are currently en route to Pitcairn and planning is underway to deliver booster doses to Tristan da Cunha as soon as possible.

■ **China: Human Rights**

Jim Shannon:

[\[105524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations she has made to her counterparts in China on the continued attack on the human rights of citizen journalists, academics, human rights lawyers, human rights defenders, and ethnic and religious minorities in that country.

Amanda Milling:

We have serious concerns about the human rights situation in China, including severe restrictions on ethnic minority rights, independent civil society, media freedom, and human rights defenders.

We regularly raise our concerns about human rights directly with the Chinese authorities at the highest levels. Most recently, the Prime Minister did so in a telephone call with President Xi on 29 October, as did the Foreign Secretary in her introductory call with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on 22 October. I [Minister Milling] personally raised our concerns with the Chinese Ambassador in our meeting on 15 December.

■ China: Iran

Andrew Rosindell: [\[106665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department has made an assessment of the implications of China's comprehensive strategic partnership with Iran.

Amanda Milling:

China and Iran have a long-standing and close relationship. Whilst the 'launch of the implementation of a comprehensive cooperation plan' was announced on 14th of January, details were limited. We will continue to monitor China-Iran cooperation and its implications.

■ China: Olympic Games

Andrew Rosindell: [\[107488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department will take to help ensure that British journalists are able to report freely during the Beijing Winter Olympic Games.

Amanda Milling:

Our concerns over media freedom and other human rights issues in China are well known. Officials have engaged British Olympic Association-accredited media on the likely conditions for journalists in Beijing and stand ready to provide support throughout the Games. We continue to raise media freedom with the Chinese authorities, urging them to allow journalists to practice their profession without fear of arrest, harassment or reprisal, and to end extensive censorship and control over the media and wider freedom of expression.

■ China: Syria

Andrew Rosindell: [\[106666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment her Department has made of the influence of China on the Syrian economy.

Amanda Milling:

There is limited available data on Syria's economy.

The UK is strongly against engagement with the Asad regime in absence of its genuine participation in the political process established by UN Security Council Resolution 2254. Asad and his backers have perpetrated innumerable crimes and abuses against the people of Syria and must be held to account.

■ China: Uyghurs

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[107489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the UK's work at the UN on imposing sanctions and a range of supply-chain measures to end human rights abuses against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang.

Amanda Milling:

The UK remains deeply concerned by the scale and the severity of the human rights violations being perpetrated in Xinjiang. In response, the UK has led international efforts to hold China to account at the UN, imposed sanctions on senior Chinese government officials, and taken robust action in respect of UK supply chains.

Those sanctioned face travel bans and asset freezes across the US, Canada, the EU and the UK, which together make up over 1/3 of global GDP. This sends a clear message to the Chinese Government that the international community will not turn a blind eye to such serious and systematic violations of basic human rights.

The supply chains measures we have taken include new guidance for UK businesses, and announcing enhanced export controls as well as the introduction of financial penalties under the Modern Slavery Act. Taken together, these measures will help ensure that no British organisations - government or private sector, deliberately or inadvertently - are profiting from or contributing to human rights violations against the Uyghurs or other minorities.

■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus

Julian Sturdy:

[\[905244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking with international partners to increase vaccination rates in developing nations to help ensure global protection from potential new variants of covid-19.

Amanda Milling:

The UK supports global vaccine access through the COVAX Facility, which has delivered over 1 billion doses. We have donated more than 30 million doses. Millions more will be sent in 2022. As supply increases, we are working with COVAX and country governments to ensure health systems are ready to deliver vaccines at scale.

■ Eastern Europe: Democracy

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[905239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps she is taking to help support democracies in Eastern Europe.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We strongly support the democracies of Eastern and Central Europe. Democracy and freedom are at the heart of the Foreign Secretary's vision for a Network of Liberty, using partnerships in technology, trade and security to promote democratic values. NATO is the cornerstone of Euro-Atlantic security. Closer cooperation is vital if we are to effectively counter interference by malign actors.

■ Egypt and Sudan: River Nile**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[105438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of taking steps to support the members of the Nile Basin Initiative in establishing negotiations to enable accession by Egypt and Sudan to the Cooperative Framework Agreement as part of a process to establish sustainable, cooperative and fair protocols for the management of the Nile's water among all riparian states.

James Cleverly:

The UK supports the principles of transboundary water management, however it is a matter for the Nile River Riparian States to agree on fair and equitable use of Nile Waters.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Sledge**Emily Thornberry:**[\[105425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to contracts 282362/1023256 and 200894/796293, for what reason her Department's average monthly expenditure on video production services from Sledge Ltd will rise from £7,533 in 2019-20 to £23,041 in 2022-24.

James Cleverly:

As part of its communications, the FCDO produces video content to explain the work of the department and communicate the foreign policy priorities set out in the Integrated Review. Videos produced centrally are shared on the FCDO social media channels, including embassy and high commission social media channels overseas.

Video is an impactful way to promote and explain foreign policy issues and we have boosted our professional video capability including at weekends. The increased value of the new contract also enables the FCDO to call on additional video production resources if required. The total value published online is a maximum figure and includes an optional third year 2024-2025.

Emily Thornberry:[\[105426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will publish the full contract specification issued by her Department for video production services under contract reference 282362/1023256.

James Cleverly:

The full contract specification will be attached to the Contracts Finder notice on gov.uk. <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/7cf61cff-4076-4c9a-b8d5-ef9750ba23e2?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Written Questions**Emily Thornberry:****[108506]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when she plans to answer Question 100467 from the hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury.

Vicky Ford:

Question 100467 was answered on 21 January 2022.

Hong Kong: Administration of Justice**Andrew Rosindell:****[107490]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of potential state interference in the Hong Kong judicial system.

Amanda Milling:

As the Foreign Secretary set out in the foreword to the most recent Six-Monthly report on Hong Kong, British judges have played an important role in supporting the independence of the judiciary in Hong Kong for many years. The UK Government hopes this can continue.

However, the National Security Law poses real questions for the rule of law in Hong Kong and the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms promised by China in the Joint Declaration.

Our assessment of Hong Kong's judicial independence is increasingly finely balanced; it is therefore right that it is kept under review. It is essential that both the Hong Kong judiciary and Hong Kong's legal institutions are able to operate independently and free from political interference.

Andrew Rosindell:**[905242]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the extent of state interference in Hong Kong's judicial system.

Amanda Milling:

As the Foreign Secretary set out in the most recent Six-Monthly report to Parliament, British judges have played an important role supporting the independence of the judiciary for many years. The UK Government hopes this can continue. Our assessment of Hong Kong's judicial independence is increasingly finely balanced; it is therefore right that it is kept under review.

■ Iran: Nuclear Power

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[108462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her counterparts in (a) the US and (b) Iran on negotiations to restore Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action compliance.

James Cleverly:

Negotiations to restore the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) are continuing in Vienna. On 10 December, the Foreign Secretary met E3 and US Foreign Ministers to discuss progress. I met them again on 20 January. We are resolute that Iran's continued nuclear escalation means that time is running out to conclude a deal. The Foreign Secretary continues to make this explicitly clear in her engagement with Iranian Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Jim Shannon:

[\[105523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations she has made to her Israeli counterpart on discrimination faced by Palestinians.

James Cleverly:

We have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation and encourage the Israeli Government to do all it can to uphold the values of equality for all enshrined in its laws.

■ Kazakhstan: Demonstrations

Jim Shannon:

[\[105521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations she has made to her counterpart in Kazakhstan on reported unlawful killings and excessive use of force by security forces against people protesting against deteriorating living standards and the repression of peaceful protest.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We are deeply concerned by the violent clashes witnessed in Kazakhstan in early January and greatly regret the loss of life. We condemn the acts of violence and destruction of property seen, particularly in the city of Almaty. The reasons behind the violence remain unclear, although we note that President Tokayev has characterised what happened as an 'attempted coup'. We also take note of the President's decision to establish an investigative commission and await a full account of what led to these unprecedented events and loss of life. We continue to engage directly with the Kazakh authorities to gain further insights into the chain of events and information about those who have been reported as detained, missing or dead. We are also in contact with human rights and other civil society organisations.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon spoke with the Kazakh Ambassador to the UK on 6 January, with Deputy Foreign Minister Alimbayev on 7 January and with President Tokayev's Special Representative, Erzhan Kazykhan, on 14 January. During these meetings, he underlined the importance of law enforcement responses being proportionate, that due process is followed in the judicial system, and that freedom of speech and expression are respected in line with Kazakhstan's international commitments.

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[108464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the recent violent unrest against protestors in Kazakhstan.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is closely following events in Kazakhstan. We greatly regret the loss of life and injuries sustained as a result of recent unrest and condemn the violence and destruction of property that occurred, particularly in the city of Almaty. The reasons behind the violence remain unclear, although we note that President Tokayev has characterised what happened as an 'attempted coup'. We also take note of the President's decision to establish an investigative commission and await a full account of what led to these unprecedented events and loss of life. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, the Minister of State responsible for Human Rights, was assured by President Tokayev's Special Representative, Ambassador Kazykhan, that the work of the commission would be transparent and effective.

The Government's long-standing position is that legitimate protest must be peaceful and genuine grievances resolved through dialogue. We have called for law enforcement responses to be proportionate, and for freedom of speech and expression to be respected in line with Kazakhstan's international commitments. We will continue to underline these points in our engagement with the Kazakh government, as we seek to understand the chain of events and to ensure that human rights are upheld.

■ Kenya: Al Shabaab

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[105436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support she is offering to the Government of Kenya to (a) maintain security in areas threatened by an increase in attacks by Al-Shabaab and (b) support internally displaced people and communities affected by those attacks.

Vicky Ford:

The UK and Kenya are close partners in the fight against global terrorism, and strengthening our counterterrorism cooperation is a priority under the UK-Kenya Strategic Partnership. To tackle the threat posed by Al Shabaab, the UK Government provides the Kenyan authorities with a range of support to develop their counter terrorism capabilities. This includes partnering in the development of counter-IED (Improvised Explosive Device) capability with a regional Centre of Excellence based in Nairobi that benefits the whole region.

Since 2011, the UK has played a leading role in supporting refugees fleeing fighting and drought. This has included significant investments in drought mitigation and famine prevention initiatives which range from building capacities of governments and institutions to supporting early warning systems, adaptation and resilience efforts. UK support is making a difference on the ground. I [Minister Ford] have just announced £17 million of UK emergency humanitarian support via the Crisis Reserve to address drought and food insecurity needs in Somalia (£8 million), Ethiopia (£5 million), South Sudan (£3 million) and Kenya (£1 million).

■ **Khaleda Zia**

Apsana Begum: [\[105751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations she has made to her Bangladeshi counterpart on the deteriorating health of former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and access for her to adequate healthcare.

Apsana Begum: [\[105752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations she has made to her Bangladeshi counterpart on allowing the former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to travel abroad to access healthcare treatment.

Amanda Milling:

Lord Ahmad, the Minister for South Asia, visited Bangladesh on 15 November to 17 November and met with the Government of Bangladesh, civil society actors and other key figures. During the visit, Lord Ahmad reiterated the UK's commitment to supporting human rights and democratic values.

We will continue to stress to the Government of Bangladesh, both in public and in private, the importance of respect for human rights and the rule of law. We expect those in detention, including Khaleda Zia, to be treated in accordance with Bangladesh's international commitments on human rights. We regularly engage with the Government of Bangladesh on the treatment of those in detention and on the integrity and independence of the judicial process.

■ **Mozambique: Politics and Government**

Kerry McCarthy: [\[905241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions her Department has held with counterparts in Mozambique on the political and security situation in that country.

Vicky Ford:

The UK holds regular discussions with Mozambican counterparts on the political and security situation. Our High Commissioner met the Mozambican Defence Minister on 14 January to discuss Cabo Delgado and UK support. The UK co-chairs the International Taskforce on Cabo Delgado, which works

closely with the Mozambican government, coordinating the international community response to the security and humanitarian threats.

■ Myanmar: Politics and Government

Rachael Maskell:

[\[106774\]](#)

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

Amanda Milling:

Please refer to my previous answer at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/100690>

The UK condemns the coup in Myanmar. We are deeply concerned by the military's actions, the mass displacement of people and the significant, and growing, humanitarian need. The UK is monitoring the recent increase in violence in North West and South East Myanmar closely. We are appalled by reports that the military killed at least 35 people, including four children and two staff of Save the Children, in Kayah State on 24 December. In response, the UK and international partners secured a United Nations Security Council press statement on 29 December condemning the killings and stressing the need to ensure accountability for this act, and calling for an immediate cessation of all violence and the protection of civilians. We continue to support the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar which investigates, collects, and preserves evidence of serious human rights violations for future prosecution.

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

■ Pakistan: Humanitarian Aid

Sir Edward Leigh:

[\[905240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make it her policy to make her Department's humanitarian programmes in Pakistan conditional on the Government of Pakistan's steps to protect freedom of religion or belief minority groups from forced conversions and marriages in that country.

James Cleverly:

We frequently raise the issues of freedom of religion or belief and human rights with the Government of Pakistan, including with Prime Minister Imran Khan and Foreign Minister Qureshi. We press the Pakistan Government to honour its international commitments and obligations. UK aid in Pakistan targets the most marginalised and vulnerable communities, and we fund

programmes that work to address discrimination against minorities and gender-based violence.

■ Peng Shuai

Andrew Rosindell: [\[107491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment her Department has made of the case of Peng Shuai.

Amanda Milling:

We have called on the Chinese authorities to assure the safety of Peng Shuai and we are following her case closely. Everyone should be allowed to speak out without fear of repercussions. All reports of sexual assault, anywhere in the world, should be investigated.

■ Russia

Layla Moran: [\[107702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Intelligence and Security Committee's Report on Russia published on 21 July 2020, whether she plans to implement the outstanding recommendations of that report.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government published its response to the ISC's Russia Report immediately after the report's publication (21 July 2020). The full response is available on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-intelligence-and-security-committee-russia-report>

■ Russia: Foreign Relations

Layla Moran: [\[107703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make a statement on the UK's involvement in (a) NATO-Russia Council talks on 12 January 2022 and (b) OSCE talks on 10 January 2022.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The UK is at the heart of the international community's engagement to support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This includes shaping international sanctions against Russia; deepening The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) partnership with Ukraine; and leading efforts in the UN and OSCE to hold Russia to account for its destabilising behaviour.

The first NATO-Russia Council (NRC) in two and a half years (since July 2019) took place on Wednesday 12 January. The UK and our Allies made clear to Russia that its military build-up on the border of Ukraine, and in illegally annexed Crimea, is unacceptable, and invited Russia to further meetings of the NRC to discuss our respective security concerns in detail. The only way forward is for Russia to de-escalate and engage in meaningful discussions.

At the OSCE Permanent Council meeting on 13 January, the UK and our partners outlined the importance of abiding by OSCE principles and commitments, including military transparency. The UK stressed the importance of Russia upholding the commitments it signed up to freely. This includes the Helsinki Final Act and the Minsk Protocols, as well as the Budapest Memorandum guaranteeing to "respect the independence and sovereignty and the borders of Ukraine".

■ **Russia: Ukraine**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[108461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with (a) NATO and (b) her European counterparts on Russia's continued military build-up on Ukraine's border.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Foreign Secretary spoke with EU Foreign Policy Chief, Josep Borrell, and NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, on 28 December. She also spoke with her US, German and French counterparts on 30 December and attended a virtual meeting with NATO Foreign Ministers on 7 January.

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.

■ **Somaliland**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[105593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of the Government recognising Somaliland as a sovereign state.

Vicky Ford:

The UK - in line with the rest of the international community - does not recognise Somaliland as an independent state. Our policy remains that it is for Somaliland and the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) to come to an agreement about their future relationship and for neighbours in the region and the African Union to take the lead in recognising any new arrangements. We continue to support and encourage dialogue between the FGS and Somaliland Government.

The UK nevertheless maintains a permanent diplomatic presence in Hargeisa and enjoys a strong relationship with Somaliland authorities, political parties, civil society and diaspora in the UK. UK assistance in Somaliland is also significant, supporting security, enhancing stability and promoting economic, human and social development.

■ South East Asia: Human Rights

Jim Shannon:

[\[105522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions (a) she and (b) the Minister for Asia have had with their Association of Southeast Asian Nations counterparts on human rights in (i) the region and (ii) Myanmar.

Amanda Milling:

The ASEAN Charter commits Member States to rule of law, good governance, and the principles of democracy and constitutional government. Where we have concerns about human rights in the region, we raise these bilaterally, through our regular ministerial and official engagement with host governments, and multilaterally, including through UN Human Rights Council statements and the Universal Periodic Review process.

Since the coup in Myanmar, FCDO Ministers have engaged extensively with ASEAN counterparts to raise our concern about military violence and the humanitarian crisis and reiterate our support for ASEAN's efforts to resolve the crisis. I was in Cambodia and Thailand between 9-14 January. In my meetings, I reaffirmed the UK's support for ASEAN leadership and the Five Point Consensus on Myanmar.

■ Sri Lanka: Sanctions

Siobhain McDonagh:

[\[905247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the sanctions imposed by the US on General Shavendra Silva of the Sri Lankan army.

Amanda Milling:

We regularly engage with the US and other partners on issues relating to Sri Lanka. The UK government keeps all evidence and potential designations under the UK Global Human Rights sanctions regime under close review, guided by the objectives of the sanctions regime. We would not normally speculate about future sanctions targets, as to do so could reduce their impact.

■ Summit for Democracy

Alex Norris:

[\[108602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make it her policy to request that the role of citizens assemblies be placed on the agenda for the 2022 Summit for Democracy.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government welcomed the opportunity to participate in the first, virtual Summit for Democracy in December, with the main topics being: Fighting Corruption; Defending Against Authoritarianism, and Advancing Human Rights. Throughout the Year of Action, we will work with the US and other Summit participants to advance the goals of the Summit and the UK's own

commitments. Alongside other Summit participants, we will discuss the agenda for the second, in-person Summit as it develops throughout the year.

■ **Tonga: Tsunami**

Ruth Jones: [\[105729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has discussed the recent tsunami in Tonga with her New Zealand counterpart.

Vicky Ford:

The UK and New Zealand are close partners, and we appreciate the joint working and support between our two governments. The British High Commissioner in Nuku'alofa (Tonga) is working closely with her New Zealand counterpart, and the British High Commission in Wellington is also in regular contact with the New Zealand Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT). In addition, officials from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in London have discussed the recent tsunami in Tonga with the New Zealand Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT).

■ **Tonga: Volcanoes**

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[105439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to (a) provide emergency assistance to those affected by the damage of the volcanic eruption near Tonga on 15 January 2022 and (b) ensure that British nationals affected are safe.

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. Her Majesty's Government 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.

Ruth Jones:

[105728]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what her latest assessment is of the humanitarian situation in Tonga.

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. Her Majesty's Government has been working with partners on options for support, helping to ensure a coordinated regional response.

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Mr Gregory Campbell:

[108477]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what emergency (a) aid and (b) support her Department is sending to Tonga following the eruption of the 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. Her Majesty's Government has been working with partners on options for support, helping to ensure a coordinated regional response.

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■ **Ukraine: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

John Healey:

[\[105358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the potential effect on the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine of the OSCE's special monitoring mission's budget not being renewed beyond March 2022.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The UK is resolute in our support to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM). With partners, we will call on all OSCE participating States to ensure a timely adoption of the budget for 2022/23 and continue to support efforts to ensure the SMM is able to fully implement its mandate.

■ **USA: Northern Ireland Protocol**

Colum Eastwood:

[\[107742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of the ongoing negotiations regarding the Northern Ireland protocol on the (a) Government's relations with the US and (b) likelihood of reaching a trade deal with the US.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We and the US are at one on the paramount need to protect the gains of the peace process and the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in all its dimensions. The Protocol is not currently doing that which is why significant changes are needed.

■ **Uyghur Tribunal**

Chris Law:

[\[105578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government plans to publish a response to the judgement of the Uyghur Tribunal published on 9 December 2021.

Amanda Milling:

We welcome the contribution the Uyghur Tribunal has made to building international awareness and understanding of the human rights violations in Xinjiang. The findings add to our serious and well-known concerns about the severity of the human rights violations being perpetrated against Uyghur Muslims and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. Ministers and officials have met Sir Geoffrey Nice on several occasions over the past year to discuss the tribunal's work. Whilst we do not plan to publish a response to the findings, we will continue to take robust action to hold China to account for its human rights violations in the region, working alongside our international partners.

■ Yemen: Armed Conflict

Alison Thewliss:

[\[108549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has held recent discussions with her counterparts in Oman in order to seek their best endeavours in trying to persuade the Houthis to agree to a ceasefire in their military advance towards Marib.

James Cleverly:

UK Ministers engage regularly with their regional counterparts to encourage progress towards both a political solution and an end to the humanitarian suffering in Yemen. We welcome Oman's diplomatic efforts. The Foreign Secretary and I discussed Yemen with Omani Foreign Minister Sayd Badr and wider GCC Foreign Ministers in December 2021.

■ Yemen: Aviation and Imports

Alison Thewliss:

[\[108546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has held with her counterparts in (a) the Government of Saudi Arabia and (b) the Government of Yemen on unconditionally (i) removing restrictions on the importation of fuel into Hodeidah; and what discussions she has had with those Government on opening up Sana'a International Airport for direct international flights for aid workers, journalists, humanitarian aid and seriously ill people.

Alison Thewliss:

[\[108548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the humanitarian implications of the longstanding blockade of containers destined for the port of Hodeidah; and what recent discussions she has held with her counterparts in (a) the Government of Saudi Arabia and (b) the Government of Yemen on removing these restrictions; and if she will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

The UK engages regularly with the Governments of Yemen, Saudi Arabia and with the UN to press for the swift release of fuel ships from the Coalition Holding Area. HMA Sana'a last raised the issue at the meeting of Yemen Quad Ambassadors on 14 December.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Breast Cancer

Peter Gibson:

[\[106874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage women to carry out regular self examination of their breasts to identify lumps.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS.UK promotes awareness of checking breasts for potential symptoms of breast cancer, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/womens-health/how-should-i-check-my-breasts/>

The NHS Breast Screening Programme has produced a five-point plan: individuals should know what is normal for them; examine their breasts; know what changes to look for; report any changes to a general practitioner without delay; and attend routine screening if aged 50 to 70 years old.

■ Care Homes and Hospitals: Visits**Dan Carden:****[R] [107696]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to his Answer of 18 January 2022 to Question 905095 on Care Homes: Visits, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to guarantee regular and safe visiting to (a) residents in care homes and (b) patients in hospitals.

Edward Argar:

We have no plans to bring forward legislative proposals. Decisions on how to facilitate visiting are best taken locally, in the context of national guidance. Care homes, National Health Service trusts or other NHS bodies should make an assessment in the context of local prevalence of COVID-19 and the specific design of their facilities.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus**Dame Diana Johnson:****[108487]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when care home restrictions will be lifted.

Gillian Keegan:

We are currently reviewing our guidance and we will set out the next steps shortly.

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

■ Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership: Pay**Dame Diana Johnson:****[108488]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the chief executive of the Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the chief executive of the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the (a) chief executive and (b) chair of the Coventry and Warwickshire integrated care partnership.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the (a) chief executive and (b) chair of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire integrated care system.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the (a) chief executive and (b) chair of the Joined-up Care Derbyshire integrated care system.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the (a) chief executive and (b) chair of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland integrated care system.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the (a) chief executive and (b) chair of the Lincolnshire integrated care system.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the (a) chief executive and (b) chair of the Live Healthy Live Happy Birmingham and Solihull integrated care system.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the chief executive of the Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the (a) CEO and (b) Chair of the Northamptonshire Health and Care Partnership integrated care system.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the (a) chief executive and (b) chair of the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire integrated care system.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the (a) chief executive and (b) chair of the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin integrated care system.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the (a) chief executive and (b) chair of The Black Country integrated care system.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the (a) chief executive and (b) chair of the Together we're better – Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent integrated care system.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the (a) CEO and (b) Chair of the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes integrated care system.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the (a) CEO and (b) Chair of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough integrated care system.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the (a) CEO and (b) Chair of the Hertfordshire and West Essex integrated care system.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[108505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed salary is of the chief executive of the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership.

Edward Argar:

Owing to data protection reasons, individual salaries cannot be disclosed without the individual's consent.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Andrew Gwynne: [\[107499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the recommended covid-19 guidance will be for clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable patients after Plan B restrictions are lifted on 26 January 2022.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 24 January 2022]: The Government ended the shielding programme on 15 September 2021. People previously considered as clinically extremely vulnerable are advised to follow general guidance, while considering extra precautions to reduce the risk of infection. Updated public

health advice for people who were previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable was issued on 24 December 2021, which is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19

Guidance for people whose immune system means they are at higher risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19 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

NHS England and NHS Improvement have written to general practices and hospital trusts in England to raise awareness of this new guidance.

■ **Coronavirus: Recycling**

Sarah Olney:

[106825]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the recyclability of (a) covid-19 testing equipment and (b) used personal protective equipment.

Edward Argar:

NHS Test and Trace is exploring alternatives to current test devices which are safe, effective and made of predominantly recyclable or biodegradable materials.

We are reviewing the potential of reusable Type IIR masks in acute settings, using existing laundry services to reduce the need for single use products. These reusable Type IIR masks will be recycled into curtains, mattress covers or other products to contribute to the sustainable disposal of personal protective equipment and zero to landfill recycling programme. We plan to pilot reusable eye protection where the product can be recycled at the end of its life. We have recycled 22 million visors to make plastic containers, which can be used to store food items and will also be recyclable.

■ **Coronavirus: Research**

Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:

[107475]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether residents in Northern Ireland will participate in the PANORAMIC study of antiviral and antibody treatments for covid-19 announced by his Department on 8 December 2021.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 24 January 2022]: Oral antiviral treatments are available through the PANORAMIC national study, run by the University of Oxford. The study is open to individuals across the United Kingdom. General practitioner practices in Northern Ireland are expected to begin contacting patients eligible to enrol in the PANORAMIC study directly to increase recruitment.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[101697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) supplies of lateral flow tests and (b) PCR tests remain freely available.

Maggie Throup:

In December 2021, we delivered approximately 280 million LFD tests and we have now procured additional stocks and increased delivery capacity. We expect to deliver 90 million LFD tests a week in the United Kingdom, including seven million a day through GOV.UK. In England, this includes approximately 12 million a week through pharmacies.

We have recently increased capacity for polymerase chain reaction testing by over 200,000 tests per day. All laboratories have also transitioned to the new Omicron mutation target assay, providing three to four times increased capacity and detection.

■ **Dentistry: York**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[108557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of York having a dentistry school.

Edward Argar:

No assessment has been made. However, we are committed to ensuring that the number and location of dental school places reflect England's workforce requirements and continue to monitor current arrangements.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Public Appointments**

Kevin Brennan:

[\[108474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department seeks references for candidates appointed to public positions which fall under the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Edward Argar:

The Department asks all candidates for public appointments to provide at least two referees, one of whom should be from the candidate's main or most recent organisation. Referees are approached for shortlisted candidates.

Candidates are also asked to declare when they apply and again if interviewed, if they have any potential conflicts of interest, or any issues in their history which if they were appointed, may bring the appointment into disrepute, particularly in the context of meeting the Principles of Public Life. The Principles form part of the Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies, which candidates are informed they will need to adhere to. Checks are also carried out on open-source material for shortlisted candidates and information is provided to the assessment panel.

Attachments:

1. ROUND ROBIN GUIDANCE [2022.01.21 - Round Robin Guidance - Commissioner for Public Appointments.docx]

■ Eating Disorders: Hospital Beds**Thangam Debonnaire:****[106754]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of unmet demand for specialist beds for young people with eating disorders in (a) the South West and (b) Bristol.

Gillian Keegan:

No formal assessment has been made. NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to work with system leaders and regions to prioritise service delivery and investment to meet the needs of vulnerable young people.

We are investing a further £79 million extra in 2021/22, which will allow 2,000 more children and young people to access eating disorder services. NHS England and NHS Improvement are also investing £40 million in 2021/22 to address the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people's mental health. Of this, £10 million capital funding is providing extra beds at units which provide care for young people with the most complex needs, as well as £1.5 million for additional facilities for children under 13 years of age, including for those with eating disorders.

■ General Practitioners: Recruitment**Stuart Anderson:****[107722]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help increase the number of new doctors who choose to specialise as community GPs.

Maria Caulfield:

Health Education England's (HEE) 'Choose GP' campaign promotes the benefits and opportunities of a career as a general practitioner (GP). It is aimed at foundation-year doctors considering specialty training options or a change in career path who wish to train as a GP. In addition, HEE continues to work with medical schools to enhance the profile of GPs. We have increased the number of GP training places with 4,000 trainees accepting a place in 2021/2022, an increase from 2,671 trainees in 2014.

■ Health Professions: Vacancies**Colleen Fletcher:****[106730]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many vacant (a) nurse, (b) doctor and (c) GP positions there are in (i) Coventry, (ii) the West Midlands and (iii) England.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement collect vacancy data for three staff groups: doctors, registered nurses, and 'other staff'. These vacancy statistics are published by NHS Digital for England and at the regional level. The latest

data as of September 2021 shows 39,813 registered nursing vacancies and 8,333 medical vacancies in England, full time equivalent (FTE). Data for the West Midlands is not available. However, in the Midlands area as of September 2021 there were 7,897 registered nursing vacancies and 2,102 medical vacancies, FTE. Many of the vacancies will be covered by bank and agency staff. The data requested on vacant general practitioner positions in these areas is not collected centrally.

■ **Health Services and Social Services: Autism and Learning Disability**

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[106805\]](#)

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 has made training on autism and learning disability available to all health and adult social care staff; and (b) how many of those staff have undertaken such training since July 2021.

Gillian Keegan:

The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training was trialled in England during 2021 with over 8,000 people receiving the training. The trial is currently being evaluated.

■ **Healthy Start Scheme: Social Security Benefits**

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[107643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure new parents are not negatively impacted by not being eligible for the Healthy Start scheme.

Maria Caulfield:

The Healthy Start scheme helps to encourage a healthy diet for pregnant women, babies and young children under four from low-income households.

We are expanding family hubs to more areas and supporting the implementation of the Early Years Healthy Development Review. We announced £300 million to fund a network of Family Hubs, Start for Life services, perinatal mental health support, breastfeeding services, and parenting programmes in 75 local authorities over the next three years, and a further £200 million to expand the Supporting Families programme.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[107644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of new parents affected by the decision not to allow claimants of legacy benefits access to the Healthy Start scheme.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department does not hold the information requested.

■ Hospitals: Standards

Jon Trickett: [\[107462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to introduce a reform trust class of hospitals.

Jon Trickett: [\[107463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussion he has had with relevant stakeholders on engaging outside sponsors managing under-performing hospitals.

Jon Trickett: [\[107464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussion has he had with the (a) NHS Confederation, (b) National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, (c) Care Quality Commission and (d) British Medical Association on engaging outside sponsors managing under-performing hospitals.

Edward Argar:

We have had no specific discussions. At present we have no plans to introduce a reform trust class of hospital, although we keep emerging developments under review.

■ Hospitals: Visits

Dan Carden: [\[R\] \[107697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to his Answer of 18 January 2022 to Question 905095 on Care Homes: Visits, whether he plans to issue further guidance to NHS trusts to improve consistency with regards to hospital visiting arrangements.

Edward Argar:

Guidance on hospital visiting is decided by NHS England and NHS Improvement which is kept under review and is updated when necessary. As was the case prior to the pandemic, hospital visiting is at the discretion of NHS Trusts and other bodies, based on national principles, who make their own assessment as to the visiting arrangements that can be in place given local prevalence of COVID-19 and the specific setup of their facilities. There are no plans to issue further guidance at this time.

■ Hospitals: Waiting Lists

Colleen Fletcher: [\[108532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England have been waiting for more than (i) one year and (ii) two years for hospital treatment.

Edward Argar:

Waiting list data is only collected at a trust, commissioning group, integrated care system and regional level.

Therefore, the following table shows the number of patients who have been waiting for more than 52 weeks and 104 weeks for hospital treatment as of November 2021 at the University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust, the NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Group, the Midlands Commissioning Region which includes the sub region West Midlands and in England.

LOCATION	NUMBER OF PATIENTS	
	52+ WEEKS	104+ WEEKS
University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust	3,870	105
NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Group	5,034	188
Midlands Commissioning Region (includes the West Midlands)	84,878	5,320
England	306,996	18,585

■ Hospitals: York

Rachael Maskell:

[\[108571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of need for a new hospital in the city of York.

Edward Argar:

Local health infrastructure needs are determined by local health system planners in collaboration with NHS England and NHS Improvement and are not separately assessed by the Department.

As part of the Health Infrastructure Plan launched in 2019, the Government committed to build 40 new hospitals by 2030, funded by an initial £3.7 billion, alongside eight previously announced schemes. In July 2021, the Government announced the selection process for the further eight new hospitals. The proposal for trusts to submit an expression of interest closed in September 2021. There were no expressions of interest received for a new acute, mental health or community hospital in the city of York.

■ Integrated Care Systems: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[\[108562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the integration of funding from the NHS, local government and other strategic partners through Integrated Care Systems.

Edward Argar:

The Health and Care Bill will aim to promote local collaboration through the establishment of Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), which will have at least one member nominated by their partner local authorities, and Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs).

Section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 already allows for joint working and pooling of budgets between National Health Service (NHS) organisations and local authorities, for prescribed functions and prescribed health-related functions respectively. ICPs, which the Health and Care Bill proposes to require ICBs and their partner local authorities to establish, will be required to consider whether the needs of the area could be more effectively met using these arrangements when producing their strategy.

The proposed joint working provisions in the Bill will also make it easier for ICBs to arrange for functions to be exercised by or jointly with other ICBs, certain NHS bodies and local authorities, including powers to form joint committees and pool budgets.

■ **Medical Technologies Directorate: Life Sciences**

Chi Onwurah: [\[105516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 20 December 2021 to Question 92932, what plans his Department has to ensure the Medical Technology Directorate supports progress on the Precondition for Success, set out in the Life Sciences Vision, to maintain and grow investment in science and research in life sciences.

Chi Onwurah: [\[105518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 20 December 2021 to Question 92932, what plans his Department has to ensure the Medical Technology Directorate supports progress on the Precondition for Success, set out in the Life Sciences Vision, to improve access to finance for innovative UK Life Sciences companies.

Edward Argar:

The Medical Technology Directorate is supporting the Life Sciences Vision by enhancing market arrangements on innovation and evidence; working with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency on the United Kingdom's medical device regulations to ensure patient safety and influence international standards; enhancing data across the health system; and improving the resilience of the supply chain.

To attract investment, the MedTech strategy will outline plans to align clinical and commercial leadership to reduce complexities in channels for procurement and budgets. We have announced £5 billion to increase health-related research and invest in innovation. The Office for Life Sciences will set out plans to develop a globally competitive investment environment in the UK, where promising life science companies, including medical technology businesses, can access long-term capital.

Chi Onwurah: [\[105517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 20 December 2021 to Question 92932, what plans his Department has to ensure the Medical Technology Directorate supports progress on the Precondition for Success, set out in the Life Sciences Vision, to simplify governance and oversight of NHS health data to drive research and innovation.

Edward Argar:

The Directorate is supporting NHSX to transform access to and integration of National Health Service health and genomic datasets for data-driven innovation and inclusive clinical trials, ensuring public confidence in data access for research and innovation purposes.

The Directorate's MedTech strategy will detail steps to improve the data infrastructure and collection of evidence. Working with others in the health system we aim to enhance transparent, comparable data to build a trusted data picture of medical technology. This will enable further insights into Medical Technology and enable a greater understanding across usage, purchase, asset management, safety and innovation. Developing this data will inform delivery of operational and strategic objectives across the system. In addition, the Directorate is working to deliver the Medical Device Information System to enhance high quality health data and patient safety

Members: Correspondence**Robert Largan:**[\[107749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to Question 98471 tabled on 5 January 2022 on Members: Correspondence, when he plans to respond to the enquiry from the hon. Member for High Peak of 12 November 2021, referenced RL30384.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 24 January 2022

Robert Largan:[\[108638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the enquiry from the hon. Member for High Peak dated 12 November 2021, reference RL30126.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 17 January 2022.

Mental Health Services: Standards**Mike Amesbury:**[\[106862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of average waiting times for people diagnosed with mental health problems to receive the treatment they need.

Gillian Keegan:

No formal assessment has been made. Waiting times are published for services where a waiting time standard is in place, which includes Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT), Early Intervention in Psychosis and Children and Young People Eating Disorders. The latest available data for October 2021 for IAPT services shows that 98.6% of those people completing treatment waited less than 18 weeks for the start of treatment, against a target of 95%; and 91.2% waited less than six weeks, against a 75% target. The latest annual data for 2020/21 shows that 98% accessed IAPT services within

18 weeks, against a 95% target; and 90% within six weeks, against a 75% target.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have consulted on the potential to introduce five new waiting time standards. This consultation closed on 1 September 2021 and the outcomes will inform a recommendation to the Government in due course. We have committed to invest at least an additional £2.3 billion a year into mental health services in England by 2023/24. This will allow an additional two million people to access timely mental health care. We are also investing an additional £500 million in 2021/22 to address waiting times for mental health services and invest in the National Health Service workforce.

■ NHS and Social Services: Coronavirus

Jon Trickett:

[\[107469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the (a) number of staff that may require redeployment as a result of the enforcement of covid-19 vaccination as a condition of deployment and (b) cost of that redeployment.

Edward Argar:

No estimate has been made as decisions on redeployment will be taken by individual employers based on local circumstances.

The Department's impact assessment estimates the number of workers who may remain unvaccinated against COVID-19 at the end of the 12-week grace period and are not medically exempt. For National Health Service staff, this was estimated to be 73,000 or 4.9%. In social care this was 38,000 or 7.6% and 15,000 or 4.6% for the independent health sector.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[107630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) NHS and (b) other staff covered by the regulations on mandatory covid-19 vaccination have taken up their first vaccine since those regulations came into force.

Edward Argar:

Since regulations for vaccination requirements in care homes came into force on 11 November 2021, the number of care home staff with a first dose has increased by 1,218. This is the difference in the number of recorded first doses between 7 November 2021 and 16 January 2022. Vaccination requirements for workers in the health and wider social care sector come into force 1 April 2022.

■ NHS Trusts: Coronavirus

Jon Trickett:

[\[107468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance he has provided to NHS Trusts on enforcement of vaccination as a condition of deployment.

Edward Argar:

Guidance for National Health Service trusts has been published by NHS England which sets out that the Care Quality Commission is responsible for enforcement of the requirements. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2022/01/C1545-update-vcod-for-healthcare-workers-phase-2-implementation.pdf>

■ NHS: Flexible Working**Rachael Maskell:****[108563]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing flexible working conditions to improve NHS staff retention.

Edward Argar:

The 2020 NHS People Plan aims to retain people more effectively by strengthening support for flexible working within organisations. All National Health Service staff in the future can have the chance to work flexibly, regardless of role, grade, reason or circumstance.

From September 2021, contractual changes took effect for employees covered by the NHS Terms and Conditions of Service Handbook to have the right to request flexible working one without the need to provide a justification. NHS employers are expected to promote flexibility options at the point of recruitment and should cover flexible working in standard induction conversations for new starters and in one-to-ones, health and wellbeing conversations and annual appraisals as appropriate.

■ NHS: Innovation**Chi Onwurah:****[105519]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on delivering the Life Sciences Vision commitment of empowering the NHS to take up and embed innovative technologies.

Edward Argar:

The 2021 Spending Review announced ring-fenced funding of £95 million to address systemic barriers to the uptake of innovation in the National Health Service and support delivery of the Life Sciences Vision's healthcare missions. The Office for Life Sciences is currently developing an implementation plan for the Vision and updating life science governance.

■ NHS: Pensions**Anne Marie Morris:****[108525]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of a pension scheme for higher paid NHS staff that is similar to the Judicial Pensions Scheme 2022.

Edward Argar:

The NHS Pension Scheme provides generous retirement benefits for staff and for the vast majority of members their pension savings are tax free.

The unique circumstances of judiciary appointments mean that it is necessary to reform their pension arrangements. Judges are not able to work in private practice after taking up office and many judges have a significant decrease in pay to join the judiciary. The Government is therefore committed to introducing a reformed judicial pension scheme. Such a scheme would not benefit the vast majority of National Health Service staff, as members would receive no tax relief on their contributions.

■ Social Services: Disease Control**Rachael Maskell:**[\[105627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking top steps to refresh infection, prevention and control guidance in the care sector.

Gillian Keegan:

The UK Health Security Agency is currently updating the 'How to Work Safely in Care Homes' guidance in collaboration with adult social care providers and other stakeholders. We regularly review and update guidance to ensure it is necessary and proportionate, considering clinical advice and other priorities such as maintaining safe staffing levels and residents having meaningful contact with loved ones.

■ Strokes: Mechanical Thrombectomy**Rachael Maskell:**[\[108559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether local integrated care systems can determine whether they carry out thrombectomy for stroke patients.

Maria Caulfield:

In England, provision of healthcare for stroke thrombectomy is the responsibility of NHS England. Local integrated care systems (ICSs) cannot determine whether thrombectomy for stroke patients is available.

Thrombectomy is available in 24 centres in England. The Integrated Stroke Delivery Network is now operational, bringing together stakeholders to deliver whole pathway transformation across ICSs.

■ Surgery: Coronavirus**Rachael Maskell:**[\[107612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of elective surgical cases that will be delayed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

No formal estimate has been made.

HOME OFFICE**■ Animal Experiments**

Rachael Maskell: [\[108572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of animals used in animal experimentation in each of the last three years, by type of animal.

Damian Hinds:

The Home Office annually publishes statistics of scientific procedures on living animals in Great Britain under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-of-scientific-procedures-on-living-animals>.

The next publication, covering data for 2021, is provisionally scheduled for release in July 2022.

■ Asylum: Mental Health Services

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[105586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) funding and (b) services her Department provides to asylum seekers requiring immediately treatment for (i) mental health issues and (ii) trauma in the latest period for which information is available.

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[105587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) funding and (b) services her Department provides to asylum seekers requiring (i) GP assessment and (ii) medical treatment in the latest period for which figures are available.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not fund or provide medical services to asylum seekers.

Asylum seekers have access to NHS medical services in the same way as other permanent residents.

■ Asylum: Middle East

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[105594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applicants for asylum from (a) Afghanistan, (b) Yemen and (c) Syria have been told by her Department, in refusing their asylum claims, that it is safe for them to return to their country of origin, in the last 12 months.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office are unable to state how many applications for asylum from Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria have been told in refusing their asylum claims, it is safe for them to return to their country of origin in the last 12 months, as this information is not held in a reportable format and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

All asylum claims, including those from nationals of Yemen, Syria and Afghanistan, are considered on a case by case basis, based on the facts presented by the claimant, regardless of the claimant's country of origin and the prevailing situation.

Our country policy and information notes contain an assessment of risk and makes it clear that each case will be considered on its own merits and that no one who is at real risk of persecution or serious harm in Afghanistan, Yemen or Syria will be expected to return. The country policy guidance for each country is available on gov.uk, via the following links: [Afghanistan: country policy and information notes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/country-policy-and-information/afghanistan), [Syria: country policy and information notes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/country-policy-and-information/syria), [Yemen: country policy and information notes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/country-policy-and-information/yemen)

■ **Care Workers: Recruitment**

Alex Norris: [\[108604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if the Government will place Care Workers and Home Carers on the Shortage Occupation List, as recommended in the Migration Advisory Committee's 2021 Annual Report.

Alex Norris: [\[108605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if the Government will make Care Workers and Home Carers eligible for the Health and Care Worker Visa, as in the Migration Advisory Committee's 2021 Annual Report.

Kevin Foster:

The Government has already announced it would be accepting the Migration Advisory Committee recommendation to add care workers and home carers to the Shortage Occupation List and making them eligible for the Health and Care Visa: [Biggest visa boost for social care as Health and Care Visa scheme expanded - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/biggest-visa-boost-for-social-care-as-health-and-care-visa-scheme-expanded)

On 24 January the Government laid the necessary changes to the immigration rules which will come into force on 15 February.. I refer my Honourable Friend to the Written Ministerial Statement of 24 January for further details.

■ **Criminal Investigation: Children**

Darren Jones: [\[108601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance has been issued on the use of release under investigation for minors; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of its use in cases where suspects are minors.

Kit Malthouse:

Release Under Investigation (RUI) is a non-legislative police process. The National Police Chiefs' Council issued guidance on RUI in January 2019.

In tandem with wider changes to pre-charge bail included in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, the College of Policing will, for the first time, issue statutory guidance, including specific consideration of minors and how RUI

should be used. This work is being undertaken with key stakeholders from the youth justice system.

■ **Deportation: Leicester East**

Claudia Webbe: [105764]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many residents of Leicester East constituency have been deported since January 2020.

Claudia Webbe: [105765]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many residents of Leicester East constituency have been deported on charter flights since January 2020.

Claudia Webbe: [105766]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many residents of Leicester have been deported since January 2020.

Claudia Webbe: [105767]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many residents of Leicester have been deported on charter flights since January 2020.

Claudia Webbe: [105768]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many residents of Leicester East constituency have been detained in immigration removal centres since January 2020.

Claudia Webbe: [105769]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many residents of Leicester have been detained in immigration removal centres since January 2020.

Tom Pursglove:

This Government is clear that foreign nationals who abuse our hospitality by committing crimes should be in no doubt of our determination to deport them. Since January 2019 we have returned 9,286 foreign national offenders (FNOs) and since January 2020, we have utilised over 110 charter flights to deport FNOs and other immigration offenders to countries across Europe and around the rest of the world.

Information on deportations and detentions by constituency or county level are not held centrally by the Home Office. Published information on returns including deportation and detention is available from [Immigration statistics quarterly release - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) and the factsheet on [Returns, Deportation and Charter Flights Factsheet - Home Office in the media \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

■ **Home Office: Diaries**

Wendy Chamberlain: [106881]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish in full her Ministerial diary for 20 May 2020.

Priti Patel:

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](https://www.gov.uk).

■ Home Office: Public Appointments**Kevin Brennan:****[108475]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department seeks references for candidates appointed to public positions which fall under the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Damian Hinds:

The Department is committed to ensuring that all appointments under the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, are conducted in accordance with Governance Code on Public Appointments.

As part of the recruitment process, references are taken up for all appointed candidates.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals**Stephen Farry:****[105771]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of applications to the EU Settlement Scheme via the Relevant Person of Northern Ireland route are successful; and what assessment she has made of the adequacy of that route to Settled Status.

Kevin Foster:

Consistent with UK Government commitments given to support the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland, applications to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) can be made by family members of a 'relevant person of Northern Ireland', that is of a British or Irish citizen born in Northern Ireland to at least one parent who was then a British or Irish citizen or otherwise entitled to reside permanently in Northern Ireland.

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

■ Members: Correspondence**John Spellar:****[105347]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to reply to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Warley of 14 October 2021 on Mr. H A Bucul.

Tom Pursglove:

I apologise for the delay. The Home Office responded to the correspondence on 18 January 2022.

John Spellar: [\[105348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to reply to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Warley of 19 July 2021 on Mr. M Nayeri.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office responded to the correspondence on 18 January 2022.

John Spellar: [\[105349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to reply to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Warley of 28 September 2021 on Mr. F B Tavalaei.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office responded to the correspondence on 18 January 2022.

Public Spaces Protection Orders: Drugs**Julian Knight:** [\[105585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department holds data on the number of local authorities in England and Wales that have introduced Public Space Protection Order's to prevent the use of psycho-active substances.

Kit Malthouse:

The Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 introduced powers, such as Public Space Protection Orders, which the police and local councils can use to prevent people from taking intoxicating substances, including psychoactive substances, in specified areas.

Due to the localised nature of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, data on the use of the powers from the Act locally is not collated centrally.

Refugees: Afghanistan**Thangam Debbonaire:** [\[105595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she will review the impact of the closure of English language testing hubs in Afghanistan for spouses of people already granted refugee status in UK.

Kevin Foster:

There are no requirements for family members of refugees applying under the family reunion provisions in part 11 of the Immigration Rules to meet the English language requirements.

With respect to the wider family Immigration Rules, the Government believes those seeking to enter and make a permanent home in the UK should be equipped to integrate successfully in UK society, with an appropriate level of English and an understanding of British life.

There are no plans to suspend the requirement for spouses specifically from Afghanistan to pass an English language test to enter the UK.

However, under the Rules an applicant can be exempted from the English language requirement to enter the UK if a decision maker considers there are exceptional circumstances preventing the applicant from meeting the requirement.

The applicant must demonstrate, as a result of exceptional circumstances, they are unable to learn English before coming to the UK or it is not practicable or reasonable for them to travel to another country to take an approved English language test.

Each application for an exemption on the basis of exceptional circumstances will be considered on its merits on a case-by-case basis.

■ Refugees: Children

Gill Furniss:

[\[108586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made on reuniting unaccompanied Afghan child refugees in Qatar with relatives in the UK; and what discussions she has had with international partners to help settle those children who have no relatives in other countries.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office is continuing to work with local authorities in the UK and authorities in the USA to ensure the best interests of the children are met when deciding where the children are ultimately settled.

We are working with the utmost urgency to ensure that, where it is in their best interests, these children are brought to the UK. Where the children cannot be safely settled in the UK they will be settled in the USA. None of them children remain in Qatar.

■ Slavery

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[105387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to extend section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 on transparency and supply chains to improve its effectiveness in governing the activities of financial services institutions, in response to reports of HSBC facilitating investment in Xinjiang Tianye Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, an entity sanctioned by the US for its involvement in alleged atrocity crimes in the Xinjiang Uyghur region of China.

Rachel Maclean:

The UK was the first country in the world to require businesses to report on the steps they have taken to tackle modern slavery. The landmark provision in section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires organisations, including financial institutions, with a turnover of £36m or more, to report annually on the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

The prevalence of modern slavery and complexity of global supply chains means that it is highly unlikely that any sector or company is immune from the

risks of modern slavery, including those in financial services. The Government encourages companies to monitor their supply chains with rigour to uncover and remedy any associations they may find with forced labour or other labour abuses.

The Government has already committed to take forward an ambitious package of changes to strengthen the Act's transparency legislation, including mandating the specific reporting topics that statements must cover and introducing financial penalties for organisations that fail to comply.

To further bolster our approach to modern slavery, on 24 March 2021, the Government announced a review of the 2014 Modern Slavery Strategy. As part of the strategy review we will consider how to strengthen our approach to transparency in supply chains, including in relation to financial institutions. A revised strategy will allow us to build on the considerable progress we have made to date, adapt our approach to the evolving nature of these terrible crimes, and continue our international leadership in tackling modern slavery.

■ **Visas: Married People**

Claire Hanna:

[\[107738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to allow applicants to complete tuberculosis screening and biometric appointments post application decision in the UK, for people seeking to relocate from Afghanistan under more formal visa avenues such as a spousal visa.

Kevin Foster:

There are no current plans to allow applicants in Afghanistan to undertake tuberculosis screening or provide biometrics in the UK after a decision has been made on their applications.

Biometrics, in the form of a facial image and fingerprints, underpin the UK's immigration system to support identity assurance and suitability checks on foreign nationals who are subject to immigration control. They enable us to conduct comprehensive checks to prevent leave being granted to or travel to the UK by those who pose a threat to national security or are likely to breach our laws.

Allowing people to travel before undertaking TB screening would undermine the purpose of the tuberculosis screening requirement, which is to prevent the spread of tuberculosis in the UK.

■ **Visas: Migrant Workers**

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[105756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of relaxing visa conditions for health workers from abroad to help support the NHS during any staff shortages.

Kevin Foster:

The introduction of the Health and Care visa in August 2020 made it quicker and cheaper for regulated health and care professionals to secure their visa to work in the Health and Care sector. Furthermore, a number of Health and

Care occupations, such as senior care workers, nurses and auxiliary nurses and assistants, feature on the Shortage Occupation List (SOL).

On 24 December, the Government announced it was accepting the Migration Advisory Committee's (MAC) interim recommendation to add care workers to the SOL and making them eligible for the Health and Care Visa.

On 24 January the Government laid the necessary changes to the immigration rules which will come into force on 15 February. I refer my Honourable Friend to the Written Ministerial Statement of 24 January for further details.

The Government also introduced various COVID-19 concessions to minimise some of the pressures faced by the Health and Care sector in dealing with the pandemic, such as working across various sites and allowing people to work more than the normal 20 supplemental hours in such roles.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Department for International Trade: Diaries

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[106880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish her predecessor's Ministerial diary for 20 May 2020.

Penny Mordaunt:

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

■ Department for International Trade: Trade Remedies Authority

Gareth Thomas: [\[106617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many and what proportion of her departmental staff are employed to work directly for the Trade Remedies Authority.

Penny Mordaunt:

No DIT staff are employed to work directly for the Trade Remedies Authority (TRA).

■ Trade Remedies

Gareth Thomas: [\[106619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will list the trade remedies which are no longer applicable since the UK's departure from the EU; and if she will make a statement.

Penny Mordaunt:

Since the UK's exit from the EU, the Trade Remedies Authority has completed four transition reviews covering 6 of the measures leading to the revocation of the measure on PSC wire from China and welded pipes and tubes from Russia.

■ Trade Remedies Authority

Gareth Thomas: [\[106621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when the Trade Remedies Authority plans to report to Parliament on its work; and if she will make a statement.

Penny Mordaunt:

Under the Trade Act 2021, the Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) must prepare a performance report of its functions and include the statement of accounts in respect of each financial year. Under the terms of the Act, the TRA's first financial year will cover the period from initiation on 1 June 2021 to 31 March 2023.

The TRA will report to my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade as soon as reasonably practicable after 31 March 2023 and the Secretary of State will lay the report before Parliament.

■ Trade Remedies: Correspondence

Gareth Thomas: [\[106622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many letters her Department has received for hon. Members regarding trade remedies and the assembly of bicycles; and if she will make a statement.

Penny Mordaunt:

Since the end of the transition period, the department has received 9 letters from hon. Members regarding trade remedies on the assembly of bicycles.

JUSTICE

■ Ministry of Justice: Disability

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[105651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published 28 July 2021, what steps his Department has taken to progress the development of a national neurodiversity training toolkit for staff to be rolled out in 2022.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Justice is working with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service to rollout base level training ('Neurodiversity Training Toolkit') on how to support neurodivergent people within our care to all frontline staff by the end of the year.

We are also currently testing a new Neurodiversity Support Manager role in some prisons, who will be responsible for liaising with education and skills teams and ensuring that departments across the prison are aware of prisoners' individual needs.

■ Prison Officers: Cameras

Dr Rupa Huq:

[106815]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of legislating to make to Body-Worn Cameras accessible to all officers on the frontline, including Prisoner Escorting and Custody officers.

Victoria Atkins:

A procurement process for the next generation of Body Worn Video Cameras (BWVC) within the public prison estate is underway, for rollout commencing in 2022. The process will represent a substantial uplift of cameras available to the entire public prison estate, with each establishment having sufficient stock of cameras for every operational band 3 – 5 Prison Officer on shift at any time and a surplus for other roles.

In conjunction with the procurement of new cameras, a review of the current Prison Service Instruction is being undertaken to ensure the new Policy Framework reflects new and effective practices. This includes mandatory wearing of cameras by operational band 3 – 5 Prison Officers and their use outside of prison establishments, including on external escorts of prisoners.

It is at the discretion of Privately Managed Provisions (PMP), such as Prisoner Escort and Custody Services, to determine the provision of BWVCs to their staff. PMP providers have a range of existing contracts for the provision BWVCs, which adds to the complexities of standardising BWVC use within PMP. As such, mandating BWVCs within PMP has not been pursued within the current review of the Prison Service Instruction.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Antisocial Behaviour

Rachael Maskell:

[105628]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of publishing data on anti-social behaviour for the purpose of informing prospective renters or homebuyers on the safety of an area.

Eddie Hughes:

We are aware of the merits that this data would have for prospective renters or homebuyers and the Home Office collects information on the number of incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) recorded by the police in England and Wales. This is published quarterly by the Office for National Statistics, along with the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) data, which presents people's perception of the levels of ASB in particular areas. Monthly data on incidents of ASB recorded by the police at lower levels of geography can be found on the www.police.uk website.

■ Building Safety Fund

Thangam Debonnaire:

[\[105592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether building management firms applying to Building Safety Fund can include their time spent making an application and have this reimbursed by the Building Safety Fund, for example by listing the application writing costs under Professional fees or similar.

Christopher Pincher:

Yes, building management firms can be reimbursed for the reasonable costs of works directly related to the replacement of unsafe non-ACM cladding systems.

■ Coastal Areas: Government Assistance

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[105773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to support coastal communities.

Neil O'Brien:

We have continued to make significant progress in supporting coastal communities in a number of areas, demonstrated by the Coastal Communities Fund now having supported 359 projects, totalling over £229 million since 2012, spreading jobs, investment and opportunity to towns and cities across the country including in coastal areas.

Further to this, our coastal areas have already benefited from over £600 million through successful bids into Town Deals and the Future High Streets Fund. Of the 101 towns receiving a Town Deal, 22 of them are coastal towns.

■ High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention

Daisy Cooper:

[\[105741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 14 January 2022 to Question 101844 on Buildings: Fire Prevention, notwithstanding the commitment that no leaseholder should lose their home as a result of forfeiture or eviction in building safety cases, if he will make it his policy to introduce a moratorium on all enforcement and recovery action relating to non-payment of a demand for payment by a leaseholder for their share of fire safety remediation.

Christopher Pincher:

Building owners and industry should make buildings safe without passing on costs to leaseholders, and leaseholders living in their own medium and high-rise buildings should not pay a penny to remediate historic cladding defects that are no fault of their own.

We think it is wrong that some leaseholders are being threatened by their building owner with forfeiture of their lease and possible eviction for non-payment of historic cladding remediation costs.

We are working across government to protect leaseholders from the threat of forfeiture arising from non-payment of historic building safety remediation costs until the wider protections offered by the Bill are in place.

■ High Rise Flats: Safety

Bob Blackman:

[\[105483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his policy is on how the remediation of non-cladding items which pose dangers to life will be funded in a block between 11 and 18 metres where resident tenants have purchased the freehold to the building and the developer of the building cannot be found via Operation Apex as a result of insolvency of the developer.

Christopher Pincher:

The new funding schemes will make sure leaseholders never pay a penny to fix dangerous cladding. On non-cladding, we are clear that we have to make sure there is a proportionate approach – there are too many incentives currently to try to find new problems and declare buildings unsafe. We recognise there is a specific heightened safety risk with cladding which can accelerate fires. That is why our new plan to apply common sense is so important. If there are any remaining non-cladding costs, we want to support leaseholders across the board – they should not be bearing an unfair burden. That is why: · Developers will be expected to fix all fire defects in the buildings they built · We will work with MPs and stakeholders on statutory protections for leaseholders; and · We are working across government to ensure leaseholders will be protected against eviction for any fire safety defect costs.

■ Homelessness: Temporary Accommodation

Rachael Maskell:

[\[105631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of York's NAPpads for homeless people; and if he would consider expanding the programme to other areas.

Eddie Hughes:

This Government is committed to ending rough sleeping this Parliament and believes everyone deserves a roof over their head. The NAPpad scheme is one of several innovative solutions being used by local authorities and voluntary organisations to tackle rough sleeping.

The Government recognises that local authorities are best placed to make decisions on what local services they provide, based on local priorities and circumstances. It is therefore up to individual local authorities as to which interventions make up their rough sleeping response. We have provided £203 million investment through the Rough Sleeping Initiative this year (2021-2022) – an 81% increase from the £112 million provided last year – funding up to 14,500 bed spaces and 2,700 support staff across England. This includes immediate work to support people off the street, moving people on from emergency accommodation as well as longer-term housing-led solutions through multi-disciplinary support and more sustainable accommodation such as PRS access schemes.

■ Housing: Hazards

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[105486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of households in England that are affected by at least category one hazard as defined by the Building Research Establishment.

Christopher Pincher:

This information was published in the 2020-2021 English Housing Survey, which can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1039214/2020-21_EHS_Headline_Report.pdf

■ Housing: Vulnerable Adults

Rachael Maskell:

[\[105629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that vulnerable people are not housed in areas which is likely to negatively impact on their wellbeing.

Eddie Hughes:

The allocation of social housing and homelessness assistance is devolved, and local authorities have the necessary powers to ensure that vulnerable people are not housed in areas likely to have a negative impact on their wellbeing.

Government introduced several measures with the Homelessness Act 2002 to give local authorities extra flexibilities to manage the allocation of social housing in their area. These measures include Local Lettings Policies, which allow local authorities to allocate some housing outside of the allocations system, for example to identify suitable accommodation for those with specific needs. The measures also include the Choice Based Lettings policy, by which local authorities enable applicants to indicate what type of accommodation and location they would prefer.

■ Listed Buildings: Energy

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[105467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans he has to help improve the energy efficiency of grade II listed homes.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[105468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans he has to improve the energy efficiency of grade 1 listed homes.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government remains fully committed to meeting its climate change targets, alongside the protection of the historic environment, and recognises the important contribution that cost effective energy efficiency improvements to buildings can make in meeting these targets.

Approved Document L Volume 1 gives guidance on how to meet the energy efficiency requirements in homes. The guidance explains that when doing work on a listed building, dwellings do not need to comply fully with the energy efficiency requirements, where to do so would unacceptably alter their character or appearance. However, the work should comply with standards to the extent that it is reasonably practicable.

■ Local Enterprise Partnerships

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[105432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the future arrangements are for (a) Shropshire and (b) other counties to receive capital funding previously allocated to Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Neil O'Brien:

We expect these and other commitments to be delivered in full.

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[105433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans he has for the future of Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Neil O'Brien:

We announced a review of the future of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) at last year's Spring Budget, and are grateful to LEPs and other stakeholders for their engagement in the review process. We will set out our position on the future of LEPs in the forthcoming Levelling Up White Paper.

■ Local Government

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[105434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what benefits will arise for (a) Shropshire and (b) other counties from County Deals.

Neil O'Brien:

Devolution makes local politicians responsible for issues like transport, infrastructure and skills in their area; it enables those with local knowledge of the businesses and people to fix the problems their communities face; and it gives local residents the chance to judge how well they're doing at the ballot box.

County Deals will enable local partners in Shropshire and in other counties to come together with powers exercised at the right level to make a difference for local communities. They also offer an opportunity for improvements in governance, efficiency and service delivery. As is the case with all devolution deals, County Deals are about strengthening local leadership, which is essential to levelling up, to delivering better outcomes and more joined-up public services at an appropriate spatial scale, to providing a convening focal point for innovation and local collaboration, and to improving local accountability. Further detail on County Deals will be set out in the Levelling Up White Paper.

■ Local Government Finance: Cornwall

Mike Amesbury:

[\[105719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to provide funding to Cornwall Council to compensate for the loss of EU funding; and when that funding will be made available.

Neil O'Brien:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will ramp up to £1.5 billion per year in 2024-25 and total funding will at a minimum match the size of EU funds in all nations, each year. The Government will also match current EU funding levels in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

The UKSPF will focus on restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging across the country. The UKSPF will act as a primary lever in levelling up people and places in all parts of the UK to empower places to identify, and build on, their own strengths and needs at a local level.

The Government will publish further details on the fund in due course.

■ Property Development: Carbon Emissions

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[105330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to publish revised guidance for planning authorities on requiring onsite carbon neutral energy generation in new building permissions.

Christopher Pincher:

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate and we will make sure that the reformed planning system further supports our efforts to combat climate change and help bring greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

Alongside this, the Government sets minimum energy efficiency standards for buildings through the Building Regulations. From 2025, the Future Homes Standard will ensure that new homes produce at least 75% fewer CO₂ emissions than those built to the 2013 standards and highly efficient new non-domestic buildings. Homes and buildings constructed to these Standards will be future-proofed with low carbon heating and high levels of energy efficiency. No further energy efficiency retrofit work will be necessary to enable them to become zero-carbon over time as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise.

To work towards this, in December 2021 we introduced an uplift in energy efficiency standards, which will come into force in June 2022. The uplift delivers a meaningful reduction in carbon emissions; once the uplift comes into force new homes will be expected to deliver around 30% fewer CO₂ emissions compared to the previous standards and new non-domestic buildings will be expected to produce 27% fewer CO₂ emissions.

■ Regional Planning and Development

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[105360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Government's Levelling Up agenda is meeting its targets.

Neil O'Brien:

In July, the Prime Minister set out that we will have made progress in levelling up when we have begun to raise living standards, spread opportunity, improved our public services and restored people's sense of pride in their community. The forthcoming White Paper will set out how we will continue to deliver against these levelling up outcomes.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Finance

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[105435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when the next round of submissions for Levelling up funding will be opened.

Neil O'Brien:

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

■ Regional Planning and Development: North of England

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[105361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Government's Levelling Up agenda is implemented across all parts of the North of England.

Neil O'Brien:

Levelling Up is at the heart of the Government's agenda to build back better after the pandemic and was at the centre of the manifesto on which the Government promised to deliver for the people of the UK.

Levelling Up was the golden thread running through the whole of Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 which funded an ambitious domestic agenda, including an unprecedented investment package of £5.7 billion for eight English city regions to transform local transport networks through London-style integrated settlements, benefitting West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, South Yorkshire and Tees Valley.

We have also announced the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund, which will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, supporting town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects, and cultural and heritage assets.

At the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, £519 million from the Levelling Up Fund was confirmed for 27 projects in the North of England from the first tranche of allocations.

Almost half of the towns that will benefit from the £3.6 billion Towns Fund are in the North of England. All Town Deals have now been announced, with those in the North totalling over £1 billion.

The Government will shortly be publishing a Levelling Up White Paper, building on existing action we are already taking across Government and setting out a new policy regime that will drive change for years to come.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Sustainable Development

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[105362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to incorporate the UN's Sustainable Development Goals into the Levelling Up agenda.

Neil O'Brien:

Levelling up is at the heart of the government's agenda and is about empowering local leaders and communities to seize their own destiny; boosting living standards, particularly where they are lower; spreading opportunity and improving public services, particularly where they are weak; and restoring local pride in places across the UK.

The UK remains committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and all government departments have responsibility for aspects of the SDGs that relate to their policy remits.

■ Social Rented Housing

Rachael Maskell:

[\[105630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities carry out a safety and risk assessment before a family or person moves into a new social home.

Eddie Hughes:

All social rented homes are required to be fit for habitation and to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard. The Standard requires that homes are free of serious hazards, are in a reasonable state of repair, have reasonably modern facilities and services such as kitchens and bathrooms, and have efficient heating and effective insulation.

We are delivering on our Social Housing White Paper commitments by reviewing the Decent Homes Standard as part of our transformation of the social housing regulatory system. The review will consider whether the Standard needs to be updated to make sure it is delivering what is needed for safety and decency today

■ **Students: Housing**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[105591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals for additional means by which student accommodation providers can contribute to local authority finances.

Christopher Pincher:

Local planning authorities are able to collect developer contributions through the Community Infrastructure Levy and section 106 planning obligations. The levy is a set charge on most new development to help address the cumulative impact of development by funding infrastructure provision anywhere across the authority's area. Different charges can be set for different types of development, based on viability evidence. In Bristol for example, the levy charge for student accommodation is currently £148 per square metre citywide, while the charge for other residential development in Bristol is either £103 or £74 per square metre, depending on location. Local planning authorities can also seek a bespoke section 106 planning obligation, where appropriate, to mitigate the impact of a specific development.

An Infrastructure Funding Statement, detailing an authority's request, receipt and use of developer contributions, is required to be published annually.

We are exploring replacing the existing system of developer contributions with a new Infrastructure Levy, which would also be chargeable on this type of development.

■ **Telecommunications: Permitted Development Rights**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[105460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he will publish his response to the technical consultation on changes to permitted development rights for electronic communications infrastructure, which closed on 14 June 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

In April 2021, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) (formally Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)) and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) launched a joint technical consultation which sought views on the detail of proposals to amend permitted development rights to support increased mobile coverage and 5G deployment.

The technical consultation closed on 14 June 2021. The government is considering the responses and will issue its response in due course. Subject to the outcome of this consultation, we will bring forward secondary legislation to implement the proposals.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Dame Margaret Hodge:

[\[105331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made an assessment of the impact of the end of EU funding on less developed regions in the UK; and if he will make it his policy to provide the equivalent amount of funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund when it is allocated in 2022.

Neil O'Brien:

UK-wide funding for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will ramp up to at least match receipts from EU structural funds, which on average reached around £1.5 billion per year. Spending Review 2021 fulfils this commitment, with the announcement of over £2.6 billion for the UKSPF over the next three years, with funding reaching £1.5 billion in 2024-25.

The UKSPF will focus on restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging across the country. The UKSPF will act as a primary lever in levelling up people and places in all parts of the UK to empower places to identify, and build on, their own strengths and needs at a local level.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Platinum Jubilee 2022: Northern Ireland

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[106668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the trade of saplings oak trees between Great Britain and Northern Ireland in preparation for Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee.

Conor Burns:

The Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) is a unique tree planting initiative created to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 that invites people from across the United Kingdom to "Plant a Tree for the Jubilee".

The QGC is encouraging schools and communities to get involved in planting Jubilee trees. In Northern Ireland, free tree packs for schools and communities are available through [the Conservation Volunteers](#).

Under the current implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol, oak trees are among a number of native British tree species that are currently prohibited from moving to Northern Ireland. The Government is in intensive negotiations with the EU to find solutions to the impacts of the Protocol and to sort out these very real issues impacting Northern Ireland.

TRANSPORT**■ Aircraft: Equipment**

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[107471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that pitot tubes and other pressure sensitive instruments in aviation are of the highest quality to ensure passenger safety.

Robert Courts:

The design of pressure sensitive systems is required to meet specified standards set out in legislation. The system hardware and its operation are furthermore frequently inspected and tested by approved maintenance organisations as part of detailed aircraft's maintenance programme.

Aircraft operators and maintenance organisations are also required to ensure that the systems are compliant with the criteria set by the original equipment manufacturer to ensure high level of safety and confidence in equipment.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[107472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with aviation leaders on ensuring that pitot tubes and other pressure sensitive instruments are of the highest quality across the sector to ensure the safety of passengers and crew.

Robert Courts:

The Department for Transport remains in close contact with the industry through various means, for example, a regular aviation safety industry forum. This forum allows industry to raise pressing safety matters directly.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in its role as the UK regulator has provided guidance to aircraft operators and maintenance organisations to highlight the potential for pitot tubes to become blocked, particularly as airlines return to service aircraft that have been in storage or limited use during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[107473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to prevent failures of pitot-static systems within the aviation sector.

Robert Courts:

Pitot static systems provide data on an aircraft's airspeed and altitude to flight control systems and cockpit instruments. On rare occasions these systems can become blocked by ice or foreign objects, particularly after an aircraft has been inactive for an extended period. However, commercial aircraft typically have dual or triple independent systems to provide back-ups.

An aircraft's flight crew conducts a visual inspection of the pitot system before each flight and these systems are frequently inspected as part of an aircraft's regular maintenance programme. Pilots are also thoroughly trained to recognise discrepancies in the information provided by these systems, and on what action to take if it occurs. The Department for Transport's current

assessment is that these measures, if undertaken correctly, are sufficient to mitigate the risk posed by blockages.

■ **Bus Services**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[105365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure local authorities have the (a) finances and (b) infrastructure to support high-quality bus services.

Trudy Harrison:

At the Budget we announced £1.2 billion of new dedicated funding for bus transformation deals, which will support both infrastructure and service improvements, and £525m to deliver zero emission buses. Over £500m from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements will directly fund bus infrastructure. We will announce details of how that funding will be allocated in due course.

■ **Bus Services: Travel Information**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[105659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published on 28 July 2021, how much funding was awarded to help the smallest bus companies to provide audible and visible information on services in 2021 in addition to the £2 million already committed and (b) if he will publish a list of companies which received this additional funding.

Trudy Harrison:

The National Disability Strategy aims to improve disabled people's everyday lives and to take action to create a society that works for everyone so we can build back better, and fairer.

Within the Strategy, the government has committed to introducing Regulations by Summer 2022 to require bus companies to provide audible and visible announcements onboard their services in Great Britain, subject to final analysis. To support small operators to comply with the Regulations, the government has allocated a further £1.55 million in 2021, on top of the £2 million allocated in 2018, to the Real Time Information Group (RTIG) to distribute to those operators that most need it. The government expects that the names of the beneficiaries of this funding will be published in due course.

■ **Driving Licences: Applications**

Dehenna Davison:

[\[105732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps is the Government taking to help resolve delays to licensing applications at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

Trudy Harrison:

The quickest and easiest way to apply for a driving licence is by using the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)'s online service. There are no

delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their licence within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application and the DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day. The DVLA understands the impact of delays on those who make paper applications and is working hard to process them as quickly as possible. To help reduce waiting times for paper applications, the DVLA has introduced additional online services, recruited more staff, increased overtime working and has secured extra office space in Swansea and Birmingham. There may be additional delays in processing more complex transactions, for example if medical investigations are needed. The latest information on turnaround times for paper driving licence applications can be found [here](#).

The majority of applicants renewing an existing licence will be able to continue driving while their application is being processed, providing the driver can meet specific criteria. More information can be found online [here](#).

■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[106808]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published 28 July 2021, what work his Department has carried out to date with consumer groups and charge point operators to set clear accessibility standards for electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government is committed to ensuring an accessible electric vehicle (EV) charging network and that inclusively designed chargepoints are available for all consumers.

That is why we are partnering with national disability charity Motability to commission the British Standards Institution (BSI) to develop accessibility standards for public EV chargepoints across the country. These standards – to be finalised by summer 2022 – are being developed in collaboration with consumer groups, chargepoint operators and other stakeholders and will provide a new, clear definition of accessibility for public EV chargepoints. Guidance will consider aspects such as kerb height, cable weight, adequate space between bollards and chargepoints being of a height suitable for wheelchair users. It will also consider chargepoints in the context of their surrounding built environment to ensure pedestrians and other road users' needs are reflected.

We have also consulted on introducing accessibility requirements at EV chargepoints via the Future of Transport Regulatory Review consultation. The consultation closed on 22nd November.

James Grundy:

[107740]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he plans to take to ensure that people who own electric cars but do not have access to off-street parking will be able to charge their vehicles at home.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government is supporting local authorities to deploy chargepoints for their residents without access to off-street parking to ensure this is not a barrier to drivers being able to realise the benefits of owning an EV. The On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) is available to all UK local authorities, and has so far awarded funding to over 135 different local authorities, to install over 5,000 chargepoints. This year, £20 million is available under this scheme to ensure more local authorities and residents can benefit from the scheme.

A new Local EV Infrastructure fund will be made available to local authorities later in the 2022-23 financial year, which will facilitate the rollout of larger-scale chargepoint infrastructure projects across England.

Drivers without off-street parking at home can also take advantage of the Workplace Charging Scheme, which provides Government support of up to £350 towards the cost of installing a charge point socket for staff and fleet use, with a maximum of 40 sockets available per business. To date over 8,000 businesses have used this scheme to install over 19,000 chargepoint sockets. There are a growing number of solutions for drivers without private parking, such as initiatives like community charging, where those with personal chargepoints can share access with other residents.

The Government's forthcoming EV Infrastructure Strategy will define our vision for the continued roll-out of a world-leading charging infrastructure network across the UK. The strategy will focus on how we will unlock the chargepoint rollout needed to enable the transition from early adoption to mass market uptake of EVs. We will set out our next steps to address barriers to private investment, and level up charge point provision. The strategy will clearly establish Government's expectations for the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in the planning and deployment of charging infrastructure alongside how we will intervene to address the gaps between the current market status and our vision, and how we will monitor progress.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Training**Sir Robert Neill:****[105451]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to make it easier for people in receipt of benefits to train as HGV drivers.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government has taken 32 specific measures to deal with the shortage of HGV drivers. These include the Large Goods Vehicle Driver apprenticeship standard with a funding band of £7,000 and the Urban Driver apprenticeship with a funding band of £5,000. The Government has also extended its £3,000 incentive payment for every apprentice a business hires to 31 January 2022.

The Department for Education is investing £34 million in skills bootcamps to train just over 11,000 more people to become HGV drivers. An additional 1,000 people are expected to be trained through the Government's adult education budget.

The Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus are supporting an HGV driver training pilot scheme. Jobcentre Plus is also able to make Flexible Support Fund grants available to those who are unemployed or are in receipt of Universal Credit. It can be used to help those that hold an HGV licence but need to renew their Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC).

■ Merseyrail

Damien Moore: [\[105792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of Merseyrail's decision on passengers to reduce its timetable and increase fares on 4 January 2022 by 3.8 per cent.

Wendy Morton:

No such assessment has been made because the timetable operated by Merseyrail and the fares charged are the subject to the agreement of Merseytravel to whom responsibility for these matters has been fully devolved since 2003.

■ Motorcycles: Regulation

Damien Moore: [\[106868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of his Department's anti-tampering proposals for motorcycles preventing activities such as restoration, repairs and legitimate improvements to vehicles; and if he will make an assessment of the potential effect of the introduction of those proposals on the growth of enterprises producing anti-tampering parts for motorcycles.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department ran a public consultation from 28 September to 22 November 2021 seeking views on proposals to tackle tampering. As part of the consultation, the Department sought views and evidence on the potential effect of proposals, which are not intended to prevent activities such as restoration, repairs and legitimate improvements to vehicles.

The Government will consider all responses received and undertake an assessment of the impact of any proposals that are taken forward.

■ Parking: Pedestrian Areas

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[105655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department expects to publish the outcome of the Managing pavement parking consultation, which closed on 30 August 2020.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department's consultation on pavement parking closed on 22 November 2020. We received over 15,000 responses and Ministers are now actively considering the options for addressing pavement parking. We will publish the formal consultation response and announce next steps for policy as soon as possible.

■ Ports: Disability**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[106809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published 28 July 2021 and the £1 million made available to improve the accessibility of lifeline seaports on the Isle of Wight and the Isles of Scilly, how many ports have applied for funding; and what proportion of the £1 million has been allocated to date.

Robert Courts:

The funding was available for both port and ferry operators serving the Isles of Wight and Scilly. All bids received have been assessed and offers have been made to all successful applicants. Full details of the awards will be published in due course.

■ Railways: Carbon Emissions**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[107684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Government has signed off on the Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy.

Trudy Harrison:

Network Rail's Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy (TDNS) is a set of recommendations that suggests which traction decarbonisation solutions (electrification, battery, or hydrogen) could be best suited to which parts of the currently unelectrified network. The recommendations in TDNS are based on assumptions founded on the best analysis of the technology available at the time; such analysis will need to be updated as technology evolves.

In the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, the Government has committed to the delivery of a net zero railway by 2050, and to use TDNS to guide our work to deliver an affordable, deliverable decarbonisation programme.

■ Railways: Heathrow Airport**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[107685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the total amount of public money spent on (a) consulting on and (b) planning the Western Rail Link to Heathrow.

Wendy Morton:

The estimated total amount of money spent on the Western Rail Link to Heathrow is £46.9m.

■ Taxis**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[105402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to support black cab drivers.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government has provided support for the taxi and private hire vehicle sector throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of taxi and private

hire vehicle drivers are self-employed and were therefore able to apply for grants through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) before the scheme closed on 30 September 2021. Over the history of the SEISS, £28.1 billion has been paid in grants in total (up to 28 October 2021) and 2.9 million individuals have received a grant.

The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) provides local councils with grant funding to support businesses that are severely impacted by Coronavirus and the rise of the Omicron variant, which are not eligible for other grant funding. Further information can be found here at

www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-youre-eligible-for-the-coronavirus-additional-restrictions-grant.

While the ARG scheme remains in place to enable Local Authorities to deliver discretionary business support, we are encouraging Local Authorities to support those businesses that have been severely impacted by the spread of the Omicron variant. There is no restriction on the number of grants a business may receive, subject to subsidy limits.

■ **Taxis: Disability**

Catherine West:

[106823]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will require taxi and minicab drivers to complete disability equality training.

Trudy Harrison:

Effective disability awareness training can help ensure that taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) drivers have the knowledge, skills and confidence to provide passengers with appropriate assistance, so that they can travel independently and with confidence.

The Department wants every local licensing authority to require taxi and PHV drivers to complete this training, and will make this clear in updated best practice guidance, due to be published for consultation later in the year.

The Government also remains committed to introducing mandatory disability awareness training for taxi and PHV drivers through new National Minimum Standards for licensing authorities when Parliamentary time allows.

■ **Taxis: Licensing**

Julian Knight:

[106746]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans the Government has to clarify legislation for the rest of the UK following the judgement in Uber London Limited v Transport for London & Others [2021] EWHC 3290 (Admin).

Trudy Harrison:

This High Court declaration was on the legislation that applies to private hire vehicle operators in London. Different legislation applies in the rest of the UK. The High Court considered the legislation that applies in the rest of England (except Plymouth) and Wales in reaching its decision on the London legislation, but it did not make a declaration on that legislation. Interpretation

of the law is ultimately a matter for the courts and any clarification the Department could give would be couched in such terms.

Taxi and private hire vehicle policy is a devolved matter in all UK nations and any clarification in respect of the legislation that applies in their nation would be a matter for the relevant devolved administrations.

The issue of plying for hire was also considered by the High Court. However, the question of whether a vehicle is plying for hire in particular circumstances is a matter of fact and degree. It is not therefore possible to provide a list of factors which could be sufficiently determinative as to give clear guidance on this matter.

■ Travel Requirements: Coronavirus

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[106817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Answer of 6 December 2021 to Question 84419 on Mexico: Coronavirus, what recent discussions he has had with his Mexican counterpart on reports that citizens of Mexico are unable to have their covid-19 vaccination status recognised by the UK.

Robert Courts:

As set out in the response on 6 December, the Government is taking a phased approach to the rollout of our inbound vaccination programme and will continue to work with international partners to expand the policy to more countries and territories where it is safe to do so. Vaccine certification between countries and territories varies considerably and the government has published minimum criteria on gov.uk that both digital and paper certificates must meet.

TREASURY

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties

Alex Cunningham:

[\[108520\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made on the impact of the proposed alcohol duty system on (a) health inequalities and (b) wider inequality.

Helen Whately:

To better support public health, the Government intends to move to a new system that taxes all products in reference to their alcohol content for the first time. This will help to target problem drinking by taxing higher-strength products associated with alcohol-related harm a higher rate of duty.

The Government is continuing to engage with interested stakeholders, including public health professionals, on these reforms. A consultation was launched in October and stakeholders are encouraged to respond before the deadline of 30 January 2022. A tax information and impact note will be published following the consultation when the policy is final, or near final, in the usual way.

■ Bank Services

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[108535\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of people in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England who do not have a bank account.

John Glen:

The Government recognises the continued importance of access to banking.

The Financial Conduct Authority conducts a biennial Financial Lives Survey of 16,000 adults which provides a comprehensive insight into the finances of the UK population. The latest findings from the survey were published in February 2021. They showed that in February 2020 1.2 million adults were considered 'unbanked', defined as adults without a current account or an alternative e-money account. The Government does not have data broken down by area.

The Government is also committed to improving access to financial services and recognises that access to a transactional bank account is key to enabling people to manage their money on a day-to-day basis effectively, securely and confidently. The nine largest personal current account providers in the UK are legally required to offer basic bank accounts to customers who do not have a bank account or who are not eligible for a bank's standard current account.

■ Bus Services: North of England

Alex Sobel:

[\[108608\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to extend the Bus Recovery Grant beyond March 2022 to help support the recovery of bus transport in the North of England.

Helen Whately:

The Government recognises the vital importance of bus services to local economies and communities across the country.

We have provided over £1.5bn to maintain essential local bus services outside London since March 2020, ensuring that people can continue to get to work, school, and shops safely and easily.

The Chancellor also confirmed a further £1.2bn to deliver London-style services, fares and infrastructure improvements. This will help to deliver the PM's 'Bus Back Better' strategy for transforming bus services across England, and means that dedicated spending on buses will more than double over this Parliament taking into account wider investment in thousands of new zero emission buses.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Luke Pollard:

[\[105724\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the proportion of the £4.3 billion fraudulently claimed through covid-19 support payments which is yet to be recovered which comes from debt in (a) Plymouth, (b) Devon and (c) Cornwall.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC's estimate for the amount lost to fraud and error in the schemes during 2020-21 is 8.7 per cent in Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), 2.5 per cent in Self-Employment Income Support Scheme phases 1-3, and 8.5 per cent in the Eat Out to Help Out (EOHO) scheme. This equates to £5.8 billion, against a spend of £81.2 billion.

HMRC prioritised getting money to those who needed it with the schemes designed to minimise fraud while not unnecessarily delaying payments. The schemes were designed to prevent fraud, both in the eligibility criteria and the claim process itself. However, they could still be attractive to fraudsters.

To ensure quick payment, HMRC undertook pre-payment risk assessments of 22 million claims (£93 billion) within 72 hours of receipt, blocking those indicating criminal activity.

HMRC have taken a supportive and reasonable approach where mistakes have been made, giving customers the opportunity to correct them without fear of sanctions. By law, claimants can notify and amend incorrect claims within 90 days without penalty. An online system to help people correct mistakes was set up and all claims are risk assessed and considered for post payment checks. HMRC look at a variety of factors, including comparing the claims to historic data (e.g. pre-pandemic payroll data), third party information, and other intelligence, like Fraud Hotline calls. HMRC have also compared claims made to different support schemes to identify where they might want to ask more questions, such as in the case of a restaurant who had furloughed all their staff under CJRS but were also claiming under the EOHO scheme.

Claims HMRC think are higher risk, or appear more complex, are selected for "One-to-One" intervention (OTO). Lower or less complex risk claims are considered for "One-to-Many" (OTM) Campaigns.

OTM are written campaigns to address simpler risks. The same communication is sent to up to tens of thousands of customers. HMRC are clear with what they are asking, where to get support, and how to put it right. They also ensure there is follow up if customers do not respond to the OTM approach.

OTO interventions are direct enquiries by experienced compliance officers for more complex risks.

HMRC are taking tough action to tackle fraudulent behaviour. Anyone who keeps money despite knowing they were not entitled to it, faces repaying up to double the amount, plus interest and potentially criminal prosecution in serious cases.

HMRC established the Taxpayer Protection Taskforce, which is estimated to recover approximately £800 million to £1 billion in the two years to 2022-23, on top of around £500 million which was recovered in 2020-21. HMRC will continue to address fraud and error in the schemes beyond the duration of the taskforce.

For COVID-19 schemes, compliance checks are carried out when HMRC suspects there has been an overpayment of the claim, which may be due to

either error or fraud. This work is still ongoing and therefore HMRC cannot say what proportion of any amount that is fraudulently claimed will be from businesses based in Plymouth, Devon, and Cornwall.

Charlotte Nichols:

[105757]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to increase resources to HMRC's Taxpayer Protection Taskforce to recover more of the monies in covid-19 support claimed in fraud and error.

Lucy Frazer:

The Covid-19 support schemes were designed to prevent as much error and fraud as possible before any payments were made, while still quickly supporting those who needed it. Robust measures were put in place to control error and fraud in the key Covid support schemes. The controls put in place delivered results.

A significant amount of funding has already been invested in HMRC to ensure a level playing field for legitimate businesses, and to protect taxpayers from fraudulent use of these schemes. This compliance activity saw HMRC recover £536 million of overclaimed grants in the year 2020-21.

To bolster HMRC's compliance work, the Government has also invested over £100 million in a Taxpayer Protection Taskforce of 1,265 HMRC staff to combat fraud on the HMRC Covid-19 schemes, one of the largest and quickest responses to a fraud risk by HMRC. The taskforce is expected to recover £800 million to £1 billion from fraudulent or incorrect payments over the next two years.

The Government takes error and fraud relating to Covid-19 support schemes extremely seriously. However, it is not possible to eliminate it completely, and this applies to Government schemes all over the world. The Government has been clear from the beginning that the Covid schemes would carry a certain level of error and fraud risk.

HMRC's compliance efforts are focusing on those who have deliberately sought to cheat the system, rather than spending public money to penalise those who have tried their best to do the right thing. Where claimants will have made genuine mistakes, HMRC will help them put things right.

Sarah Olney:

[106824]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has been made of the number of covid-19 support scheme overpayments due to fraud involving values of (a) more than £1 million, (b) between £500k to £1 million, (c) between £250k to £500k, (d) between £100k to £250k, (e) between £50k to £100k, (f) between £20k to £50k and (g) under £20k.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC identifies claims for compliance checks where the amount of the claim is out of step with other information. The risk that the claim is incorrect may be due to either an honest mistake or fraud, and the reason cannot be established until the check is concluded.

However, initial compliance analysis indicates that for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), the bulk of the likely over-claims were for relatively small amounts. For example, preliminary results from compliance activity on the first 8 months of CJRS claims indicates around a half of CJRS overpayments are less than £2,000, with around one sixth being less than £500.

HMRC continue to take tough action to tackle fraudulent behaviour. Anyone who retains money withdrawn from the COVID support schemes despite being aware that they were not entitled to do so faces having to repay up to double the amount that was received, plus interest, and potential criminal prosecution.

■ Business: Loans

Alison Thewliss:

[\[108545\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his plans are for the future of Government-guaranteed loan schemes.

Helen Whately:

The Recovery Loan Scheme (RLS) is currently open UK-wide to SMEs and is due to close to new loan applications on 30 June 2022. Lenders can offer loans, overdrafts, and invoice and asset finance up to £2 million, with a minimum loan size of £25,001 for term loans and overdrafts, and £1,000 for invoice and asset finance. The Government provides a 70% guarantee to lenders on each loan.

The Government keeps all schemes under review.

■ Child Benefit

Martyn Day:

[\[107639\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 14 December 2021 to Question 87844 on Child Benefit: Taxation, what estimate he has made of the number and proportion of eligible claimants who have opted out of High Income Child Benefit in each year from 2013 to 2020; and what assessment he has made of the effect of maintaining the adjusted net income threshold for that benefit at £50,000 on tax revenues in (a) 2013 and (b) 2020.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The High Income Child Benefit Charge (HICBC) was introduced in January 2013 to target support at those who need it most. It applies to anyone with an income over £50,000 who claims Child Benefit or whose partner claims it. The charge is tapered for taxpayers with incomes between £50,000 and £60,000. Where income is over £60,000, the amount of the charge is equal to the Child Benefit payments.

The table below shows the number and proportion of eligible claimants who have opted out of Child Benefit in each year from 2013 to 2020. These are the latest figures available.

	TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES CLAIMING CHILD BENEFIT PAYMENT + TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES THAT HAVE OPTED OUT OF RECEIVING CHILD BENEFIT PAYMENT (UNITED KINGDOM)	TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES THAT HAVE OPTED OUT OF RECEIVING CHILD BENEFIT PAYMENT (UNITED KINGDOM)	TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES THAT HAVE OPTED OUT OF RECEIVING CHILD BENEFIT PAYMENT AS A PROPORTION OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES CLAIMING CHILD BENEFIT PAYMENT + TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES THAT HAVE OPTED OUT OF RECEIVING CHILD BENEFIT PAYMENT (UNITED KINGDOM)
August 2013	7,947,000	397,000	5%
August 2014	7,937,000	476,000	6%
August 2015	7,908,000	492,000	6%
August 2016	7,900,000	504,000	6%
August 2017	7,893,000	516,000	7%
August 2018	7,871,000	545,000	7%
August 2019	7,863,000	582,000	7%
August 2020	7,834,000	624,000	8%

The Government is committed to managing the public finances in a disciplined and responsible way by targeting support where it is most needed. The Government considers the adjusted net income threshold of £50,000 used in the administration of the HICBC to be set at the right level. Only a small minority of taxpayers, with comparatively high incomes are affected. As with all elements of tax policy, the Government keeps this under review as part of the annual Budget process. The tax revenue from the HICBC in the 2013/14 tax year was £431m and in 2019/20, it was £416m.

Details on the numbers of Child Benefit opt-outs and tax raised are published annually on GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-income-child-benefit-charge-data/high-income-child-benefit-charge> (opens in a new tab).

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Females

Owen Thompson:

[106787]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will (a) review his policy on payments made under the Self Employment Income Support Scheme in order to

discount average trading profits in the preceding three full tax years that were reduced as a result a self-employed woman having taken maternity leave and (b) make retrospective payments to affected women based on that revised calculation.

Lucy Frazer:

Under the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), the Government has been able to support millions of self-employed people at scale and pace, making it one of the most generous self-employment income COVID support schemes in the world. The SEISS grant was based on data HMRC already held and could quickly and easily calculate at scale. Without this mechanism, the schemes might have run into unacceptable delay, created unmanageable manual demand, or exposed the support to fraud.

There is no way for HMRC to know the reasons why an individual's profits may have dropped in earlier years from income tax self-assessment returns. However, by calculating the grant on average trading profits over several tax years, the SEISS supported people who saw a dip in profits for any reason.

The Government's approach made the scheme as accessible and fair as possible, while ensuring it remained deliverable and achieved its objectives.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Conversion Therapy

Nia Griffith: [\[108509\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the recently enacted legislation to ban sexual orientation and gender identity conversion therapy in France and the exclusion of a provision to allow informed consent in that legislation.

Nia Griffith: [\[108510\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions her Department has had with the Home Office on assessing the potential impact of introducing consent as a defence for abuse in a conversion therapy ban on other areas of legislation relating to abuse including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Nia Griffith: [\[108511\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions her Department has had with the Department for Health and Social Care on assessing the potential impact of introducing consent for talking conversion therapy on the regulation of other psychologically harmful treatments.

Mike Freer:

Our proposals to ban conversion practices often known as conversion therapy are robust and comparable to other bans in place, or currently under development, around the world.

We are engaging with a wide range of international jurisdictions including France, Canada, New Zealand and Malta and will continue to work with a wide range of domestic stakeholders as our policy develops.

The existing criminal law is clear that a person cannot consent to serious harm and we do not propose to change this. We are working closely with colleagues in the Ministry of Justice, Home Office and the Department for Health and Social Care to ensure that the proposals will complement existing laws, including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and that they will not interfere with existing professional obligations and regulatory frameworks.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Disability Unit

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[105665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published on 28 July 2021, (a) whether the Disability Unit completed its review of the way the UK government engages with disabled people by December 2021 as planned and (b) with whom it has consulted to inform this review.

Chloe Smith:

Following the publication of the National Disability Strategy the Disability Unit is progressing the Disability Stakeholder Review, working closely with disabled people's organisations and disability charities. People said that this review should enable a full opportunity for meaningful engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and as such the review will run through to Spring 2022, and we agree.

In December 2021, key disabled people's organisations and disability charities were informed of the extension by letter. A copy of the letter was made available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and also included on the Disability Unit's social media.

■ Disability: Departmental Coordination

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[106803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published 28 July 2021, when the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work plans to chair the second quarterly meeting of the Disability Ministerial Champions.

Chloe Smith:

The next quarterly meeting of the Ministerial Disability Champions will be held on 26 January 2022.

■ Employment and Support Allowance: Tees Valley

Alex Cunningham: [\[108521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2022 to Question 105509, what her timeframe is for providing the

number of people affected by the underpayment of benefits in (a) Stockton North constituency and (b) the Tees Valley Combined Authority area.

Chloe Smith:

The Department published an update on the exercise to correct past ESA underpayments on Gov.uk on 8 July 2021. This reported that as of 1 June 2021, of the 600,000 cases checked, 118,000 arrears payments have been made totalling £613 million. This report showed the numbers of cases paid arrears at a national level only as the data was not available at sub-national level at that time. The Department is investigating the feasibility of providing this analysis at a constituency level and will pre-announce any upcoming publication in line with normal statistical practices.

■ **Employment Schemes: Disability**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[105656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published on 28 July 2021, what progress her Department has made towards exploring offering earlier and more intensive back-to-work support in jobcentres for people before their work capability assessment.

Chloe Smith:

The Government is committed to seeing one million more disabled people in work between 2017 and 2027 and reducing the disability employment gap. The disability employment gap

has closed by around 5 percentage points since 2013 (when the current way of measuring disability began) and in the last four years, the number of disabled people in employment has increased by 850,000. We are committed to doing more, building on this good progress, to support disabled people and people with health conditions to start, stay and succeed in work, where it is right for them.

We know that to be truly effective in supporting disabled people, our jobcentres must offer a range of help. As outlined in both the recent Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper and the National Disability Strategy, this includes exploring offering earlier and more intensive back-to-work support in jobcentres for people before their work capability assessment.

This builds on support already available to people from a work coach before their work capability assessment. All new claimants are given Day 1 interventions by a dedicated work coach to support them back to work. DWP has also introduced the new approach to conditionality, called Tailoring Up. For disabled people and people with health conditions, this aims to enable an honest and open conversation between a person and their work coach about what they can do.

The aim is to build commitment to move towards work and into work where possible. Work coaches can start from a point of no mandatory requirements and agree with the person the voluntary steps the person will take, bringing in mandatory requirements as and when it is appropriate for the individual.

The Autumn Budget announced an additional £156 million over the Spending Review 2021 period to provide job finding support for disabled people, with a focus on additional support from work coaches in Jobcentres. We are developing plans for how to further support people with health conditions and disabled people towards and into work, including through increased work coach support, building on the Tailoring Up approach that is already available.

■ Local Housing Allowance

Hywel Williams:

[\[108471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate her Department has made of the adequacy of local housing allowance rates to meet future housing costs in (a) Wales, (b) England, (c) Scotland and (d) Northern Ireland.

David Rutley:

The Department has not made a recent estimate on the adequacy of local housing allowance rates to meet future housing costs in (a) Wales, (b) England, (c) Scotland. For d) social security is transferred to Northern Ireland.

In April 2020, we boosted investment in Local Housing Allowance rates by nearly £1 billion. We have maintained Local Housing Allowance rates at the same cash level for 2021/22 and they will remain at those levels for 2022/23, meaning everyone who benefitted from the increase will continue to do so.

For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments are available. Since 2011, we have provided almost £1.5 billion in Discretionary Housing Payments to local authorities for households who need additional support with their housing costs.

■ Poverty

Hywel Williams:

[\[108468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of removing the benefit cap on (a) current and (b) future levels of poverty in (i) Wales, (ii) England, (iii) Scotland and (iv) Northern Ireland.

David Rutley:

No assessment has been made of the potential impact of removing the benefit cap on the current and future levels of poverty in each nation.

The benefit cap provides a strong work incentive and fairness for hard-working taxpaying households and encourages people to move into work, where possible. This aligns with our long-term focus of continuing to support parents into, and to progress in, work. Our multi-billion-pound Plan for Jobs, which has recently been expanded by £500 million, will help people across the UK to find work and to boost their wages and prospects.

Households can still receive benefits up to the equivalent gross earnings of around £24,000, or around £28,000 in London.

The Government continues to monitor and publish trends in poverty across the UK. National Statistics on the number and percentage of people in poverty are published annually in the “Households Below Average Income” publication. This can be found at:

[Households below average income: for financial years ending 1995 to 2020 - GOV.UK](#)

Hywel Williams: **[108469]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of removing the two-child policy limit on (a) current and (b) future levels of poverty in (i) Wales, (ii) England, (iii) Scotland and (iv) Northern Ireland.

David Rutley:

No assessment has been carried out. However, latest figures from April 2021 indicate that over 50% of those households with three or more children who are in receipt of Universal Credit, are not affected by the two-child policy. Statistics relating to this policy are published annually, most recently on the 15 July 2021, and are available on GOV.UK.

Statistics from the Office for National Statistics show that in 2020, of all families with dependent children, 85% had a maximum of two in their family. The government therefore feels it is proportionate to provide support through Universal Credit for a maximum of two children. A benefits structure adjusting automatically to family size is unsustainable.

This policy also ensures fairness by asking families on benefits to make the same financial decisions as families supporting themselves solely through work. We recognise that some claimants are not able to make the same choices about the number of children in their family, which is why exceptions have been put in place to protect certain groups.

On 9 July 2021, the Supreme Court handed down its judgment in the judicial review of the two-child policy. The court found the two-child policy lawful and not in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Hywel Williams: **[108470]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of removing the six week wait for new universal credit payments on (a) current and (b) future levels of poverty in (i) Wales, (ii) England, (iii) Scotland and (iv) Northern Ireland.

David Rutley:

There are no plans to change the assessment period and payment structure of Universal Credit.

When claimants are paid Universal Credit is determined by the date of entitlement. The first payment is usually made around five weeks after the claim is made. The first calendar month is the initial assessment period. At the end of that period, entitlement for that month is calculated and paid 7 days later. Payments thereafter are made monthly in arrears.

The Universal Credit assessment period and payment structure are fundamental parts of its design. Universal Credit reflects payment patterns in the world of work, where the majority of people are paid monthly. Ensuring similarities between paid employment and receiving benefits eliminates an important barrier which could prevent claimants from adjusting to paid employment.

It is not possible to award a Universal Credit payment as soon as a claim is made as the assessment period must run its course before the award of Universal Credit can be calculated. It is not possible to accurately determine what a claimant's entitlement will be in the month ahead. This process ensures claimants are paid their correct entitlement and prevents significant overpayments from occurring.

If new claimants need support before their first payment is made, all new claimants can request an advance of their entitlement to support them.

New Claims Advances are available urgently if a claimant needs support during their first assessment period and budgeting support is available for anyone who needs extra help. Advances of up to 100% of potential Universal Credit entitlement are available urgently if a claimant needs support. With an advance, claimants receive an additional Universal Credit payment, resulting in 25 payments over a 24-month period.

■ **Poverty: Children**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[108537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to tackle child poverty in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

David Rutley:

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

With the success of the vaccine rollout and record job vacancies, our focus now is on continuing to support parents across the UK into and to progress in work. This is because we know that work, particularly where it is full-time substantially reduces the risks of child poverty and improves long-term outcomes for families and children. Our multi-billion-pound Plan for Jobs, which has recently been expanded by £500 million, will help people across the UK to find work and to boost their wages and prospects.

In addition, Universal Credit recipients in work are now benefitting from a reduction in the Universal Credit taper rate from 63% to 55%, while eligible in-work claimants can also benefit from changes to the Work Allowance. These measures represent, for the lowest paid in society, an effective tax cut of around £2.2b in 2022-23 and are now benefitting almost two million of the lowest paid workers by £1,000 a year on average.

We recognise that some people require extra support over the winter, which is why vulnerable households across the country can access a new £500 million support fund to help them with essentials. The Household Support Fund provides £421 million to help vulnerable people in England with the cost of food, utilities and wider essentials. The Barnett Formula applies in the usual way, with the devolved administrations receiving almost £80 million. Coventry City Council are receiving £3,224,222.30 of this funding.

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

■ Social Security Benefits: Chronic Illnesses

Dehenna Davison:

[\[105731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps is the government taking to ensure that reassessments for sufferers of chronic conditions are as unobtrusive and infrequent as possible.

Chloe Smith:

As announced in the recent Shaping Future Support: Health and Disability Green Paper we want to make changes to the assessment process so people with the most severe health conditions and disabilities can claim the benefits they are entitled to through a simpler process. We are exploring how to test a new Severe Disability Group (SDG) so those with severe and lifelong conditions can benefit from a simplified process to access ESA/UC and PIP without ever needing to complete a detailed application form or go through a face to face assessment/reassessment.

We have already stopped reassessments for people with the most severe conditions that are unlikely to change. In Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper, we proposed ways to further reduce the number of unnecessary assessments, while continuing to ensure support is properly targeted. Alongside this, we proposed ways of offering greater flexibility and simplicity in the way that assessments are delivered, including improving the evidence we use to make decisions from health assessments, and learn the lessons of coronavirus where we introduced telephone and video assessments.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification

Kate Osamor:

[\[107650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reasons a claim may be suspected of fraud and therefore subject to the Risk Review Process.

Kate Osamor:

[\[107655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2022 to Question 97000 on Social Security Benefits: Disqualification,

what information is taken into account when carrying out an assessment of a person's personal circumstances prior to suspending their benefits.

David Rutley:

The specific methods employed by the Risk Review Team are sensitive and, as such, we are not able to provide the mechanics of how they are identified, or how they are progressed. By putting such methods or the guidance in the public domain, we would risk undermining the ability of DWP to detect and counter fraudulent threats.

Kate Osamor:

[\[107651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what further evidence may be requested from claimants who have had their benefits suspended under the Risk Review Process.

David Rutley:

The Risk Review Team may ask for any information and/or supporting evidence that is required to determine correct benefit entitlement.

Kate Osamor:

[\[107652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, at what stage claimants who have had their benefits suspended or closed under the Risk Review Process are provided with the reasons for that suspension or closure.

David Rutley:

Any claimant whose benefit is suspended as a consequence of the Risk Review Team activity is notified by journal, which is a digital means by which messages are exchanged between the Department and a Universal Credit claimant. These messages tell the claimant how they can contact the Department to speak to the agent responsible for that case. Where a customer does contact us in these circumstances, they will have the opportunity to have a one to one conversation with an agent to discuss their specific claim in more detail, and the agent can request any additional information required. With the relaxation of Covid rules, we can arrange for claimants to meet officials by way of a face to face appointment, where they can receive help in understanding what has happened with regards to their claim, and with providing the correct verification information.

At no point should the claimant be unaware as to what is required from them in order to determine their benefit entitlement.

Kate Osamor:

[\[107653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason her Department's Risk Review Team does not capture demographic data on any claims they suspend.

David Rutley:

The Risk Review Team does not capture demographic data because it is not relevant to the fraud risk identified by our Integrated Risk and Intelligence Service, which uses detection methods that are agnostic of nationality and other demographic data, to identify risk and fraud within the benefits system.

The specific methods employed are sensitive and, as such, we are not able to provide the mechanics of how they are identified. By putting such methods or the guidance in the public domain, we would risk undermining the ability of DWP to detect and counter fraudulent threats.

Kate Osamor: [\[107654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2022 to Question 97000 on Social Security Benefits: Disqualification, what steps are taken by the Risk Review Team prior to suspending a claimant's benefits to ensure that suspension is a last resort.

David Rutley:

The Risk Review Team only reviews, and therefore suspends, cases where there is a high risk of fraud based on specific intelligence.

Kate Osamor: [\[107656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2022 to Question 97000 on Social Security Benefits: Disqualification, what the average time taken by the Risk Review Team is to make a decision on a claimant's entitlement once a claimant has engaged with the Risk Review Team.

David Rutley:

Once a customer engages with us, the time taken to complete a review is case specific. It is dependent on the information provided and it may also be necessary to involve independent decision makers. If entitlement is established, any suspension will be lifted and any payments due will be made without delay.

Kate Osamor: [\[107657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2022 to Question 97000 on Social Security Benefits: Disqualification, how many claims remain suspended by the Risk Review Team despite the claimants having now engaged with the team and provided all requested evidence.

Kate Osamor: [\[107659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2022 to Question 97003 on Social Security Benefits: Disqualification, how many of the 149,763 cases that had been suspended under the Risk Review Process as of 24 December 2021, have now been closed after a decision was made that the claim was made fraudulently.

David Rutley:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

Kate Osamor: [\[107658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2022 to Question 97000 on Social Security Benefits: Disqualification, how many claims have been reviewed by the Risk Review Team but not suspended.

David Rutley:

Due to the high risk of fraud associated to the claims identified through this process, and in order to protect the public purse, all claims are suspended pending contact from the claimant, and the provision of any information requested to support a review and decision on entitlement.

■ Social Security Benefits: Strokes**Darren Jones:**[\[102747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department had made of the physical and mental health pressures that medical reassessments for welfare support place on claimants who are recovering from strokes.

Chloe Smith:

As set out in answer [UIN102750](#), benefits are designed to support an individual's needs arising from a range of disabilities or ill health, including strokes.

The Department aims to continually improve the assessment process for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) through customer insight, stakeholder engagement and qualitative research. For people with the highest level of support and with severe and lifelong health conditions which will not improve or will deteriorate, new guidance was introduced in August 2018 for both new claims and award reviews to ensure they receive an ongoing award of PIP, with a light-touch review at the 10-year point. Since 2019 ongoing awards with a light-touch review at the 10-year point are also applied to most awards for people over State Pension age.

We published 'Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper' in July 2021 and asked for views on how we might improve health assessments considering a number of options. The consultation closed on 11 October 2021 and we will set out next steps in a White Paper later this year.

We are now exploring how to test a new Severe Disability Group (SDG) so those with severe and lifelong conditions can benefit from a simplified process to access ESA/UC and PIP without ever needing to complete a detailed application form or go through a face to face assessment/reassessment.

■ Work Capability Assessment**Emma Hardy:**[\[105707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to tackle the backlog in work capability assessments.

Chloe Smith:

Ensuring claimants are assessed at the earliest opportunity and reducing customer processing times are a priority for the department. As part of the Covid-19 response we introduced telephone and video assessments alongside existing paper-based assessments.

We resumed face to face Work Capability Assessments (WCA) in May 2021, initially for claimants we were unable to assess by telephone. We continue to

work with the assessment provider, Centre for Health and Disability Assessments (CHDA), to maximise the number of WCAs completed.

We have assessed or scheduled for a face to face assessment over 99% of customers who were unable to be assessed remotely, or who were assessed by telephone but for whom a recommendation could not be made.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

DEFENCE

■ Ministry of Defence: Training

John Healey:

[\[52414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of civil servants in his Department have completed (a) initial and (b) annual refresher training for information security, by grade.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 18 October 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Leo Docherty:

All Ministry of Defence (MOD) personnel are required to undertake initial and refresher training to ensure they can recognise threats to security and can respond appropriately. The mandated training is the Defence Information Management Passport (DIMP) online course, which must be retaken every three years, and annual attendance at a General Security Threat Brief (this covers all elements of protective security and includes information and cyber security).

In the period 1 February 2021 (when Version six was introduced) to 4 October 2021, a total of ~~81,306~~ **12,520** MOD **Civil Service** staff completed or refreshed their DIMP in accordance with the three-yearly cycle. Completion data is not held by grade within the Defence Learning Environment. Longer term training records will be held locally by business units, but collating this information would involve going out to all sites across MOD, and this would incur disproportionate cost.

General Security Threat Briefs are delivered locally, and no data regarding attendance is held centrally. Again, collating this information would involve going out to all sites across MOD, and this would incur disproportionate cost.

John Healey:

[\[58730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 18 October 2021 to Question 52414, how many and what proportion of his Department's staff have received their refresher training for information security.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 22 October 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Leo Docherty:

All Ministry of Defence (MOD) personnel are required to undertake initial and refresher training to ensure they can recognise threats to security and can respond appropriately. The mandated training is the Defence Information Management Passport (DIMP) online course, which must be retaken every three years, and annual attendance at a General Security Threat Brief (this covers all elements of protective security and includes information and cyber security).

In the period 1 February 2021 (when Version six was introduced) to 4 October 2021, a total of 81,306 12,520 MOD civil service staff completed or refreshed their DIMP in accordance with the three-yearly cycle. Completion data is not held by grade within the Defence Learning Environment. Longer term training records will be held locally by business units, but collating this information would involve going out to all sites across MOD, and this would incur disproportionate cost.

General Security Threat Briefs are delivered locally, and no data regarding attendance is held centrally. Again, collating this information would involve going out to all sites across MOD, and this would incur disproportionate cost.

EDUCATION

■ Education: Air Conditioning

Munira Wilson:

[\[99397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) Dyson Pure Cool Formaldehyde – TP09 and (b) Camfil City M air cleaning units have been purchased by (i) education and (ii) childcare settings through the marketplace opened by the Department.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 12 January 2022. The correct answer should have been:

Mr Robin Walker:

During the autumn term, the department provided CO₂ monitors to all state-funded education providers. This includes early years, schools, and further education providers, backed by £25 million in government funding. Further information on this can be found here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-schools-to-receive-carbon-dioxide-monitors>.

The department has now delivered on our public commitment with over 353,000 monitors delivered. The programme provided schools and other settings with sufficient monitors to take representative readings from across their estate. Feedback suggests that schools are finding the monitors helpful to manage ventilation and, in most education providers, existing ventilation measures are sufficient.

CO₂ monitors are an additional measure which the department have rolled out to education providers to be used as a guide for where ventilation can be improved. This is not intended to create an additional burden on staff but is an extra tool to support education providers to improve ventilation. It is up to school leaders to decide how to best use them in their specific setting.

On 2 January 2022, the department announced that 7000 air cleaning units are now being made available for mainstream state-funded providers, in addition to the 1000 units made available for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision (AP) settings that we announced in November. Settings can apply for funded units via an online form. Applications are open until 9am on 17 January.

Before applying for a funded air cleaning unit, the following criteria must be met by mainstream education providers, as set out in the 'How to apply for a Department for Education-funded air cleaning unit' guidance, which is available on the ventilation document sharing platform:

- Sustained high CO₂ readings: there have been sustained high CO₂ readings (1500ppm or higher) for at least 1 week while the room is occupied, despite taking all measures possible to introduce ventilation.
- Lengthy remedial works required in order to address poor ventilation, that cannot be completed before the end of February 2022.
- Suitable space: air cleaning units will be allocated for teaching spaces only.

There are different criteria for SEND and AP settings due the higher-than-average number of vulnerable pupils attending those settings. For these education providers, air cleaning units will also be allocated to poorly ventilated staff rooms. The department will prioritise spaces with the poorest ventilation to receive units based on criteria such as CO₂ readings and occupation density.

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

The department has launched an online marketplace which provides schools, colleges and nurseries with a route to purchasing air cleaning units at a suitable specification and competitive price. The marketplace is available to view here: <https://s107t01-webapp-v2-01.azurewebsites.net/list/air-cleaning>. In future, we may review this list. As more products which meet our specification become available, these will be added. The education provider transacts directly with the supplier to purchase the units. For in stock items, units will be delivered within 10 days from date of purchase. As of 18 January, 371 Dyson Pure Cool Formaldehyde- TP09 units have been purchased and 66 Camfil City air cleaning units have been purchased.

Munira Wilson:

[99398]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) criteria and (b) data were used to determine the destinations of the 7,000 air purifier units announced on 2 January 2022.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 12 January 2022. The correct answer should have been:

Mr Robin Walker:

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

information on this can be found here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-schools-to-receive-carbon-dioxide-monitors>.

The department has now delivered on our public commitment with over 353,000 monitors delivered. The programme provided schools and other settings with sufficient monitors to take representative readings from across their estate. Feedback suggests that schools are finding the monitors helpful to manage ventilation and, in most education providers, existing ventilation measures are sufficient.

CO₂ monitors are an additional measure which the department have rolled out to education providers to be used as a guide for where ventilation can be improved. This is not intended to create an additional burden on staff but is an extra tool to support education providers to improve ventilation. It is up to school leaders to decide how to best use them in their specific setting.

On 2 January 2022, the department announced that 7000 air cleaning units are now being made available for mainstream state-funded providers, in addition to the 1000 units made available for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision (AP) settings that we announced in November. Settings can apply for funded units via an online form. Applications are open until 9am on 17 January.

Before applying for a funded air cleaning unit, the following criteria must be met by mainstream education providers, as set out in the 'How to apply for a Department for Education-funded air cleaning unit' guidance, which is available on the ventilation document sharing platform:

- Sustained high CO₂ readings: there have been sustained high CO₂ readings (1500ppm or higher) for at least 1 week while the room is occupied, despite taking all measures possible to introduce ventilation.
- Lengthy remedial works required in order to address poor ventilation, that cannot be completed before the end of February 2022.
- Suitable space: air cleaning units will be allocated for teaching spaces only.

There are different criteria for SEND and AP settings due the higher-than-average number of vulnerable pupils attending those settings. For these education providers, air cleaning units will also be allocated to poorly ventilated staff rooms. The department will prioritise spaces with the poorest ventilation to receive units based on criteria such as CO₂ readings and occupation density.

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

On 2 January we announced that 7,000 air cleaning units were being made available for mainstream state-funded settings, in addition to the 1,000 units made available for special and alternative provision settings that we announced in November. The government is now committing to fulfil all eligible applications from 1,265 state funded education providers for just over 8,000 air cleaning units. Please note that applications are now closed. Units were allocated to settings based on need. Before applying for a funded air cleaning unit, the following criteria had to be met by mainstream providers, as set out in the 'How to apply for a DfE-funded air cleaning unit' guidance: There have been sustained high CO₂ readings (1500ppm or higher) for at least 1 week while the room is occupied, despite taking all measures possible to introduce ventilation. Lengthy remedial works are required in order to address poor ventilation, that cannot be completed before the end of February 2022. Air cleaning units will be allocated for teaching spaces only. There were different criteria for special and alternative provision settings due the higher-than-average number of vulnerable pupils attending those settings. For these providers, air cleaning units were also allocated to poorly ventilated staff rooms. The number of units applied for was just over 8,000, which demonstrates that, in the majority of classrooms and teaching spaces, solutions can already be found to keep ventilation at adequate levels. The department has also launched an online marketplace which provides settings with a route to purchasing air cleaning units at a suitable specification and competitive price. Further information is available here: <https://s107t01-webapp-v2-01.azurewebsites.net/list/air-cleaning>. In future, we may review this list and as more products which meet our specification become available, these will be added. All purchases through the marketplace are managed by the supplier, rather than by the department.

■ Schools: Ventilation

Munira Wilson:

[\[99399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish data gathered from the 350,000 carbon dioxide monitors distributed to schools across England from September 2021.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 12 January 2022. The correct answer should have been:

Mr Robin Walker:

~~During the autumn term, the department provided CO₂ monitors to all state-funded education providers. This includes early years, schools, and further education providers, backed by £25 million in government funding. Further information on this can be found here~~
~~<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-schools-to-receive-carbon-dioxide-monitors>.~~

~~The department has now delivered on our public commitment with over 353,000 monitors delivered. The programme provided schools and other~~

settings with sufficient monitors to take representative readings from across their estate. Feedback suggests that schools are finding the monitors helpful to manage ventilation and, in most education providers, existing ventilation measures are sufficient.

CO₂ monitors are an additional measure which the department have rolled out to education providers to be used as a guide for where ventilation can be improved. This is not intended to create an additional burden on staff but is an extra tool to support education providers to improve ventilation. It is up to school leaders to decide how to best use them in their specific setting.

On 2 January 2022, the department announced that 7000 air cleaning units are now being made available for mainstream state-funded providers, in addition to the 1000 units made available for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision (AP) settings that we announced in November. Settings can apply for funded units via an online form. Applications are open until 9am on 17 January.

Before applying for a funded air cleaning unit, the following criteria must be met by mainstream education providers, as set out in the 'How to apply for a Department for Education-funded air cleaning unit' guidance, which is available on the ventilation document sharing platform:

- Sustained high CO₂ readings: there have been sustained high CO₂ readings (1500ppm or higher) for at least 1 week while the room is occupied, despite taking all measures possible to introduce ventilation.
- Lengthy remedial works required in order to address poor ventilation, that cannot be completed before the end of February 2022.
- Suitable space: air cleaning units will be allocated for teaching spaces only.

There are different criteria for SEND and AP settings due the higher-than-average number of vulnerable pupils attending those settings. For these education providers, air cleaning units will also be allocated to poorly ventilated staff rooms. The department will prioritise spaces with the poorest ventilation to receive units based on criteria such as CO₂ readings and occupation density.

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

The CO₂ monitors funded by the department do not automatically report readings, they are read manually by school staff. CO₂ monitors are an additional measure which we are rolling out to education providers to be used as a guide for where ventilation can be improved. This is not intended to create an additional burden on staff but is an extra tool to

support providers to improve ventilation. It is up to school leaders to decide how to best use them in their specific school, college or nursery.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Government Cyber Security Strategy 2022-2030**

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Steve Barclay):

[\[HCWS558\]](#)

Further to my statement to the House on Wednesday 15 December on the National Cyber Strategy (HCWS484), I am pleased to announce the publication of the Government Cyber Security Strategy. This will deliver on the public sector resilience aspects of the national strategy which is critical to realising our ambitions as a cyber power.

Government has made significant progress in the last five years. The introduction of the Minimum Cyber Security Standards for Government in 2018, and the underpinning annual 'Health Check', signalled clear requirements for cyber security controls and behaviours and improved government's understanding of its cyber security posture. Yet, while government's recognition and understanding of cyber security risk has evolved, it has also highlighted the gap between where government cyber resilience is now and where it needs to be.

As such, the Government Cyber Security Strategy sets out the vision that core government functions are resilient to cyber attack, strengthening the UK as a sovereign nation and cementing its authority as a democratic and responsible cyber power. The measurable aim is for these critical functions to be significantly hardened to cyber attack by 2025, with all government organisations across the whole public sector being resilient to known vulnerabilities and attack methods no later than 2030.

A copy of the Government Cyber Security Strategy will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ **Diffuse Mesothelioma Payment Scheme Levy 2021-22**

Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work (Chloe Smith):

[\[HCWS557\]](#)

The Diffuse Mesothelioma Payment Scheme (Levy) Regulations 2014 require active employers' liability insurers to pay an annual levy, based on their relative market share, for the purpose of meeting the costs of the Diffuse Mesothelioma Payment Scheme (DMPS). This is in line with the insurance industry's commitment to fund a scheme of last resort for persons diagnosed with diffuse mesothelioma who have been unable to trace their employer or their employer's insurer.

Today I can announce that the total amount of the levy to be charged for 2021-22, the eighth year of the DMPS, is £22.0 million. The amount will be payable by active insurers by the end of March 2022.

Individual active insurers will be notified in writing of their share of the levy, together with how the amount was calculated and the payment arrangements. Insurers should be aware that it is a legal requirement to pay the levy within the set timescales.

I am pleased that the DMPS has seen seven successful years of operation, assisting many hundreds of people who have been diagnosed with Diffuse Mesothelioma. The seventh Annual Report for the scheme, along with the annual statistics were published on 29 November 2021 and is available on the gov.uk website. I hope that members of both Houses will welcome this announcement and give the DMPS their continued support.