



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 26 January 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:28 P.M., 26 January 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	6	CABINET OFFICE	12
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	6	■ Cabinet Office: Legislation	12
■ Automotive Transformation Fund	6	■ Cabinet Office: Public Appointments	12
■ Conditions of Employment	6	■ Government Departments: Buildings	13
■ Delivery Services: Regulation	7	■ Government Departments: Consultants	13
■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Diaries	7	■ Government Departments: Vacancies	13
■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points	7	■ Ministers	14
■ Employment: Bullying and Harassment	8	DEFENCE	14
■ Energy: Competition	9	■ Autonomous Weapons	14
■ Fuel Poverty	9	■ Defence: Artificial Intelligence	14
■ Industrial Health and Safety	9	■ Electronic Warfare	15
■ Local Government: Coronavirus	10	■ Fleet Solid Support Ships	15
■ Small Businesses: Motor Vehicles	10	■ Infrastructure: National Security	16
■ Social Rented Housing: Energy	11	■ Members: Correspondence	16
■ Termination of Employment: Coronavirus	11	■ Ministry of Defence: Expenditure	16
■ Wind Power: Scotland	11	■ RAF Fairford and RAF Menwith Hill	17
		■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel	17

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	18	■ British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies: Politics and Government	33
■ Platinum Jubilee 2022: Medals	18	■ Conflict Prevention	34
■ Tickets: Sales	18	■ Crimes against Humanity	34
EDUCATION	19	■ Department for International Development: Diaries	35
■ Department for Education: Diaries	19	■ Ethiopia: Development Aid	35
■ Further Education: Government Assistance	19	■ Ethiopia: Human Rights	35
■ Further Education: Teachers	20	■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Working Hours	36
■ GCSE: Assessments	21	■ Tigray: Peace Negotiations	36
■ Local Government and Schools: Autism	22	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	37
■ Schools: Air Conditioning	23	■ Abortion	37
■ Schools: Coronavirus	24	■ Abortion: Drugs	38
■ Schools: Vaccination	27	■ Abortion: Gender	39
■ Schools: Ventilation	27	■ Abortion: Standards	39
■ Sex and Relationship Education	28	■ Advisory Committee On Borderline Substances: Nutrition	40
■ T-levels	29	■ Advisory Committee On Borderline Substances: Standards	40
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	30	■ Alcoholic Drinks: Death	40
■ Dangerous Dogs Act 1991	30	■ Allergies: Prescription Drugs	41
■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Diaries	30	■ Care Homes: Coronavirus	44
■ Hazardous Substances: Waste Disposal	31	■ Care Homes: Visits	44
■ Marine Environment	31	■ Coronavirus	44
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	32	■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing	46
■ Afghanistan: Development Aid	32	■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	46
■ Afghanistan: Emigration	32	■ Coronavirus: Drugs	48
■ Afghanistan: Refugees	33	■ Coronavirus: Drugs and Screening	49
■ Africa: Overseas Investment	33	■ Coronavirus: Greater London	49
		■ Coronavirus: Hospital Beds	50

■ Coronavirus: Intensive Care	51	■ Test and Trace Support Payment	66
■ Coronavirus: Quarantine	51	■ Travel: Coronavirus	67
■ Coronavirus: Research	51	■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme: Coronavirus	67
■ Coronavirus: Screening	52	■ Weddings: Coronavirus	67
■ Coronavirus: Travel	55	HOME OFFICE	67
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	55	■ Communist Party of China	67
■ Coronavirus: Drugs	58	■ Domestic Abuse	68
■ Dementia: Research	58	■ Domestic Abuse: Crime Prevention	68
■ Dengue Fever: British Nationals Abroad	59	■ Joint Fraud Taskforce	69
■ Dental Services	59	■ Members: Correspondence	70
■ Dental Services: Cumbria	59	■ NHS: Migrant Workers	70
■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions	60	■ Police	71
■ General Practitioners: Telephone Services	60	■ Police: Dogs	71
■ Health Professionals: Training	60	■ Refugees: Afghanistan	72
■ Health Services: Waiting Lists	61	■ Refugees: Scotland	72
■ Home Care Services: Coronavirus	61	■ UK Border Agency: Training	73
■ Hormone Replacement Therapy	61	■ UK Visas and Immigration	73
■ Integrated Care Boards	62	■ UK Visas and Immigration: Administrative Delays	74
■ Members: Correspondence	63	■ Visas	75
■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People	63	■ Visas: Fees and Charges	75
■ Mental Health Services: Health Professionals	63	■ Visas: Overseas Students	75
■ NHS	64	■ Windrush Compensation Scheme	76
■ NHS: Counselling	64	INTERNATIONAL TRADE	77
■ NHS: Labour Turnover	65	■ Trade Remedies	77
■ NHS: Protective Clothing	65	■ Trade Remedies: Complaints	77
■ Sodium Valproate: Compensation	65	JUSTICE	78
■ Surescreen Diagnostics	66	■ Courts: Fines	78
		■ Courts: Interpreters	79
		■ Hunting: Prosecutions	80
		■ Legal Aid Scheme	81

■ Magistrates: Disability	81	NORTHERN IRELAND	95
■ Ministry of Justice: Public Appointments	82	■ Economic Situation: Merseyside and Northern Ireland	95
■ Prison Officers: Pay	82	■ NHS: Northern Ireland	95
■ Prison Officers: Training	82	■ Skilled Workers: Northern Ireland	96
■ Prisoners' Release: Females	83	TRANSPORT	96
■ Prisons: Body Searches	84	■ Blue Badge Scheme: Cancer	96
■ Prisons: Public Sector	84	■ Department for Transport: Public Appointments	96
■ Reoffenders	85	■ Diesel Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions	97
■ Social Security Benefits: Leeds	86	■ Electric Scooters: Hire Services	98
■ Wayland Prison: Solar Power	86	■ Motorways: Safety	98
LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	87	■ Parking: Pedestrian Areas	99
■ Buildings: Disability	87	■ Railways: Travel Information	99
■ Council Tax: Rates and Rating	87	■ Taxis: Disability	100
■ Flats: Insulation	88	■ Trams	100
■ Housing: Disability	88	■ Travel: Costs	100
■ Local Government: Cornwall	88	TREASURY	101
■ Local Government: Coronavirus	89	■ Business: Coronavirus	101
■ Local Government: Devolution	89	■ Cash Dispensing	101
■ Local Government: Video Conferencing	90	■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Aviation	102
■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Diaries	90	■ Hospitality Industry: VAT	103
■ Non-domestic Rates: Airports	90	■ Inflation	103
■ Non-domestic Rates: Tax Allowances	92	■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services	104
■ Property Development	92	■ Revenue and Customs: Working Hours	104
■ Regional Planning and Development	92	WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	105
■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus	93	■ Conversion Therapy	105
■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund	94	■ Disability: Commonhold and Leasehold	106

■ Sexual Harassment: Employment	106	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	111
WORK AND PENSIONS	106	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	111
■ Department for Work and Pensions: Diaries	106	■ Special Health Authority for Independent Maternity Investigations	111
■ Department for Work and Pensions: Public Appointments	107	PRIME MINISTER	112
■ Employment: Disability	107	■ Appointments to the UK Delegation to the United Kingdom-European Union Parliamentary Partnership Assembly	112
■ Government: Procurement	107	WORK AND PENSIONS	114
■ Inflation	108	■ Help To Claim	114
■ Pensioners: Utilities	109		
■ Poverty: Children	109		
■ Universal Credit	110		

Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Automotive Transformation Fund

Colum Eastwood:

[109352]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to launch a new round of applications to the Automotive Transformation Fund following the completion of the last round that closed on 24 November 2021.

Lee Rowley:

The Automotive Transformation Fund (ATF) supports late-stage R&D and capital investments across strategically important parts of the electric vehicle supply chain.

On 24 January, we opened Round 18 of the Expression of Interest competition to support capital investments (<https://apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition/1069/overview>), along with Round 3 of the competition to support Feasibility Studies (<https://apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition/1094/overview>).

Information about open funding competitions and further detail on scope and eligibility can be found on the IFS portal:

<https://apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition/search>.

■ Conditions of Employment

Rachael Maskell:

[106777]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department is making on the Employment Bill; and what policy areas will be covered in that 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 have made significant progress in bringing forward legislation to protect workers' rights, including:

- Giving all workers the right to receive a statement of their rights from day one;
- Introducing new rights to workers to receive a payslip and for payslips for hourly paid workers to include the numbers of hours worked;
- Quadrupling the maximum additional penalty fine that Employment Tribunals can use for employers who treat their workers badly;
- Closing a loophole which sees agency workers employed on cheaper rates than permanent workers;

- Extending the holiday pay reference period from 12 to 52 weeks, ensuring those in seasonal or atypical roles get fair holiday pay; and
- Announcing a new naming scheme for employers who fail to pay Employment Tribunal awards.

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.

■ **Delivery Services: Regulation**

Martyn Day:

[\[106794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of potential merits of introducing additional regulations for the parcel delivery sector to ensure a minimum of standard of service.

Paul Scully:

The Government remains committed to an affordable and accessible postal service for all users. Under its universal service obligation, Royal Mail offers a letter and parcel service for the same price and to the same delivery standards to anywhere in the UK.

Ofcom, as the UK's designated independent regulator of postal services, is currently consulting on the future regulatory framework for post, including parcel operators outside of the universal service obligation, and plans to issue a statement in Summer 2022.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Diaries**

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[106878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish in full his Ministerial diary for 20 May 2020.

George Freeman:

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 at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/beis-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings>.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[104400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department taking to help local authorities with developing an electric vehicle charging transition strategy.

Mike Amesbury: [\[104401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the support available to local authorities for the development of electric vehicle charging transition strategies.

Mike Amesbury: [\[104402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the number of local authorities with an electric vehicle charging transition strategy; and what steps his Department is taking to support local authorities to ensure that those strategies are implemented.

Greg Hands:

The Government has a programme of engagement and support for local authorities, to ensure all areas are working to help deliver on the phase out of the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030. This includes funding the Energy Saving Trust to provide free advice to local authorities in England, on matters such as developing a local electric vehicle charging strategy. In collaboration with the Institution of Engineering and Technology, the Government will soon also publish an electric vehicle infrastructure guide for local authorities, which will support the planning and delivery of electric vehicle chargepoints in their areas. This year £20 million is available under the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme for local authorities, to provide public chargepoints for their residents without access to private parking.

Local authorities are best placed to consider local needs, and the Government's forthcoming Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy will serve to define the role and responsibilities of local authorities in the delivery of charging infrastructure.

The Government will continue to monitor and engage with local authorities as they progress with their strategies and will work to help mainstream capability and leadership, leading to local action to support zero emission vehicle uptake across every part of the UK.

■ Employment: Bullying and Harassment

Rachael Maskell: [\[106778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will bring forward measures to tackle bullying and negative behaviours at work in the proposed Employment Bill.

Paul Scully:

Bullying and harassment are unacceptable and have no place in today's workplace. The Government believes employees should be able to work without fear of encountering bullying from their employers, fellow employees or anyone else.

Current legislation provides robust safeguards for employees against harassment in the workplace. This covers harassment on the grounds of gender, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or age. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act

1994 and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 make intentional harassment a criminal offence.

Employers can also establish good practices by, for example having a clear anti-harassment policy and ensuring staff receive training in this area.

■ Energy: Competition

Julie Elliott:

[\[107579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the (a) effectiveness and (b) adequacy of the process in place to transfer energy credit from liquidated energy suppliers to the customers' new supplier.

Greg Hands:

Protecting the credit balances of domestic customers when energy companies cease trading is a priority for both Government and Ofgem, who manage the service transfer under the Supplier of Last Resort process.

■ Fuel Poverty

Sarah Olney:

[\[108589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the extent to which planned programmes to improve home energy efficiency will deliver the Committee on Fuel Poverty's 2025 Band D milestone and 2030 Band C target; and steps he plans to take in the event that those targets are not reached.

Greg Hands:

The Government outlines its approach to tackling fuel poverty in England in its "Sustainable Warmth" policy paper, published in February 2021. The Government's fuel poverty target for England is to ensure that as many fuel poor homes as feasibly possible achieve a minimum energy efficiency rating of Band C, by 2030.

There are a range of schemes in place to deliver energy efficiency measures to low-income households. For example, the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, the Home Upgrade Grant and the Energy Company Obligation will all help deliver against the Government's 2030 target, and 2025 milestone.

The Government will continue to monitor the delivery of schemes to ensure support reaches those qualifying households and progress towards the 2030 target and interim milestone.

■ Industrial Health and Safety

Rachael Maskell:

[\[106779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will include workplace health and wellbeing provisions in his forthcoming Employment Bill.

Paul Scully:

We will bring forward reforms to our employment framework when Parliamentary time allows.

In the meantime, we will continue to work with stakeholders to ensure these measures deliver on our plan to build a high skilled, high productivity, high wage economy. These reforms will strike the balance between the flexibility the economy needs and the security that employees deserve.

Local Government: Coronavirus**Cherilyn Mackrory:**[\[106875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether Local Authorities have discretion not to award grants to (a) holiday lets and (b) other businesses that cannot explicitly prove that they have been directly financially impacted by the Omicron variant.

Paul Scully:

Holiday accommodation businesses are eligible for the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant (OHLG) scheme provided they can evidence they are trading as a business and are listed on the business rates register. Second homeowners not trading as a business cannot claim a grant of any amount. Where a Local Authorities determines that a business is not trading they will not be eligible for a grant. This is consistent with steps announced by Government on 14 January 2022, which mean that owners of second homes who abuse a tax loophole by claiming their often-empty properties are holiday lets will be forced to pay their fair share of tax under tough new measures due to be introduced from April 2023.

Local Authorities have the discretion to use Additional Restrictions Grants (ARG) funding to support businesses in the way that best meets local economic need, in line with the scheme guidance. Local Authorities are encouraged to focus ARG support on businesses who have been severely impacted by reduced business activity due to the spread of the Omicron variant. The guidance does not mandate specific evidence to determine if a business has been severely impacted by Omicron. It is for Local Authorities to issue grants at their discretion, based on local decision making.

The guidance for both OHLG and ARG schemes can be found [here](#).

Small Businesses: Motor Vehicles**Seema Malhotra:**[\[105539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the availability of vehicle emissions filtration systems for small businesses.

Lee Rowley:

BEIS has not assessed the adequacy of the availability of vehicle emissions filtration systems for small businesses. However, as the global economy has rebounded from

the pandemic, we have seen pressures placed on supply chains across sectors and across countries.

■ **Social Rented Housing: Energy**

Sarah Olney:

[\[108590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how his Department has allocated the additional £60 million to retrofit social housing which the Government committed to spending in the Sustainable Warmth policy paper published in February 2021.

Greg Hands:

The Government committed £60 million of funding to continue upgrading the least efficient social housing in the Autumn 2020 Spending Review. This was increased to around £160 million for the first Wave of the fund, in March 2021. The Government launched the grant competition for Wave 1 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund in August 2021 and will provide circa. £160 million funding in 2021/22 financial year, delivering up to March 2023. The bidding window closed on 15 October 2021 and the outcomes of bids will be disclosed in due course.

In the Heat and Buildings Strategy and Net Zero Strategy, launched in October 2021, the Government announced that a further £800 million had been committed for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund in the 22/23 to 24/25 financial years as part of the 2021 Spending Review process.

■ **Termination of Employment: Coronavirus**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[106776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to help ensure that people who lost their jobs as a result of breaking covid-19 restrictions have their employment reinstated.

Paul Scully:

The existing employment rights framework protects employees from being unfairly dismissed. Employees who consider that their dismissal was unfair can complain to an employment tribunal, generally subject to a qualifying period of two-years of continuous service. Should the tribunal find the dismissal unfair, they will determine the appropriate award such as compensation or reinstatement in post.

■ **Wind Power: Scotland**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[107729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the revenue that Scotland or Scottish communities will receive from offshore wind energy as a result of Scotland being cabled to England.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 24 January 2022]: Offshore wind projects in Scotland pay rent to Crown Estate Scotland, which in turn pays its profits into the Scottish Consolidated Fund. In Financial Year 2020/21, Crown Estate Scotland's revenue from its Marine portfolio (which also includes non-offshore wind activities) was £8.9 million.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Cabinet Office: Legislation****Kirsty Blackman:**[\[109238\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many pieces of (a) primary and (b) secondary legislation their Department has sponsored in each of the last 10 years.

Michael Ellis:

Cabinet Office has sponsored nineteen pieces of primary legislation in Parliament from the 2010-2012 Parliamentary session to the current Parliamentary session.

The number of pieces of secondary legislation is not held by the Department.

These figures may not be not exhaustive as a result of machinery of government changes and departmental structures over the past decade.

■ Cabinet Office: Public Appointments**Kevin Brennan:**[\[109194\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department seeks references for candidates appointed to public positions which fall under the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Michael Ellis:

The Cabinet Office is committed to ensuring that individuals who serve on the boards of our public bodies uphold the highest standards of conduct. Public appointments are made in line with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

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 can adhere to the Code of Conduct for board members of public bodies.

On application, all candidates are asked to declare any relevant interests that they may have. These are discussed with candidates at interview. The department also provides the panel with other information such as open source material that they may wish to consider in reaching a judgement in a fair and open way. References may be taken up depending on the role.

■ Government Departments: Buildings

Chris Stephens: [\[109272\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what Departments and locations are included in the affiliate cluster contract run by the Government Property Agency.

Chris Stephens: [\[109273\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the affiliate cluster contract run by the Government Property Agency is due to expire.

Michael Ellis:

The information requested is commercially sensitive and therefore we are unable to respond to this question.

■ Government Departments: Consultants

Kate Green: [\[109222\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the total spending by each Department was on outside consultants in each of the last three years for which records are available.

Michael Ellis:

It is standard for Government Departments to draw on the advice of external specialists for a range of services. Consultancy includes staff who provide objective advice relating to strategy, structure, management or operations of an organisation and may include the identification of options with recommendations.

Cabinet Office net spend on Consultancy is published in annual reports and accounts on GOV.UK.

■ Government Departments: Vacancies

Kate Green: [\[109223\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many vacancies in each Government department are vacant due to a lack of applicants with the appropriate skills.

Michael Ellis:

The number of vacancies in each government department currently vacant due to a lack of applicants with the appropriate skills is not held centrally.

Civil servants are employed by individual departments which are responsible for setting their terms and conditions of employment in accordance with the Civil Service Management Code. Departments will, therefore, be able to provide further information on the status of their vacancies.

■ Ministers

Angela Rayner: [\[109235\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when his Department plans to publish ministerial gifts, hospitality, travel and meetings for the period July to September 2021.

Michael Ellis:

Details of Ministers' gifts, hospitality, overseas travel and meetings are published on GOV.UK on a quarterly basis. Data covering the period from April to June 2021 was published on 21 October 2021.

Departments will publish data relating to the period July to September 2021 in due course.

DEFENCE

■ Autonomous Weapons

Alyn Smith: [\[108620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the Government's policy is on the UK developing systems that operate without human intervention in the weapon command and control chain.

Jeremy Quin:

The United Kingdom does not possess, and has no intention of developing fully autonomous systems which operate without human intervention in the weapon command and control chain.

When deploying autonomous weapon systems, we will always ensure meaningful and context-appropriate human involvement across the system lifecycle from development to deployment, ensuring human responsibility for outcomes.

■ Defence: Artificial Intelligence

Alyn Smith: [\[108618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress has been made on the Autonomy and Artificial Intelligence Collaboration (AAIC) Partnership Agreement signed with the US Air Force Research Laboratory in December 2020; and if he will place a copy of that agreement in the Library.

Jeremy Quin:

Thanks to this collaboration good progress has been made in developing AI and Autonomy tools for use against priority operational challenges and scenarios. The latest milestone event (along with a review conducted by the deputy principles) was held in October 2021, demonstrating how the UK and US can integrate AI technology to create an end-to-end machine learning research development and deployment ecosystem, enabling rapid data-sharing and algorithm development, evaluation and

deployment: . A report was published and is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/us-and-uk-research-labs-collaborate-on-autonomy-and-ai>.

We do not intend to place the Project Arrangement in the House Library. The hon. Member may also wish to be aware that the Project Arrangement would fall within the scope of the qualified exemption provided for at Section 27 (International Relations) of the Freedom of Information Act. I am therefore withholding the information as its disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice relations between the United Kingdom and another State.

■ **Electronic Warfare**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[106657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to fund (a) training and (b) infrastructure in cyber technology for national defence purposes.

James Heapey:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) works closely with the National Cyber Security Centre and other government departments in support of national defence purposes. The Department is funding the delivery of transformative defensive cyber capabilities through a range of transformation programmes - both cyber defence specific and those delivering the wider digital transformation of the MOD.

The Defence Cyber School is upskilling MOD and government personnel with the tech capabilities needed for cyber professional roles, and our Cyber Confident initiative is delivering improved training and awareness for all, so that our people are an effective frontline of defence.

We have put in place a comprehensive program of activity to modernise and stay current in the face of a dynamic risk profile. These measures, co-ordinated across the whole Department and in partnership with other government experts, focus on enhancing skills, processes and technology to strengthen the ability of the MOD to prevent, detect, respond and recover from cyber-attack.

■ **Fleet Solid Support Ships**

Mick Whitley:

[\[108625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress has been made on the Fleet Solid Support Ship competition.

Jeremy Quin:

As announced on 1 September 2021, four consortia, all of which include significant UK involvement, have been awarded Fleet Solid Support (FSS) ship Competitive Procurement Phase contracts to mature their proposals. The project is on track to receive final manufacture tenders in July 2022. The Ministry of Defence expects to be able to award a manufacture contract for the FSS ships within two years of competition launch in May 2021.

■ Infrastructure: National Security

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[106658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to protect (a) water plants, (b) power plants and (c) other critical national infrastructure.

James Heappey:

Within the UK, the safety and security of individual pieces of critical national infrastructure is the responsibility of the relevant commercial operator and Police force for the geographical area in which it is located. At the strategic level, the department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is responsible for the overall operation and resilience of the UK's domestic energy sector. The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is responsible for the overall operation and resilience of the UK's water sector. The Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) provides advice on the resilience of Critical National Infrastructure across the UK.

The Ministry of Defence and the UK Armed Forces are responsible for the security and territorial integrity of the UK as a whole. Defence of the UK and its overseas territories from the malicious intent of our adversaries is the first task of the Ministry of Defence and our Armed Forces. This extends to being prepared to defend against and counter external hostile threats to our way of life and the delivery of critical services. I would, however, like to reassure you that I have received no indication that the Armed Forces would be required to provide protection water plants, power plants, or to other critical national infrastructure in the foreseeable future.

■ Members: Correspondence

Emma Hardy:

[\[106839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to respond to the letter of 6 October 2021 from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle on the proposed Royal yacht.

Mr Ben Wallace:

I responded to the hon. Member on 25 January 2022.

■ Ministry of Defence: Expenditure

Chris Evans:

[\[109220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason omitted estimates and data for jobs supported by MOD expenditure have been delayed for the report entitled MOD regional expenditure with UK industry and commerce and supported employment 2020/2021; and when that data will be published.

Jeremy Quin:

The omitted estimates and data for jobs supported by Ministry of Defence expenditure have been delayed due to a delay in the availability of the latest employment and turnover data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), caused

by the impact of COVID-19 on the ONS Business Surveys. The ONS figures are required for the calculation of employment estimates. Subject to the availability of data from the ONS, we estimate that we will be able to publish a revision of the bulletin to include the jobs estimates for 2020-21 in early summer 2022.

■ **RAF Fairford and RAF Menwith Hill**

Alex Sobel:

[\[109334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much the planned upgrades at (a) NSA/NRO Menwith Hill and (b) USAF Fairford will cost; and (b) who will pay for those upgrades.

James Heappey:

Planned upgrades at Menwith Hill and Fairford will be funded by the United States.

An approximation of planned upgrade costs can be found below.

MENWITH HILL	\$40 MILLION
Fairford	\$300 million

■ **Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**

John Healey:

[\[107454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what types of vessels which will be brought under Royal Navy command when it takes primacy for tackling illegal Channel crossings.

James Heappey:

Detailed planning for Operation ISOTROPE is underway and further detail will be announced in due course. The capabilities that Defence makes available for this task are likely to include the same classes of naval vessels and airborne intelligence and surveillance assets that have previously supported the Home Office with countering small boat migration in the Channel.

John Healey:

[\[107457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the Navy have interception or interdiction powers for taking primacy over 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.

Luke Pollard:

[\[107717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many new vessels will need to be (a) procured or (b) leased to provide sufficient cross-decking capacity to deliver his Department's new responsibilities for the cross channel migration operation.

James Heappey:

Detailed plans for operation ISOTROPE are under development and further information will be made available to the House in due course. This may include making available additional naval surface or air capabilities, and procurement or leasing activity will be considered as needed.

John Healey:[\[109185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make it his policy to publish daily data on Channel crossings.

James Heappey:

Detailed planning for Operation ISOTROPE is underway and further information, including relating to periodic data reporting, will be announced in due course.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Platinum Jubilee 2022: Medals****Patricia Gibson:**[\[109262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, for what reason retired (a) police officers and (b) members of the armed forces will not receive the Queen's platinum Jubilee Medal.

Chris Philp:

The Platinum Jubilee Medal is a commemorative medal, and as with previous Jubilee medals, is awarded to those serving at the time of the anniversary of Her Majesty The Queen's accession. It is not an award for either long or valuable service which are recognised in other ways.

■ Tickets: Sales**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:**[\[109319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the Competition and Markets Authority's recommendations on illegal ticket resale.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:[\[109320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with the Home Secretary on helping to ensure that effective action is taken by the relevant authorities regarding illegal ticket resale.

Julia Lopez:

The Government is committed to cracking down on unacceptable behaviour in the ticketing market and improving people's chances of buying tickets at a reasonable price. DCMS works with all other relevant Departments to ensure this is the case, including the Home Office.

We have strengthened the law in relation to ticketing information requirements and have introduced a criminal offence of using automated software to buy more tickets online than that allowed.

We also support the work of enforcement agencies in this area, such as the Competition and Markets Authority, National Trading Standards, and the advertising industry's own regulator the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).

The Government is considering its response to the CMA report on Secondary Ticketing which will be issued shortly.

EDUCATION

■ Department for Education: Diaries

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[106886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish in full his Ministerial diary 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 [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

■ Further Education: Government Assistance

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[109208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason post-16 providers rated by Ofsted as requiring improvement are unable to apply for certain funds, grants and Government initiatives.

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[109209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the impact on learners studying at post-16 providers which have been rated by Ofsted as requiring improvement of the inability of those providers to apply for certain funds, grants and Government initiatives.

Alex Burghart:

The vast majority of funds available to post-16 providers are available to all providers, regardless of Ofsted rating. This includes the Further Education Capital Transformation Fund which seeks to improve the condition of the further education college estate, the Post-16 Capacity Fund which seeks to ensure there is adequate space to accommodate the demographic increase in 16-18 year old learners, and the Skills Accelerator Development Fund which supports projects that build providers' capacity to meet locally agreed skills priorities. Some funds may be targeted at providers with stronger Ofsted grades for a variety of reasons, including where programmes are at an early stage, and it makes sense to ask the strongest providers to work on the initial development phase or where we are looking for a provider to

lead the delivery of a programme where the quality of provision is the overriding immediate priority.

The T Levels capital fund was restricted to providers rated Ofsted good or outstanding on a temporary basis while the programme embedded but now, in Wave 4 of the T Levels capital fund worth £150 million, all providers offering T Levels in 2023 are eligible to apply. The Higher Technical Education Growth Fund and the Institutes of Technology programme were also restricted to providers rated good or outstanding. This was to ensure effective delivery of these new qualifications and provision. Funding for Institutes of Technology was restricted to bids where all core further education partners were Ofsted good or outstanding, this is because they are expected to lead the provision of Higher Technical Education in an area. The impact of eligibility requirements for funds on learners are considered on a case by cases basis for each fund, bearing in mind the impact on protected characteristics and on learners in less affluent areas.

■ Further Education: Teachers

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[109205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential need to attract industry professionals in green jobs to teaching positions in the further education sector; and what steps he plans to take to encourage industry professionals to engage with and share their skills with the further education sector.

Alex Burghart:

The government is committed to supporting green skills across the country and a crucial part of this is ensuring further education (FE) providers have the best quality teachers and lecturers to teach the next generation workforce.

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

In November 2020, we launched the Green Jobs Taskforce, working in partnership with business, local areas, skills providers, and unions, to ensure we have the skilled workforce to deliver net zero and our Ten Point Plan. Following that, and building on the Skills for Jobs White Paper, the Net Zero Strategy was published in October 2021 and set out how the government's skills reforms will support teachers understanding of sustainability, strengthen links between employers and providers, support workers in high carbon sectors with the transition, and help to build a pipeline of future talent. The government is taking a number of steps to ensure the FE teacher workforce supports the transition to net zero.

We have worked with employers to develop a refreshed apprenticeship standard for FE teaching (Level 5 Learning and Skills Teacher), which came into effect in September 2021. For the first time, all FE teachers training via an apprenticeship will

be required to integrate sustainability into their teaching, including through modelling sustainable practices and promoting sustainable development principles in relation to their subject specialism. This standard will soon be incorporated into all future FE teaching qualifications, so that all teachers across all subject areas will be able to embed and promote sustainability in their teaching.

The 'Teach in FE' service which launched in January this year, provides a new online service to raise awareness of FE teaching and encourage and support new teachers into the profession. It is supported by a campaign to bring potential teachers to the new service.

Our FE teacher training bursaries worth up to £26,000, are available to support those who want to train in a range of subjects including STEM, engineering and computing that can contribute to the expansion of green jobs

Since 2018, the Taking Teaching Further (TTF) programme has supported over 350 industry professionals to become FE teachers with another 550 places made available in the 2021/22 academic year. This has allowed FE providers across all of the 15 technical teaching routes, including in green and sustainable industries to get technical expertise into the classroom.

The Emerging Skills Electrification pilot is currently supporting providers and businesses to upskill their employees within electrification technology. The pilot funds free upskilling days for trainers at all further and higher education providers which enables them to teach new emerging skills courses in their colleges or universities.

Taken together, and alongside the wider suite of reforms to the skills system being implemented by government in partnership with industry, these measures will help to ensure more people can get the skills they need to enter and progress within green jobs.

■ GCSE: Assessments

Alberto Costa:

[\[107611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged due to the disruption caused by the covid-19 pandemic when undertaking their GCSE examinations this year.

Mr Robin Walker:

It is our firm intention that examinations will go ahead this year. It is of great importance to give pupils the opportunity to sit their examinations and we have put measures in place to ensure they can do so fairly.

We have worked with Ofqual to put in place several adaptations to support the safe and fair delivery of examinations in this academic year to recognise the disruption pupils have already faced, and to account for further disruption. The adaptations being made were welcomed during our joint consultation with Ofqual and include:

- A choice of topics in GCSE English literature, history, ancient history, and choice of content in GCSE geography.

- Provision of advance information which will set out the content focus of examinations in subjects where there is no choice of topic or content, to be released by 7 February.
- Changes to the requirements for the delivery of practical assessments in a range of subjects.
- Provision of support materials such as formula sheets for examinations in GCSE mathematics, physics, and combined science.

In balancing public confidence in qualifications with fairness, Ofqual have also confirmed that 2022 will be a transition year for grading. Grades will be set at a mid-point between 2021 and pre-pandemic grades. In 2023, Ofqual plans to return to results that are in line with those in pre-pandemic years. This package of adaptations, combined with Ofqual's approach to grading, provides unprecedented support to maximise fairness and help pupils reach their potential.

Alongside these adaptations, we have announced almost £5 billion in dedicated education recovery funding, including a further £1.8 billion in the recent Spending Review. We have made significant investments in areas that evidence tells us will be the most effective, such as tutoring and teaching, and have directed funding at the most disadvantaged.

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

■ Local Government and Schools: Autism

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[106796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on working strategically across schools and local authorities to help ensure that all staff receive autism training.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[106798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to reincorporate (a) autism and (b) special educational needs and disability into the Initial Teacher Training Framework.

Mr Robin Walker:

All teachers are teachers of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and the department is committed to ensuring that all children and young people, particularly those with SEND receive high quality teaching that will enable them to reach their full potential at school.

That is why the revised Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework (CCF), that all new entrants to the profession benefit from, has been designed around how to support all pupils to succeed, including those pupils identified within the four areas of need set out in the SEND code of practice.

When developing the framework, there were a range of views from stakeholders and SEND experts about things that could or should be included in the framework. However, there was consensus that our approach of 'quality-first teaching', would be the best way to improve outcomes for all children, particularly those with special educational needs. The framework, therefore, deliberately does not detail approaches specific to particular additional needs, such as autism, but what makes the most effective teaching.

In addition to the mandated minimum set out in the ITT CCF, we expect ITT providers and their partners to continue to tailor their curricula to the needs of their trainees and the children in the schools where they train and will work. However, ITT courses must be designed so that trainee teachers can demonstrate that they meet the Teachers' Standards at the appropriate level. This includes the requirement in Standard 5, that all teachers must have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs.

Within the new autism strategy, published in July 2021 and extended to children and young people for the first time, 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.

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

The department has also provided £2 million of funding for the Whole School SEND consortium in 2021/22, through our contract with nasen. This will continue their wider programme of work to equip the workforce to deliver high quality teaching for all children and young people with SEND, including autism, this year.

■ Schools: Air Conditioning

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[99332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the evidence on which he based his decision to provide up to a further 7,000 air purifiers to schools without charge; and on what basis that overall number of units was reached.

Mr Robin Walker:

On 24 January, the department published summary findings from its survey of the use of carbon dioxide monitors, and data on applications for air cleaning units. This is

available to view here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/co2-monitor-survey-and-applications-for-air-cleaning-units>.

In total, 1,265 providers that applied for department-funded air cleaning units were eligible for air cleaning units. This mirrors the survey's findings that only 3% of providers using carbon dioxide monitors reported sustained high carbon dioxide readings that could not otherwise be addressed.

The total number of air cleaning units that providers have applied for was just over 8,000. This demonstrates that, in the majority of classrooms and teaching spaces, solutions can already be found to keep ventilation at adequate levels. Up to an additional 1,000 units have now been ordered, bringing the total number of units available up to 9,000, allowing all eligible applications to be fulfilled.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[106635]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to Schools Covid Operational Guidance, published in January 2022, how primary school pupils, aged five to 11 years, and school staff's positions were considered in developing that guidance.

Mr Robin Walker:

The operational guidance for each school, college and university provides details on the testing, ventilation and hygiene measures that all education and childcare provider should have in place to manage transmission of COVID-19 day to day. The department has worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA) to revise this guidance.

When developing guidance for education providers, the department regularly reviews data, analysis and advice from a number of different sources, including the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), UKHSA, and the Office for National Statistics.

We work closely with the DHSC and UKHSA, as well as local authorities and directors of public health, to inform our planning and response. The department engaged regularly with schools and their representatives in relevant planning, including primary schools.

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[106638]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent guidance has been given to protect primary school children and staff from the Omicron variant of covid-19.

Mr Robin Walker:

COVID-19 continues to be a virus that we learn to live with and the imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's education remains. The government continues to manage the risk of serious illness from the spread of COVID-19.

While it has been announced that face coverings are no longer advised for pupils, staff and visitors in classrooms, and from 27 January, face coverings are no longer advised for pupils, staff and visitors in communal areas, a range of protective measures remain in place in primary schools. Additionally, local directors of public health may temporarily advise the use of face coverings in communal areas where this is proportionate due to specific local public health concerns.

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

Young people aged 5 to 18 and fully vaccinated adults who are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 can take an NHS LFD test every day for 7 days and continue to attend their school or college as normal, unless they have a positive test result. People with COVID-19 in England can now end their self-isolation after 5 full days if they test negative on day 5 and day 6.

Children aged 5 to 11 years in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed are now able to get 2 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine 8 weeks apart.

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

Schools should regularly review their risk assessments as well as continuing to comply with health and safety law implementing proportionate control measures in line with our guidance, such as ensuring good hygiene for everyone and maintaining appropriate cleaning regimes. All education and childcare providers should already have their own contingency plans in place in cases of outbreaks within schools, as set out in the contingency framework here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-restrictions-in-education-and-childcare-settings>, to help break the chains of transmissions.

The evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, mental and physical health. This harm disproportionately affects children and young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Therefore, the government has made it a national priority that education and childcare providers should continue to operate as normally as possible during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Rachael Maskell:

[106770]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he will continue with the covid-19 public health measures in place in schools after 26 January 2022 to help prevent an increase in infections.

Mr Robin Walker:

The government continues to manage the risk of serious illness from the spread of the virus. COVID-19 continues to be a virus that we learn to live with and the imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's education remains.

While it has been announced that face coverings are no longer advised for pupils, staff, and visitors in classrooms and, from 27 January, face coverings are no longer advised for pupils, staff and visitors in communal areas, a range of protective measures remain in place in all schools, colleges, and nurseries. Additionally, local directors of public health may temporarily advise the use of face coverings in communal areas or classrooms where this is proportionate due to specific local public health concerns.

Testing remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 within schools and colleges. Staff and secondary school pupils should continue to test twice weekly at home, with lateral flow device (LFD) test kits. Schools are encouraged to ask all visitors to take an LFD test before entering the school. Young people aged 5 to 18 and fully vaccinated adults who are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 can take an NHS LFD test every day for 7 days and continue to attend their school or college as normal, unless they have a positive test result.

People with COVID-19 in England can now end their self-isolation after 5 full days, as long as they test negative on day 5 and day 6. Every child aged 12 and over is eligible to receive the vaccine. Healthy 12 to 15 year olds can have a second dose 12 weeks after their first dose. All 16 to 17 year olds will be offered the booster vaccination, which can be booked through the national booking system.

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

These changes come 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. This means it is right that we remove the most stringent restrictions around wearing face coverings from education. However, COVID-19 is still with us, and continuing with proportionate protective measures remains vital to protecting education.

■ Schools: Vaccination

Rachael Maskell:

[104371]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that schools are able to continue to access vaccine programmes throughout the current phase of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Robin Walker:

Vaccinations continue to be the best way we can protect ourselves and help keep children and young people in face-to-face education. Healthy 12 to 15 year olds can receive their COVID-19 vaccinations in their school or out of school, such as through vaccination centres. The two offers run in parallel. School-age immunisation service (SAIS) providers have resumed services since schools returned in the new year. Second doses have also been offered through schools since 10 January 2022.

The department has updated the 'how to' guide for schools with information and resources, including a template letter that can be used to communicate with parents. Whilst awaiting confirmation of an on-site visit from a SAIS team, the department encourages schools to continue signposting parents to book out-of-school vaccinations for their child, if aged 12 or over, through the NHS booking system. This can be found here: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/?utm_source=13%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19.

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

■ Schools: Ventilation

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[106637]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many CO2 monitors have been provided to publicly-funded education settings, as recommended in the Government's Schools Covid-19 Operational Guidance, as of 18 January 2022.

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[106639]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what criteria his Department is using to determine where Government provided air purifiers are distributed to primary and secondary schools in England.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department has provided CO2 monitors to state-funded education providers, including early years, schools, and further education (FE) colleges, backed by £25 million in government funding.

Over 99% of eligible maintained schools, FE colleges, and the majority of early years providers have now received a CO2 monitor, with over 353,000 delivered. Special schools and alternative provision were prioritised to receive their monitors first, given

their higher-than-average numbers of vulnerable pupils. Final deliveries are due to be made during February.

Applications for air cleaning units from all providers were assessed based on need, using the eligibility criteria we have set out in guidance. Please note that applications are now closed.

In total, 1,265 settings that applied for Department for Education funded air cleaning units were eligible for air cleaning units. This mirrors published summary findings from the department's survey of the use of CO2 monitors, which show that only 3% of providers using CO2 monitors reported sustained high carbon dioxide readings that could not otherwise be addressed. These findings are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/co2-monitor-survey-and-applications-for-air-cleaning-units>.

The total number of air cleaning units that providers have applied for was just over 8,000. Up to an additional 1,000 units have now been ordered, bringing the total number of units available up to 9,000, allowing all eligible applications to be fulfilled. Those providers who applied but will not receive units did not meet the eligibility criteria set out in our guidance.

The eligibility criteria included:

- Sustained high CO2 readings: where there has been sustained, high CO2 readings (1500ppm or higher) for at least one week while the room is occupied, despite taking all measures possible to improve ventilation with the current provisions, such as opening windows, and
- Suitable space: air cleaning units were allocated for teaching spaces only (or childcare spaces in early years providers), and we have not provided units for non-teaching rooms such as staff rooms, halls, corridors, and dining rooms.

■ Sex and Relationship Education

Mike Amesbury:

[106866]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending relationship education beyond the Relationship and Sex Education curriculum.

Mr Robin Walker:

The subjects of relationships education, relationships and sex education, and health education (RSHE) became mandatory from September 2020. They complement several other curriculum subjects, including science, computing, citizenship, and physical education. Schools are encouraged to look for opportunities to draw links between their curriculum subjects and integrate RSHE teaching where appropriate.

The department has plans in place to monitor national implementation of RSHE over time, including through new quantitative and qualitative research. This will seek to understand the quality of implementation, including teacher confidence in teaching

the statutory requirements. The findings from this research will inform a review of the statutory guidance in due course.

■ T-levels

Mr Toby Perkins:

[109206]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish data on the number of companies that (a) provided T-level placements in 2020-21 and (b) confirmed to provide placements in 2021-22.

Alex Burghart:

We currently do not, nor plan to, collect data on the number of T Level industry placements delivered, or committed to, by individual companies. Instead, this information is held by education providers, who are responsible for securing industry placements for their T Level students. Therefore, we are unable to report on the number of companies currently offering or planning on offering placements.

However, through our ongoing engagement with employers, education providers and key stakeholders, we are able to identify which sectors and geographical locations we need to focus on to support the delivery of further industry placement opportunities for T Level students.

Mr Toby Perkins:

[109207]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to ensure sufficient placements for T-Levels over the next three years.

Alex Burghart:

We have provided an extensive programme of employer and provider support to help with the delivery and scale up of high-quality industry placements. We have invested £200 million over the past 4 years to help providers build their capacity and relationships with employers, and we have published practical industry placement delivery guidance for both education providers and employers. We are engaging directly with employers through the department's employer engagement teams to provide a strong pipeline of employers, across all sectors, ready to offer placements and there is comprehensive package of support available for employers offering online guidance, webinars, and direct hands-on support to help them deliver industry placements. We have established a T Level employer ambassador network to engage with others in their industries on T Levels and placements, and we are further developing our communications materials to continue to raise the profile of T Levels and industry placements to an employer audience. We will continue to work closely with education providers and employers to identify any potential barriers to the delivery of placements for each of the T Levels and identify appropriate mitigations.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Dangerous Dogs Act 1991****Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[109204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to update breed-specific legislation and the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 to help prevent unnecessary suffering in dogs.

Jo Churchill:

The primary purpose of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 is public protection. The Government must balance the views of those who want to repeal or amend the breed specific legislation relating to the Pit Bull terrier, Dogo Argentino, Fila Brasileiro and the Japanese Tosa with that responsibility.

Historically, pit bull types are powerful dogs which have been traditionally bred in the UK for dog fighting. Data gathered from 2005 onwards on fatal dog attacks show that pit bulls were involved in around one in six tragic incidents, despite the prohibitions that we have in place that have significantly limited the numbers of pit bulls in the UK.

The Government considers that a lifting of the restrictions on these types of dogs would more likely result in an increase in dog attacks, rather than contributing to any reduction in such incidents. This position is supported by the police.

Despite the general prohibitions on these types of dog, individual prohibited dogs can be kept by their owners if a court considers certain safety criteria to be met.

The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 also gives enforcement bodies the power to take action in cases where a dog is considered to be dangerously out of control and has attacked another dog.

In December 2021, Defra published research in collaboration with Middlesex University to look at responsible ownership across all breeds of dog. The report will provide the basis for the consideration of reform in this area and the Government is already working with the police, local authorities, and stakeholders to consider the recommendations further.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Diaries**Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[106888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish in full his Ministerial diary for 20 May 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

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.

■ Hazardous Substances: Waste Disposal

Fleur Anderson:

[\[106901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the Environment Agency's policy is on responding to reports of minor hazardous waste dumping in fresh water systems.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency receives over 100,000 incident reports a year, every one of which is recorded and assessed. The Environment Agency focuses its efforts on where they will have the most impact – so those which pose the greatest risk to the environment.

Any report received by the Environment Agency within its remit which is assessed as having the potential to cause serious or significant harm to the environment or human health will be responded to immediately. Reports which are assessed to have a minor impact on the environment or human health will be logged and used to inform future regulatory interventions where resources allow.

■ Marine Environment

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[105777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure the protection of the marine environment.

Rebecca Pow:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for York Central on 2 November 2021, PQ UIN [68367](#).

The UK is a global leader in protecting the seas, ocean and marine life, and we will continue to work with partners domestically and overseas to help achieve a healthy and resilient ocean.

From penguin colonies to marine turtles, the UK Overseas Territories are home to globally significant biodiversity. Last year the Blue Belt programme exceeded its target of protecting and enhancing over four million km² of marine environment around five UK Overseas Territories. This means that at least 60% of the entire UK marine estate, including around the UK mainland and Overseas Territories, has been designated within MPAs.

We continue to push for strong multilateral action, including through the Convention on Biological Diversity, leading global efforts to champion the target to protect at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030, now supported by over 100 countries.

Under the UK's Presidency, COP26 agreed to give a more prominent role to the ocean in global climate change discussions. Protecting and restoring the ocean is essential in our response to climate change and the UK will continue to work to strengthen ocean-climate action through the UNFCCC framework.

The UK also supports the start of negotiations on a new global agreement to tackle plastic pollution and co-sponsored an ambitious resolution proposed by Peru and Rwanda to start negotiations at the continuation of the 5th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5.2) in 2022.

To help support this ambition, the Prime Minister launched a £500 million Blue Planet Fund at the G7 summit in June 2021, financed from the UK Official Development Assistance budget. The Blue Planet Fund will help developing countries protect their marine resources from key human generated threats including climate change, marine pollution, overfishing and habitat loss, in order to reduce poverty.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Development Aid

Layla Moran:

[\[106859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of whether the £286 million committed in Official Development Assistance to Afghanistan will be fully allocated by the end of 2021-22.

James Cleverly:

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.

■ Afghanistan: Emigration

Rachael Maskell:

[\[106775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has planned with Taliban leaders in Afghanistan on the safe exit of people from Afghanistan.

James Cleverly:

Safe passage is one of the UK Government's key objectives in Afghanistan. HMG officials regularly engage in pragmatic dialogue with the Taliban to pursue UK priorities, including ensuring safe passage. The UK Government has supported over 3,400 individuals to leave Afghanistan since the end of Op PITTING. This includes over 1,200 British nationals and eligible dependants. We will continue to work to ensure those still in Afghanistan are able to depart the country safely if they wish to do so.

■ **Afghanistan: Refugees**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[107623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department will take with the Home Office to expediate the operation of the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme for people who are at risk in Afghanistan.

James Cleverly:

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme responds to the challenging and complex situation in Afghanistan. It will prioritise those most at risk. While it remains difficult for those eligible to come to the UK to leave Afghanistan, the UK has supported more than 3,400 people to leave Afghanistan since the end of Op. Pitting. This includes more than 2,200 Afghan citizens who worked for the UK or in support of UK objectives, as well as women judges, LGBT activists and injured children. The FCDO, the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence are working together to assist those eligible.

■ **Africa: Overseas Investment**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[107570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much the Government investment in Africa in 2021; and how that figure compares with investment made by (a) China, (b) the US, (c) France and (d) other major partners of Africa.

Vicky Ford:

In 2020, CDC - the UK Government Development Finance Institution (DFI) - invested over \$1 billion of finance into Africa (60 per cent of its portfolio) and the Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG), of which the UK provides approximately 70 per cent of total funding, invested a further \$370 million into Africa (69 per cent of its portfolio).

Due to its investments, the UK Government also mobilises additional private sector finance into Africa. Latest available figures of private finance mobilised by the UK and other OECD countries can be found at <https://www.oecd.org/development/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/mobilisation.htm>

■ **British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies: Politics and Government**

John Penrose:

[\[905238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential role that parliamentary representation for UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies could have in strengthening their status within the UK.

Amanda Milling:

This Government is working to build a modern and productive partnership with the Overseas Territories. I have been working with the leaders of each Overseas

Territory to identify areas where we can increase cooperation and support from the United Kingdom. In my dealings with the Overseas Territory, none have raised the idea of formal representation in the UK Parliament. We believe the fundamental basis of the relationship with each Overseas Territory is right, striking a balance which allows each to maintain strong links with the UK, but to also build their own democratic systems with local accountability, which reflect their own constitutional traditions. We also value the constitutional relationship with the Crown Dependencies which are also self-governing in relation to their own domestic affairs.

■ Conflict Prevention

Sarah Champion: [\[106711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2021 to Question 70268 on Armed Conflict: Children, what funding her Department has allocated to its conflict directorate in financial year 2021-22.

Vicky Ford:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office set out its planned programme allocations for 2021-2022 in the FCDO Annual Report and Accounts 2020-2021.

■ Crimes against Humanity

Sarah Champion: [\[106712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment her Department has made of which countries are at risk of mass atrocity crimes.

Vicky Ford:

A significant increase in violations and abuses of international human rights law and breaches of international humanitarian law can be an indicator of atrocity risks. The UK Government is committed to upholding and defending the international rule of law, and the rights and freedoms of people around the world. Our geographic departments lead on this, working closely with our network of UK Embassies and High Commissions overseas as well as relevant thematic experts within FCDO and partners across government to decide on the UK's response. For example, the cross-government Conflict, Stability and Security Fund has been used in Garissa County in Kenya, which has a long history of ethnic violence and conflict related to resource allocation and extremism, to fund confidence building and skills training for mediation, conflict resolution and negotiation for women who work in local peace committees. More broadly, UK action includes condemning human rights violations and abuses in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, and violations of human rights occurring in China. Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the FCDO has been working with partners to protect human rights.

■ Department for International Development: Diaries

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[106884\]](#)

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

James Cleverly:

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

■ Ethiopia: Development Aid

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[109200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the gov.uk News story, The conflict is causing untold suffering and must end – Minister for Africa's statement following visit to Ethiopia, published on 20 January 2022, what steps she is taking to ensure that support for (a) health and education and (b) gender-based violence is able to reach every part of Ethiopia.

Vicky Ford:

On 21 January I announced £14.5 million of new funding to the crisis in Ethiopia, of which £5 million is for health and education services for people affected by the conflict throughout the country.

As the conflict continues children, especially girls, are at increased risk of gender-based violence, child marriage, and sexual exploitation and abuse. We have deployed a Gender Based Violence and Gender Adviser to enhance the integration of gender into humanitarian and human rights initiatives. We are working with partners throughout Ethiopia to implement recommendations from the scoping mission by the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative UK Team of Experts in June 2021, including: programming to work with women's rights-focused organisations to enhance support services to survivors of violence and new research into the drivers and dynamics of conflict-related sexual violence. We will continue to identify options for addressing the immediate needs of survivors, preventing further sexual violence and delivering justice and accountability.

We continue to call for respect for international humanitarian law and for an end to targeting of civilians, the cessation of the use of sexual violence within the conflict, as well as unfettered humanitarian access to all areas of the country for humanitarians to deliver lifesaving aid.

■ Ethiopia: Human Rights

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[109199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the gov.uk News story, The conflict is causing untold suffering and must end

- Minister for Africa's statement following visit to Ethiopia, published on 20 January 2022, what steps she is taking to ensure that UK funding for the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (a) will be used to guarantee that institution's independence from the Ethiopian Government and (b) is used to support projects and activities that are free from bias.

Vicky Ford:

On 21 January I announced £14.5 million of new funding to the crisis in Ethiopia of which £4.5 million is for peacebuilding and human rights. Part of this funding will go towards building the capacity of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC). Specifically, it will be provided to a multi-donor funded project run by the Danish Institute for Human Rights and focussed on the broad institutional development of the EHRC. The independence of the Commission and its work is part of the Commission's vision and principles, to which this project is aligned.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Working Hours**

Chris Stephens:

[\[106762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what records her Department keeps relating to staff working times under Regulation 9 of the Working Time Regulations 1998; and how long those records are kept for.

Vicky Ford:

We hold records of employees' contractual hours and any paid overtime worked. Staff working from home or the office are required to work their contracted hours. Where employees work beyond their contractual hours for business reasons, line managers can authorise 'time off in lieu' or overtime payments. Records of employees' contractual hours and overtime claims are retained by FCDO for 100 years from DOB or 5 years after death; whichever is shorter.

■ **Tigray: Peace Negotiations**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[109201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to Department's News Story entitled, The conflict is causing untold suffering and must end, published on 20 January 2022, what assessment she has made of the range of organisations and people who will be able to participate in the (a) National Dialogue Commission and (b) peace and reconciliation efforts that that dialogue intends to make.

Vicky Ford:

We are extremely concerned by the ongoing conflict in Ethiopia and the implications it has for the country as a whole. The UK is working to support an end to the violence. I [Minister Ford] met Prime Minister Abiy in Addis Ababa on 20 January when we discussed the conflict and I urged for efforts towards peace. I have continued to emphasise the need for a ceasefire through calls with my African counterparts, including from Kenya and the African Union (AU). I have urged my counterparts to

engage with the African Union-led mediation efforts. We welcome the establishment of a National Dialogue Commission and the release of some political prisoners as positive steps forward. We are watching the development of the new Commission closely, which is still in its very early days. We engage on a regular basis with organisations and institutions involved with dialogue, peace and reconciliation efforts. This includes providing direct funding to support such efforts in Somali Regional State. We have spoken with a variety of international partners about the situation in Ethiopia, and have urged them to support a ceasefire and support the efforts of AU High Representative Obasanjo to bring an end to the violence. The British Ambassador in Addis Ababa remains in touch with HR Obasanjo.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion

Carla Lockhart:

[\[101858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to data published in November 2021 by the HSE in Ireland that in 2020 1,480 women out of a total of 8,057 opted to continue their pregnancy after an initial abortion consultation, what steps he is taking to ensure that women in the UK who are considering an abortion receive support in the form of a high quality, in-person consultation.

Maggie Throup:

There is no legal requirement for consultations for abortion to take place face to face. Guidance published by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists states that a woman must be given enough information and time, including the opportunity to ask any questions, to give informed consent. Safeguarding is an essential part of the assessment for abortion care. Where a more detailed assessment is required, judgement should be used to determine whether remote consultation is suitable for the individual. Where English is not the first language, care should be taken to establish that the woman has understood the process, via telephone interpreter if necessary and has had the opportunity to ask questions.

Carla Lockhart:

[\[101859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Comres polling undertaken in May 2017 which found that 70 per cent of women supported a reduction in the abortion time limit from 24 weeks, and recent advances in perinatal medicine, whether his Department has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to reduce the abortion time limit from 24 weeks in line with the findings of that polling.

Maggie Throup:

There are no plans to bring forward legislative proposals to reduce the abortion time limit. It would be for Parliament to decide whether to make any changes to the law on abortion. As with other matters of conscience, abortion is an issue on which the Government adopts a neutral stance and allows hon. Members to vote according to their moral, ethical or religious beliefs.

■ Abortion: Drugs

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[100574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 December 2021 to Question 92809 on Abortion, at what week of gestation did the eight cases referred to of the home use of both abortion pills at 10+ weeks of gestation occur; and what steps his Department has taken to follow up those cases.

Maggie Throup:

The information requested is shown in the following table. The data refers to abortions performed for residents of England and Wales in 2020 from statistics published on 10 June 2021.

10 TO 12 WEEKS	7
13 to 19 weeks	1

Note:

1. Gestations have been grouped to protect patient confidentiality.

Cases that exceed the legal limit of 10 weeks gestation and above where both medical abortion pills are taken at home are identified once HSA4 forms are submitted by practitioners to the Chief Medical Officer. The Department will contact the practitioner to confirm these details and the Abortion Notification System is updated, if necessary. For the eight medical abortions at 10 weeks gestation and above where both medications were taken at home, two cases had been confirmed at time of publication with the remaining six being followed up.

Jim Shannon:

[\[101718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has undertaken an assessment of the risk to women accessing abortion pills via telemedical services since March 2020 posed by (a) sex traffickers, (b) abusive partners and (c) coercive partners.

Jim Shannon:

[\[101719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the ability of abortion providers since March 2020 to ensure that women are in a private place during a remote consultation for medical abortion pills.

Maggie Throup:

All providers must comply with legal requirements and follow statutory guidance relating to children, young people and vulnerable adults. Women who present for an abortion should have the opportunity to speak privately to a trained health professional during the consultation.

We are considering evidence submitted to the Government's public consultation on the temporary measure allowing home use of both pills for early medical abortion.

The consultation sought feedback on the impact of the provision of abortion services in relation to safety, privacy and confidentiality of access, as well as the impacts on different groups or communities. We will publish our response in due course.

■ Abortion: Gender

Rosie Cooper: [\[101680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to review the occurrence of sex-selective abortion.

Jim Shannon: [\[101720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential occurrence of sex-selective abortions occurring in the UK.

Maggie Throup:

The latest analysis on sex ratios at birth was published in October 2021 and found no evidence for sex selective abortions occurring in the United Kingdom between 2015 and 2019. In this period there were 105.5 male to 100 female births, which is below the accepted upper limit of 107.

Whilst this data shows that sex selection abortions are having no impact on birth ratios, it is possible that small numbers are occurring and we continue to remain vigilant, work with abortion providers and actively monitor the situation.

■ Abortion: Standards

Scott Benton: [\[102791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in the context of the death of Sarah Dunn in April 2020, what steps his Department is taking to (a) prevent deaths following medical abortions and (b) improve safety standards for women seeking abortion.

Maggie Throup:

Regular meetings are held with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and abortion service providers to ensure the appropriate safeguards are in place to protect women accessing abortion services.

All services registered by the CQC to provide termination of pregnancy services are subject to ongoing monitoring and providers have a statutory duty to report incidents to the CQC. Where concerns or evidence of risk are identified, the CQC will follow up to ensure the safety of woman accessing those services and will use its enforcement powers where necessary to protect people. In addition, Prevention of Future Deaths Reports play a valuable role in drawing matters of concern to the attention of the Government, its agencies and others to determine if action is needed or should be taken.

■ Advisory Committee On Borderline Substances: Nutrition

Rachael Maskell: [\[110448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances can adequately support the UK specialist nutritionist industry to ensure the sector continues to invest in innovation for improved patient care.

Edward Argar:

The Department has formed a working group to update the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances' (ACBS) processes and guidance in partnership with the ACBS and the British Specialist Nutrition Association, the trade organisation for the medical nutrition industry. The ACBS' current process has a specified route for innovative products seeking listing in Part XV of the Drug Tariff, which the working group has collectively decided should be maintained.

■ Advisory Committee On Borderline Substances: Standards

Rachael Maskell: [\[110446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to improve the time it takes for the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances to approve applications for nutritional borderline substances.

Rachael Maskell: [\[110447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the efficiency of the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances.

Edward Argar:

The Department has made no recent assessment. However, in 2019 we began a project to improve the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances' (ACBS) application process to ensure more efficient and quicker decisions. This work is being undertaken in partnership with the ACBS and the British Specialist Nutrition Association, the trade organisation for the medical nutrition industry. As part of the project, a report was produced and shared with the British Specialist Nutrition Association on 18 February 2020. The report stated that the average time for the ACBS to respond to all types of applications was 28 working days.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Death

Alex Cunningham: [\[109224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce deaths from alcohol in the North East.

Gillian Keegan:

As part of the NHS Long Term Plan, we have provided national funding to support the implementation of specialist alcohol care teams in the 25% of hospitals with the highest rates of alcohol-related harm. 12 hospitals have received funding so far, of

which two are in the North East - South Tyneside and Sunderland. A second wave of sites will be announced shortly.

We are also investing £533 million over three years to support local authority commissioned substance misuse treatment services in England. This funding will be targeted to areas of highest need first. Office for Health Improvement and Disparities will soon be informing local areas of their funding allocations. As part of this funding, an inpatient detoxification grant, available until 2024/25, has been allocated increasing the availability of inpatient detoxification beds nationally.

■ Allergies: Prescription Drugs

Jim Shannon:

[\[108524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people by (a) age group and (b) gender have been prescribed anti-histamines in the most recent period for which that information is available.

Edward Argar:

The following table shows the number of patients by age group and gender prescribed antihistamines in November 2021, the most recent data available.

AGE GROUP	GENDER	NUMBER OF PATIENTS
0-4 years	Female	9,370
0-4 years	Male	11,441
0-4 years	Unknown	1,762
5-9 years	Female	10,781
5-9 years	Male	14,682
5-9 years	Unknown	332
10-14 years	Female	11,099
10-14 years	Male	14,928
10-14 years	Unknown	332
15-19 years	Female	13,565
15-19 years	Male	12,433
15-19 years	Unknown	321
20-24 years	Female	13,584

AGE GROUP	GENDER	NUMBER OF PATIENTS
20-24 years	Male	8,607
20-24 years	Unknown	306
25-29 years	Female	17,735
25-29 years	Male	9,951
25-29 years	Unknown	343
30-34 years	Female	21,870
30-34 years	Male	11,273
30-34 years	Unknown	314
35-39 years	Female	25,835
35-39 years	Male	12,509
35-39 years	Unknown	218
40-44 years	Female	29,939
40-44 years	Male	14,277
40-44 years	Unknown	196
45-49 years	Female	36,497
45-49 years	Male	17,845
45-49 years	Unknown	145
50-54 years	Female	45,162
50-54 years	Male	22,281
50-54 years	Unknown	130
55-59 years	Female	45,924
55-59 years	Male	24,280
55-59 years	Unknown	99

AGE GROUP	GENDER	NUMBER OF PATIENTS
60-64 years	Female	44,208
60-64 years	Male	25,977
60-64 years	Unknown	108
65-69 years	Female	42,372
65-69 years	Male	26,477
65-69 years	Unknown	68
70-74 years	Female	43,592
70-74 years	Male	29,371
70-74 years	Unknown	36
75-79 years	Female	35,859
75-79 years	Male	24,698
75-79 years	Unknown	23
80-84 years	Female	25,205
80-84 years	Male	16,730
80-84 years	Unknown	13
85-89 years	Female	17,128
85-89 years	Male	10,728
85-89 years	Unknown	7
90-94 years	Female	9,299
90-94 years	Male	4,712
90-94 years	Unknown	5
95 years and over	Female	3,564
95 years and over	Male	1,157
Unknown	Unknown	421

Source: NHS Business Services Authority Information Services Data Warehouse.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell: [\[107492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of bringing the isolation period for residents in care homes in line with the general population.

Gillian Keegan:

The requirement for a 14 day self-isolation period has been in place due to evidence of increased periods of incubation and viral shedding in care home residents.

However, following the booster vaccination campaign, the Scientific Advisory Group on Emergencies' Social Care Working Group has been commissioned to provide updated clinical advice. This will inform any changes to guidance in line with the removal of 'Plan B' measures.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[107493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of changing care home visiting guidance to outbreak management only and to encourage the continuation of testing.

Gillian Keegan:

We will announce next steps on visiting arrangements following the removal of 'Plan B' measures shortly.

Due to high community prevalence of COVID-19 and the clinical vulnerability of most people living in care homes, it is necessary to keep some additional measures in place in care homes to keep residents, visitors and staff safe.

■ Care Homes: Visits

Andrew Rosindell: [\[107494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that care homes return to unrestricted visiting arrangements.

Gillian Keegan:

We will provide an update next steps for visiting arrangements 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.

■ Coronavirus

Justin Madders: [\[84383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of daily covid-19 cases that are reinfections.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has not made a specific estimate. However, the UKHSA monitors weekly COVID-19 cases, including numbers and rates of reinfections in England, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports-2021-to-2022-season>

Data on reinfections is available to 31 October 2021 where 2,264 possible reinfections were identified since the first recorded case of a reinfection.

Rachael Maskell:**[98984]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of people in hospital have (a) the omicron variant (b) the delta variant and (c) another covid-19 variant.

Maggie Throup:

Data on the number and proportion of people in hospital by COVID-19 variant is not available.

As Omicron is now the dominant strain in England, as of 01 January 2022 the United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is no longer separately reporting Omicron statistics.

The UKHSA publishes hospitalisations data for COVID-19 overall, not broken down by variant, in the National influenza and COVID-19 report which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports-2021-to-2022-season>.

The analysis is based on data from a sentinel network of acute National Health Service Trusts in England contributing enhanced data.

Rachael Maskell:**[98986]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people there were with the delta variant of covid-19 in each week since 1 December 2021.

Maggie Throup:

The following table shows the number of new cases of the Delta variant reported in each week from 1 December 2021 to 5 January 2022.

DATE	NUMBER OF NEW CASES
23 December 2021 to 5 January 2022	20,056
15 December to 22 December 2021	47,101
8 December to 14 December 2021	76,996
1 December to 7 December 2021	96,042

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-variants-genomically-confirmed-case-numbers/variants-distribution-of-case-data-7-january-2022>

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

Rachael Maskell: [\[96956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2021 to Question 83432 on Coronavirus: Contact Tracing, when the review of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund be published.

Maggie Throup:

In December 2021, we confirmed to local authorities that unspent monies from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) can be carried forward to the 2022/23 financial year. Updated guidance clarifying the new criteria will be provided in due course. We are continuing to consider the potential funding requirement for local outbreak support therefore we do not currently have a timetable for the outcome of the review. We are working with local authorities to ensure that the COMF aids them to deliver the objectives of their Local Outbreak Management Plans and support their communities.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Rachael Maskell: [\[105614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 10 January 2022 to Question 80365 on Coronavirus: Disease Control, for what reason it is commercially sensitive to publish the (a) termination dates on contracts and (b) continuity plans for services.

Maggie Throup:

Decisions on our future contracting requirements for COVID-19 response are subject to an ongoing assessment of the trajectory of the virus. As the decision on the future of these contracts is yet to be taken, information relating to plans for these arrangements is commercially sensitive.

Rachael Maskell: [\[105632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answers of 17 January 2022 to Question 101772 and 13 January 2022 to Question 100595 respectively, what the Government's strategy is for providing long term protection against covid-19 other than through booster vaccination, in the context of the reduction of booster vaccine efficacy after 10 weeks.

Maggie Throup:

We will set out the plan for the future management of COVID-19 in due course, informed by the latest scientific evidence available. This will consider the future potential requirement for non-pharmaceutical interventions, possible future vaccination programmes and other therapeutic modalities as part of the overall policy to provide long term protection against the virus.

Sara Britcliffe:

[105760]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of starting isolation periods from a positive lateral flow result on the use of PCR tests and the Government's ability to track covid-19 variants.

Maggie Throup:

The move away from confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests for some groups is compatible with surveillance for COVID-19 variants. The UK Health Security Agency aims to conduct surveillance on at least 10% of community cases for the monitoring of variants. Those groups which will continue to be tested with a PCR test will provide sufficient community-based positive samples to maintain the ability to detect any new mutations in the Omicron or Delta variants or any emerging and new variants.

Andrew Gwynne:

[108484]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government conducted an assessment of the impact of lifting Plan B COVID-19 restrictions on Clinically Vulnerable and Clinically Extremely Vulnerable people prior to its announcement on 19 January 2022.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 25 January 2022]: Plan B measures are being removed as we believe it is safe and proportionate to do so.

The Government ended the Shielding Programme on 15 September 2021. People who were previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable are advised to follow general guidance, while considering extra precautions to reduce the chance of infection. We issued updated public health advice on 24 December 2021 for people who were previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable which is available at the following link:

<https://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: Drugs

John Redwood:

[\[105325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what drugs are made available to NHS patients with covid-19 to treat them and help keep them out of hospital.

Maggie Throup:

Since December 2021, National Health Service patients can access new COVID-19 therapies, including antivirals and monoclonal antibodies which can reduce the risk of becoming hospitalised. In England, 1.3 million of the highest risk patients are eligible for monoclonal antibody Sotrovimab and antiviral drug molnupiravir directly. Eligible patients who receive a positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test result will be contacted by a clinician from a COVID Medicines Delivery Unit to discuss treatment suitability. The clinician will be responsible for assessing the patient and deciding which treatment option is most appropriate for them and their existing condition/s.

In addition, over 20 million people are eligible for the antiviral molnupiravir through the new PANORAMIC national study, run by the University of Oxford. This study is open to individuals in the United Kingdom who have received a positive PCR test result, are aged 50 years old and over, or are aged 18 to 49 years old with an underlying medical condition that can increase the risk of developing severe COVID-19.

The antiviral PF-07321332+ritonavir (co-packaged and brand name Paxlovid) received approval from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency on 31 December 2021 and will be made available to eligible patients in due course.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[105650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which research studies informed the list of health conditions that make people eligible for new covid-19 treatments, molnupiravir and sotrovimab, that was agreed by the UK Chief Medical Officers.

Maggie Throup:

Since 16 December 2021, eligible patients in the highest risk cohort in the United Kingdom can access new COVID-19 treatments from COVID Medicines Delivery Units, including molnupiravir, an antiviral treatment, and sotrovimab, a monoclonal antibody treatment. The highest risk cohort was determined by an independent expert group commissioned by Department and the clinical access policy was agreed by the UK Chief Medical Officers.

Evidence suggests that certain health conditions can cause a patient to progress to severe disease and hospitalisation, therefore these patients are most likely to benefit from novel COVID-19 treatments. A process for considering changes to this cohort is being designed using emerging data and considering all factors that might impact eligibility for treatment. Any updates to the policy will be available in due course.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[108486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the NHS has written to all people who are deemed at highest risk of becoming seriously ill with covid-19 and eligible for antiviral and antibody treatments to inform them of their eligibility for treatment.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 25 January 2022]: In England, approximately 1.3 million individuals have been pre-identified as potentially eligible for new COVID-19 treatments under the clinical access policy. These treatments are used to reduce the risk of deterioration or hospitalisation from COVID-19 infection.

The majority of patients will have received a letter or email informing them of their eligibility from NHS England and NHS Improvement. However, some potentially eligible patients are not centrally identifiable using national databases, such as those who are newly diagnosed and some cancer patients. Those patients are being contacted directly by their consultants.

■ **Coronavirus: Drugs and Screening**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[108485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of (a) levels of access to antiviral and antibody treatment for the clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable and (b) provision of priority PCR covid-19 tests for those groups.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 25 January 2022]: From 16 December 2021, up to 1.3 million of the highest risk patients in England have been able to access antiviral or antibody treatments COVID-19 treatments from COVID Medicines Delivery Units.

Deliveries of polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing kits continue to be made to the highest risk patients in England. Any high risk patients who have not yet received these kits can contact 119 or book an in-person testing appointment. Over 20 million patients in the United Kingdom can access antivirals via the PANORAMIC national study, if they have a positive test result, are aged 50 years old and over or are 18 to 49 years old with an underlying health condition that can increase the risk of developing severe COVID-19.

■ **Coronavirus: Greater London**

Sir David Evennett:

[\[106647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help increase the availability of covid-19 lateral flow tests in Greater London.

Maggie Throup:

We expect to distribute 90 million lateral flow device (LFD) tests per week in the United Kingdom in the coming weeks. We are also delivering seven million LFD tests

every day via GOV.UK. We therefore anticipate sufficient availability, including in Greater London.

Stella Creasy:

[\[108519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the letter with the subject, Important information about new treatments for coronavirus, sent by NHS England on 14 December 2021, how many individuals living in the (a) E17, (b) E11, (c) E10, (d) E4 and (e) E5 postcodes were sent that letter confirming their eligibility for new treatments.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 25 January 2022]: The information requested is not held centrally.

The majority of the 1.3 million individuals pre-identified as potentially eligible for new COVID-19 treatments in England have received a letter or email from NHS England and NHS Improvement informing them of their eligibility. However, some potentially eligible patients are not centrally identifiable using national databases, such as those who are newly diagnosed and some cancer patients. Those patients are being contacted directly by their consultants.

■ **Coronavirus: Hospital Beds**

John Redwood:

[\[105323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of SAGE forecasts of likely hospital bed use for covid-19 patients during the covid-19 outbreak.

Maggie Throup:

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) provides advice to the Government on its response to the COVID-19 epidemic. Their operational subgroup, the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling (SPI-M-O), regularly models potential scenarios for the trajectory of the epidemic, including hospital admissions and occupancy. Such modelling is regularly updated to reflect changes in assumptions as and when more detailed studies are released. This has been the case throughout the pandemic.

Much of SAGE's modelling is of unmitigated scenarios, which assume that no interventions are made. In reality, non-pharmaceutical interventions have been implemented in order to avoid such scenarios occurring. Comparisons between modelled scenarios and real events should be made on a like-for-like basis as the assumptions and/or context changed between the modelling being performed and the outturn data. The SPI-M-O regularly reviews these scenarios against outturn data.

■ Coronavirus: Intensive Care

Rachael Maskell:

[\[98985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of people in intensive care units have (a) the omicron variant, (b) the delta variant and (c) another covid-19 variant.

Maggie Throup:

The information is not available in the format requested. However, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) publishes data for hospitalisations for COVID-19, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports-2021-to-2022-season>

This analysis is based on data from a sentinel network of acute National Health Service trusts in England contributing enhanced data. As Omicron is now the dominant strain within England, the UKHSA is no longer separately reporting statistics for the Omicron variant.

■ Coronavirus: Quarantine

Ian Murray:

[\[106686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who have received their covid-19 vaccinations out-with the UK are included in the exemption to self isolate if identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 25 January 2022]: Since 9 December 2021, those recognised as 'fully vaccinated' under the United Kingdom's travel policy are now treated as 'fully vaccinated' for the purposes of self-isolation. They are therefore exempt from self-isolation if identified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. Those vaccinated overseas must be able to provide proof of full vaccination issued by an overseas vaccination programme recognised for travel to the UK, if requested to NHS Test and Trace or an enforcement officer.

■ Coronavirus: Research

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[105395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to liaise internationally with the scientists who sequence covid-19 variants of concern in the future.

Maggie Throup:

We are offering support to selected partners globally to improve genomic sequencing capacity and capability to detect new variants. Through the New Variant Assessment Platform programme, the United Kingdom works with international partners such as the World Health Organization, health ministries and public health laboratories which sequence COVID-19 variants of concern, to enable data sharing and strengthen

global surveillance. Plans to continue this work in the medium to long-term are ongoing.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[100450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether covid-19 lateral flow test products that are made in the UK for use in the UK are subject to (a) testing or (b) checking requirements that are (i) different or (ii) in addition to those applied to covid-19 lateral flow test products manufactured in the Far East for use in the UK.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 13 January 2022]: All COVID-19 lateral flow test devices and their manufacturers are subject to the Medical Device Regulations 2002 and COVID Testing Devices Authorisation requirements regardless of the origin of manufacture. There are no alternative or additional requirements for devices manufactured in the United Kingdom.

In exceptional circumstances, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) can issue an Exceptional Use Authorisation (EUA). The MHRA publishes the names of tests and other medical devices which have been granted an EUA online. All manufacturers are subject to the same EUA assessment standards regardless of the location of the manufacturer.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[104339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of (a) the number of lateral flow tests required daily, (b) the number of lateral flow tests the Government has available and (c) the cost of each lateral flow test.

Maggie Throup:

No specific estimate of the number of lateral flow device (LFD) tests required each day as demand varies significantly. We expect to distribute 90 million tests in the United Kingdom each week. We expect 400 million tests to be made available by the UK Health Security Agency in January. We are unable to provide the cost per test of each LFD test as this information is commercially sensitive.

Justin Madders:

[\[104349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of prioritising the availability of postal lateral flow tests for those who live with or are housebound.

Maggie Throup:

We have made no specific assessment as we currently have capacity to deliver approximately seven million tests a day in the United Kingdom. Lateral flow device tests can be ordered for home delivery through GOV.UK or via 119.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[105399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that Government-approved covid-19 testing providers deliver a high standard of service to customers.

Maggie Throup:

All providers must complete a declaration stating that their testing services meet certain minimum standards. We monitor the performance of private providers, including delivery and testing services. This includes issues raised by the public, data submitted by the provider and reports from regulatory and oversight bodies where applicable.

Where the UK Health Security Agency becomes aware that a provider is no longer meeting the minimum standards or that its activities may be putting public safety at risk, the provider will be required to undertake remedial action. We reserve the right to remove a provider's listing from GOV.UK in the interim whilst remedial action is being undertaken.

Alex Sobel:

[\[107707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage the public to report their lateral flow test results through the usual channels.

Maggie Throup:

We encouraging online reporting through allowing multiple results to be added in a single visit and we are planning some further improvements. We have included reminders in marketing, social media messaging and on the packaging for home-delivered lateral flow device tests. Reminder messages have been sent to those who have ordered tests but not registered any results. We will continue to look for opportunities to reinforce this important message.

Justin Madders:

[\[80348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria his Department applied in the decision making process for the automatic approval extension of lateral flow tests, previously approved until 4 February 2022.

Maggie Throup:

Tests with a current Coronavirus Test Device Approvals application have been allowed to remain on the market until 28 February 2022 or until their application is determined. This was permitted to avoid a serious public health risk during a period of high demand and where the tests had successfully undergone validation by a public sector body.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[80366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has (a) plans and (b) a timeframe for ceasing the allocation of funding for asymptomatic testing.

Maggie Throup:

As set out in the Government's COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan, asymptomatic testing continues to be an important tool to help reduce the spread of the virus, while supporting people to manage their own risk and the risks of others.

The Government will continue to provide the public with access to free lateral flow tests. People may wish to use regular rapid testing to help manage periods of risk such as after close contact with others in a higher risk environment, or before spending prolonged time with a more vulnerable person. At a later stage, as the Government's response to the virus changes, universal free provision of lateral flow tests will end in due course. The Government will engage widely on the form of this model as it is developed, recognising that rapid testing could continue to have an important, ongoing role to play in future.

Andrew Gwynne:[\[94302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the need for ongoing financial support for covid-19 testing capacity, and in particular support for the Lighthouse Lab in Glasgow, beyond March 2022..

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 5 January 2022]: The Department has secured resourcing to extend critical COVID-19 services, including testing, beyond March 2022. On 15 December, the UK Health Security Agency wrote to all Lighthouse Laboratories to confirm continued support and the intention to renew contracts.

Andrew Gwynne:[\[94303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase PCR testing capacity following the rise in Omicron covid-19 variant cases.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 5 January 2022]: Since the beginning of the pandemic, the National Health Service and the UK Health Security Agency have built a United Kingdom wide laboratory network with capacity to process 848,000 polymerase chain reaction tests per day. Following the spread of the Omicron variant, we increased testing capacity by 200,000 tests per day. Some of this capacity came online the week commencing 20 December. We have also transitioned to the new Omicron mutation target assay in nine of our ten labs (as of 10 December), providing 3-4 times increased capacity and detection.

Daisy Cooper:[\[98439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 PCR laboratories had reached their maximum processing capacity by 1 January 2022.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 10 January 2022]: Of the 10 core Lighthouse Laboratories, nine were operating at their initially contracted maximum processing capacity by 1 January 2022.

Andrew Gwynne:[\[98890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment the Government has made of the adequacy of covid-19 PCR testing site provision; and what plans he has to change the level of that provision over the next 12 months.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 11 January 2022]: There are currently more than 1,000 test sites in the United Kingdom and on average, a person travels less than two and a half miles to access a test site. We work with local authorities and other stakeholders to ensure sites are located appropriately and meet local demand. Future decisions regarding the provision of test sites will be led by expert clinical advice.

■ Coronavirus: Travel**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[105391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to verify covid-19 PCR testing results and details on passengers' arrival from overseas.

Maggie Throup:

Polymerase chain reaction test results on arrival are verified by the private provider who performed or provided the test. Providers are required by law to report the results of the test to the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA). Before providing testing services all providers must complete a declaration stating that their testing services meet the Government's minimum standards. All international arrival testing providers must also receive confirmation in writing from the UKHSA that it considers the organisation meets the standards before providing testing services. It is the overall responsibility of the test provider to ensure that the services comply with the Government's minimum standards and the UKHSA will take action where providers are found to be non-compliant.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[105394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing covid-19 booster vaccines for vulnerable people only in the future.

Maggie Throup:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) regularly reviews its advice on the COVID-19 vaccination programme, taking into account new data, evidence on the effectiveness of the programme and the epidemiological situation. At this stage we do not know if there will be a need for further COVID-19 vaccination

campaigns in the future and which patient groups it may be recommended for. The JCVI will provide advice in due course.

Sir Mark Hendrick: **[106640]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timeline is for primary school aged children to receive covid-19 vaccinations.

Maggie Throup:

On 22 December 2021, the Government accepted advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation that children aged five to 11 years old who are in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed should be offered a primary course of COVID-19 vaccination. The National Health Service is preparing for deployment to begin by the end of January 2022. Children and their parents will be contacted by the NHS locally and offered appointments. Further advice regarding COVID-19 vaccination for other five to 11 year olds will be issued following consideration of additional data.

Charlotte Nichols: **[106902]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were awaiting a fourth covid-19 vaccine dose who were immune suppressed as at 18 January 2022; and what steps he taking to help ensure that those people awaiting a fourth covid-19 dose receive it in a timely manner.

Maggie Throup:

The information requested is not held centrally.

To ensure those eligible receive their fourth dose in a timely manner, guidance was issued to all systems on 13 December 2021 setting out that those at greatest risk must be prioritised, including the severely immunosuppressed. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/national-call-next-steps-for-the-nhs-covid-19-vaccine-deployment/>

Individuals are identified and invited for their vaccination by the local Primary Care Network. If a vaccination cannot be offered at a hospital at the time of the patient's regular treatment, they will receive a letter from their consultant, to access an appointment at an alternative site. If a patient has already received a letter regarding their third primary dose, this can be used to obtain their fourth dose at a walk-in site, if it has been a minimum of three months since their third primary dose was administered. Patients who are yet to be contacted but may be eligible for a fourth dose should contact their consultant or general practitioner.

Wes Streeting: **[107647]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to begin the primary course of vaccination for children aged five to 11 year who are (a) in a clinical risk group or (b) a household contact to a person who is immunosuppressed.

Wes Streeting:**[107648]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to help ensure accurate information is available to clinicians regarding vaccinations for children aged 5 to 11 who are in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed.

Maggie Throup:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are preparing the offer of COVID-19 vaccines to all children aged five to 11 years old who are in a clinical risk group, or who are a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed, in line with advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). Deployment will begin by the end of January 2022. Eligible children and their parents will be contacted by the National Health Service locally and offered an appointment. For the household contacts of the immunosuppressed, general practitioners (GPs) will be contacting the immunosuppressed person to advise that their child is eligible.

All GP teams and hospital consultants have been asked to identify five to 11 year olds who fall into the categories outlined in the JCVI's advice. The latest guidance sent to all relevant NHS clinicians on the initial steps of vaccinating this cohort is available at the following link:

[C1524-updated-jvci-advice-for-the-vaccination-of-children-and-young-people.pdf \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/c1524-updated-jvci-advice-for-the-vaccination-of-children-and-young-people.pdf)

Sir Charles Walker:**[79292]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he expects the MHRA to license a covid-19 nasal vaccine; and whether approval of nasal vaccines will be fast-tracked in line with injectable covid-19 vaccines; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 25 November 2021]: Any route to approval of nasal vaccine treatments is subject to the developer seeking regulatory approval from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). The MHRA is therefore unable to provide a timetable for the approval of a COVID-19 nasal vaccine, as information on products not approved for use in the United Kingdom is commercially and market-sensitive. As with all other COVID-19 vaccines, the MHRA will ensure a thorough and expedited assessment of any such medicine's safety and efficacy before any authorisation.

Rachael Maskell:**[93796]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of risk of vaccinated people spreading covid-19 in venues that require a vaccine pass.

Maggie Throup:

There is evidence to suggest that vaccination reduces the likelihood of infection or transmission for the Delta variant. Analysis suggests that the AstraZeneca vaccine reduces transmission by 25% up to three months post immunisation. The Pfizer

vaccine has been shown to reduce transmission by 50% up to three months post immunisation.

There is a high level of uncertainty about the effectiveness of vaccination against infection or transmission in the context of Omicron. However, studies have shown that vaccination remains effective at reducing serious illness in the context of Omicron, particularly with booster doses.

Individuals can also show a recent test result to access settings which require vaccine-or-test certification. Negative test results provide assurance that an individual is not infectious when the test is taken and for a short time afterwards.

Overall, introducing vaccine or test certification will reduce risks in these settings when compared with no intervention. However, it will not eliminate the possibility of infectious people attending or transmitting the virus so individuals should continue to exercise caution.

■ **Coronavirus: Drugs**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[99392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people are classed as severely clinically extremely vulnerable and eligible for covid-19 antiviral treatments; and how many of those people had been sent PCR testing kits as of 1 January 2021.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 12 January 2022]: Since December 2021, National Health Service patients can access new COVID-19 therapies, including antivirals and monoclonal antibodies which can reduce the risk of becoming hospitalised.

In England, 1.3 million of the highest risk patients are eligible for antivirals directly. This cohort include patients at highest risk of hospitalisation and deterioration following a COVID-19 infection. Should they receive a positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, they will be assessed by clinicians and offered antiviral or antibody treatments from a COVID Medicines Delivery Unit, if eligible.

Over 20 million people are eligible for antivirals through PANORAMIC, the national study run by the University of Oxford. However, this larger cohort will not receive priority PCR kits. This study is open to individuals living anywhere in the United Kingdom who receive a positive PCR test, are aged 50 years old and over, or are aged 18 to 49 years old with an underlying medical condition that can increase the risk of developing severe COVID-19. As of 1 January 2022, an estimated 1.1 million priority PCR kits have been distributed in England to patients in the highest risk group.

■ **Dementia: Research**

Ruth Jones:

[\[110586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase funding for research into the prevention of dementia.

Maria Caulfield:

We are investing £375 million in neurodegenerative disease research over the next five years, including dementia and prevention. In March 2021, the National Institute for Health Research issued an invitation for research proposals, including those with a focus on dementia prevention. We will be setting out our plans on dementia and research in England for future years in 2022.

■ Dengue Fever: British Nationals Abroad**Navendu Mishra:**[\[106909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of British citizens who have died of dengue fever abroad in the last ten years.

Maggie Throup:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has not made an estimate. Surveillance is carried out for cases who are tested and diagnosed in the United Kingdom.

Information is not available on dengue cases or deaths in British nationals who are tested and diagnosed abroad. The UKHSA does not routinely receive data on deaths in the UK or deaths of British nationals abroad caused by dengue.

■ Dental Services**Rachael Maskell:**[\[108558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of trends in the level of dental patients having (a) dental treatment and (b) dental treatment in hospital in (i) 2021 and (ii) 2019.

Maria Caulfield:

The number of National Health Service courses of treatment delivered in primary care dental practices in England decreased from 38,281,000 in 2019/20 to 11,985,000 in 2020/21.

The number of outpatient attendances for dental medicine specialities, restorative dentistry, paediatric dentistry and orthodontics has decreased from 1,365,742 to 735,080 from 2019/20 to 2020/21. Similarly, the number of admissions has decreased from 38,109 to 17,654.

■ Dental Services: Cumbria**Tim Farron:**[\[108513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children are (a) registered and (b) not registered with a NHS dentist in the (a) Morecambe Bay and (b) North Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group area.

Maria Caulfield:

This information is not available as patients are not required to register with a National Health Service dental practice to access services.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**Daisy Cooper:** [\[76028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 57369, tabled by the hon. Member for St. Albans on 15 October 2021.

Edward Argar:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer to Question [57369](#).

■ General Practitioners: Telephone Services**Damien Moore:** [\[109337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase call handling capacity at GP surgeries.

Maria Caulfield:

In October 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement published, 'Our plan for improving access for patients and supporting general practice' which included a long-term measure to increase the adoption of cloud-based telephony across all practices. The benefits include additional capacity, more phone lines and automated queuing to support practices to improve call handling. We also announced a £250 million Winter Access Fund which can be used to fund extra administrative staff.

We have put in place interim arrangements to enable all practices to use Microsoft Teams telephone functionality for outbound calls, increasing capacity for incoming calls. This is at no additional cost to practices and is available until the end of April 2023.

■ Health Professionals: Training**Rachael Maskell:** [\[108560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing leadership training for advanced practitioners.

Edward Argar:

No assessment has been made. However, all National Health Service staff have access to the NHS Leadership Academy - NHS England's tool for developing clinical leadership.

In addition, 'Leadership, management, and organisation' is named as one of the thirteen core capabilities in Health Education England's 'Framework for Advanced Clinical Practice', which sets the standard of the skills, knowledge, and behaviours expected of advanced practitioners. As such, there is an expectation that those undertaking an advanced practitioner role demonstrate adequate leadership skills within their practice.

■ Health Services: Waiting Lists

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[106733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce NHS waiting lists in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Edward Argar:

The department has made available £2 billion this year through the Elective Recovery Fund in which systems across England can draw upon to help recover elective services. In addition, across 2022 to 2025, a commitment of £8 billion has been made to reduce waiting lists and transform elective services. This additional funding will support the National Health Service to deliver millions of extra checks, scans and procedures, and to invest in their infrastructure to meet patient demand.

£10 million has been provided to support the restoration of patient services across Coventry and Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Group as part of a national Elective Accelerator programme. The Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Systems have also received an additional £4.2 million of capital funding and £4.8 million of revenue funding through the Targeted Investment Fund, to support them to step up their elective activity.

Across the Midlands, NHS England and NHS Improvement's Elective care team continue to work to support all systems within the Midlands in delivering their elective recovery plans. It includes providing specific support to high volume specialties via pathway improvement initiative and best practice programmes such as the Getting it Right First-Time programme.

■ Home Care Services: Coronavirus

Caroline Nokes:

[\[98266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that domiciliary care providers are able to order covid-19 lateral flow tests in bulk.

Maggie Throup:

Domiciliary care providers can order polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests in bulk for care workers to test on a weekly basis. Providers are currently unable to order lateral flow device (LFD) tests in bulk. The advice on LFD testing is moving to a risk-based approach although we continue to review guidance in line with the latest public health advice. Domiciliary care workers have continuous access to LFD tests via GOV.UK to collect from pharmacies or for home delivery.

■ Hormone Replacement Therapy

Carolyn Harris:

[\[108577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the proportion of women who are experiencing the menopause that were receiving a

prescription for hormone replacement therapy in (a) each of the last three years and (b) each month of the last three years.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific estimate has been made. Data is held on the number of hormone replacement therapy prescriptions, but not on the condition for which they have been prescribed.

Darren Jones:

[\[108598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to take steps to bring forward the reduction in price of Hormone Replacement Therapy prescriptions for women experiencing menopause symptoms.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 24 January 2022]: We are currently exploring methods to implement these changes at the earliest opportunity.

■ **Integrated Care Boards**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[108556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of enabling Integrated Care Systems to develop their own workforce plans.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 25 January 2022]: Integrated care boards (ICBs) will have a role in increasing, developing, retaining and supporting the local health and care workforce. In August 2021 NHS England published draft guidance for integrated care systems (ICSs) and future ICBs, including guidance on ICS' people functions, which is available at the following link:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/B0662_Building-strong-integrated-care-systems-everywhere-guidance-on-the-ICS-people-function-August-2021.pdf

Subject to Parliamentary approval, ICBs will have specific responsibilities for delivering the actions in the NHS People Plan, as well as the requirements outlined in the draft guidance. This includes a role for ICBs in enabling adequate workforce supply through strategic planning and collaboration across the system. In addition, the draft guidance sets out the expectation that ICBs will work with partners in the area to develop system workforce plans for the health and care workforce, based on population needs and with an integrated approach across workforce, finance and activity. The draft guidance also asks ICBs to work with regional and national workforce teams to support planning and to inform initiatives. Through its regional teams, NHS England will support ICBs to deliver these priorities and responsibilities.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Mr John Baron:

[\[94300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 17 September, 18 October and 18 November 2021 regarding his constituent with reference JB34209.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 5 January 2022]: We replied to the hon. Member on 5 January 2022.

Robert Largan:

[\[98471\]](#)

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 of 12 November 2021, referenced RL30384.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 24 January 2022.

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

Munira Wilson:

[\[108628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many teams were set up as part of the implemented Children and Young People's Mental Health Trailblazer programme pilot; and what the cost is to the public purse of each individual Mental Health Support Team.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 25 January 2022]: The first tranche of 58 mental health support teams were set up as trailblazers in 2018/19, with 12 teams piloting a four-week waiting time for access to specialist National Health Service children's and young people's mental health services. Further tranches of mental health support teams were announced in July 2019, May 2020 and September 2021, totalling approximately 400 mental health teams planned by 2023/24.

Information on the cost of individual mental health support teams is not collected centrally. NHS Long Term Plan funding for the set up and delivery of mental health support teams has been distributed across NHS regions using a fair-share model based on weighted population.

■ **Mental Health Services: Health Professionals**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[108595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making (a) psychotherapist, (b) counsellor and (c) therapist protected titles.

Edward Argar:

Statutory regulation and the protection of professional titles should only be used when the risks to the public cannot be managed in other ways. We keep the professions subject to statutory regulation under review and on 6 January 2022, we published a public consultation on the criteria for determining when statutory regulation of a healthcare profession is appropriate. We will consider the findings of this consultation which closes on 31 March 2022. However, we have no current plans to regulate psychotherapists, counsellors or other therapist roles.

■ **NHS****Rachael Maskell:**[\[109292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to communicate effectively with the public on his proposed restructures to the NHS and its effect on services.

Edward Argar:

The Health and Care Bill delivers on the National Health Service's (NHS) own proposals for reform in its 2019 Long Term Plan. The proposed legislation intends to build on the excellent work that existing non-statutory Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) started and bring together more closely the health and care partners across the country.

During the development of the Health and Care Bill, we have closely engaged with more than 100 organisations representing all parts of the health and care system. This includes engagement with patient representative organisations, whose contributions have been invaluable to the development of the Bill.

In February 2021, we published the Health and Care Bill White Paper on gov.uk, outlining the intentions of the proposed legislation. In July 2021, we also published factsheets containing details on the measures in the Bill, explaining why they are needed and what impact they will have.

We recognise that patients and the public must be informed about the impact of placing ICSs on a statutory footing. Last June, NHS England published an Integrated Care System Design Framework. This set the expectation that each integrated care board would develop a strategy for engaging with people and communities.

Following engagement with hundreds of partners in the NHS and beyond, including local Government and members of the public, NHS England issued more detailed guidance in September, subject to Parliamentary passage of the Health and Care Bill, providing a set of principles and practical advice for local areas to use when developing their plans, including engaging with the public.

■ **NHS: Counselling****Rachael Maskell:**[\[107629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that all NHS staff have access to trauma counselling.

Edward Argar:

National Health Service staff can receive support through 40 dedicated mental health hubs. These provide proactive outreach and assessment services, ensuring staff receive rapid access to evidence based mental health services. NHS Practitioner Health delivers a service for staff with more complex needs such as trauma or addiction. There is also a range of health and wellbeing services available to all NHS staff including a counselling helpline, free access to self-help apps and tools for leaders and line managers to help them support the wellbeing of their staff.

■ NHS: Labour Turnover**Jon Trickett:**[\[107465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to improve levels of retention of NHS staff.

Edward Argar:

Retaining National Health Service (NHS) staff is a priority for this Government, as outlined in the NHS People Plan 2020/2021 and the NHS People Promise. The NHS People Plan aims to create a compassionate NHS culture that will retain staff by prioritising their health and wellbeing, ensuring a fair and inclusive workplace, promoting opportunities for professional development and supporting flexible working. The NHS People Recovery Task Force and the NHS retention programme is continuously seeking to understand why staff leave, resulting in targeted interventions to support staff to stay.

■ NHS: Protective Clothing**John Spellar:**[\[107442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what was the cost of personal protective equipment purchased by the NHS in 2021; and how much and what proportion of that equipment was manufactured in the UK.

Edward Argar:

The vast majority of personal protective equipment was supplied under contracts agreed in 2020, with deliveries into 2021 and 2022. Payments authorised in 2021 show a total of 1.36 billion items at a purchase price of £795 million. Of those, 846 million items or 62% were supplied by United Kingdom manufacturers at a purchase price of £704 million.

■ Sodium Valproate: Compensation**Alan Brown:**[\[108555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a compensation scheme for people who have been harmed by sodium valproate.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government published its response to the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety review on 21 July 2021. The Government did not accept the recommendation to establish separate redress schemes for the three interventions in the report, including sodium valproate.

Our primary focus is on improving future medicines and medical devices safety and it is therefore crucial that we focus funding on initiatives which directly improve future safety. This includes specialist mesh centres and support for families affected by medicines in pregnancy. For this reason, we have no plans to establish redress schemes in response to this recommendation.

■ Surescreen Diagnostics

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[103541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when SureScreen Diagnostics sought Government approval for the use of their covid-19 lateral flow tests.

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[103542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department gave approval to SureScreen Diagnostics for the supply of their covid-19 lateral flow tests.

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[103543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when approval was sought for the packaging design of covid-19 lateral flow tests by SureScreen Diagnostics; and when that approval was granted.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 18 January 2022]: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) first received an Exceptional Use Authorisation (EUA) application from SureScreen on the 30 September 2021 and after review, approval for the derogation was issued on the 10 November 2021. Whilst we aim to review applications at pace, it is essential that all data is thoroughly assessed.

All packaging and instructions for use are part of the normal review process of an EUA authorisation and the final versions presented to the MHRA were approved on the 23 November 2021.

■ Test and Trace Support Payment

Rachael Maskell: [\[103584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what eligibility criteria is used to allocate discretionary Test and Trace Support Payments for each Local Authority area in England.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 18 January 2022]: The UK Health Security Agency considers a range of factors to allocate discretionary funding for the Test and Trace Support

Payment scheme. This centres on incidence levels and the number of discretionary payments made by the local authority in the last allocation period. Local authorities are responsible for setting the criteria for discretionary payments in their areas.

■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[92083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 13 December 2021 to Question 86625 on Travel: Coronavirus, whether TestnGo has received a warning related to inadequate performance of their covid-19 testing services.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 16 December 2021]: We are unable to provide the information requested as it is commercially sensitive.

■ **Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme: Coronavirus**

Hannah Bardell:

[\[107638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many claims have been made to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme relating to covid-19 vaccinations as of 19 January 2022.

Maria Caulfield:

As of 19 January 2022, there have been 733 claims to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme relating to COVID-19.

■ **Weddings: Coronavirus**

Dan Jarvis:

[\[107584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of ensuring weddings for terminally ill people are not subject to any future public health restrictions.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 24 January 2022]: In light of the existing restrictions being lifted, the Government has not made a recent assessment. However, should further restrictions be required in future, we would consider what exemptions would be appropriate.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Communist Party of China**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[106662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the (a) veracity and (b) implications of reports on 13 January 2022 that an individual connected to the Chinese Communist Party infiltrated Parliament.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 25 January 2022]: The Home Secretary made the Government's position on this issue clear in a statement to the House on 17 January.

■ **Domestic Abuse**

Mike Amesbury: [\[106863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the total cost of domestic abuse to the public purse in 2020-21.

Mike Amesbury: [\[106864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the total cost of domestic abuse to the public purse in Weaver Vale constituency in 2020-21.

Rachel Maclean:

The Home Office does not hold information the cost of domestic by constituency.

The Home Office estimated the social and economic costs of domestic abuse to be £66 billion for the victims identified in England and Wales in 2016/17 (which equates to £74 billion in today's prices).

■ **Domestic Abuse: Crime Prevention**

Mike Amesbury: [\[106867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what comparative assessment she has made of the amount of funding her Department allocated to the prevention of domestic abuse and the (a) social and (b) economic cost of domestic abuse in England and Wales in each year from 2016; and what assessment she has made of the potential cost of (a) unreported cases, (b) the impact on the mental health of victims and their children and (c) the number of days of paid work lost in each of those years.

Rachel Maclean:

Preventing the cycle of abuse is a key issue which starts in childhood. That is why we are providing over £3 million this year to services supporting children experiencing domestic abuse which is going towards therapeutic support and early intervention schemes. This fund provides for children of all ages with services funded including one-to-one, group counselling and parent and child sessions, art and play therapy and funding to support with access to other services that may benefit children and young people negatively impacted by domestic abuse. The fund allows these specialist service providers to offer a response tailored effectively to those in need.

This year, the Home Office alone has allocated £43 million to tackling violence against women and girls.

We have allocated £25 million this financial year to hold perpetrators of domestic abuse to account for their behaviour. As part of this we have awarded funding to Police and Crime Commissioners to increase the availability of interventions that

work with perpetrators to improve safety for related victims, reduce the risk posed by the perpetrator and prevent reoffending.

Through the VAWG Strategy we are investing:

- £5 million for a 'Safety of Women at Night' fund, in addition to the £25 million Safer Streets fund Round 3, that focuses on the prevention of violence against women and girls in public spaces at night, including in the night-time economy.
- £1.5 million for vital specialist support services and to increase our funding for helplines, such as the Revenge Porn Helpline and the Suzy Lamplugh Trust's national stalking helpline.
- £3 million to better understand what works to prevent violence against women and girls – to invest in high quality, evidence-informed prevention projects, including in schools, aiming to educate and inform children and young people about violence against women and girls, healthy relationships and the consequences of abuse.

The Home Office estimated the social and economic costs of domestic abuse to be £66 billion for the victims identified in England and Wales in 2016/17 ^[1] (which equates to £74 billion in today's prices ^[2]). These estimated costs are associated with all victims identified through the Crime Survey in England and Wales in year 2016/17, including those who may have chosen not to report to the police.

The biggest component of this estimated cost was £47 billion for the physical and emotional harms suffered by victims. Table 8 in the [Home Office. The economic and social costs of crime second edition](#), contains the estimated emotional cost for each type of domestic abuse. We do not have costs associated with the impact of domestic abuse on victims' children.

Other costs that result as a consequence of domestic abuse include the lost output (estimated in the region of £14bn). Table 10 in the [Home Office. The economic and social costs of crime second edition](#), contains the estimated average time lost at work following domestic abuse offences.

[1] [Home Office. The economic and social costs of crime second edition](#).

[2] Note the costs are updated to 2021/22 prices using the latest [HMT GDP Deflator](#) and only account for changes in inflation and do not consider other changes in prevalence and unit costs.

■ Joint Fraud Taskforce

Emily Thornberry:

[105428]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2022 to Question 98229 on Joint Fraud Taskforce, when the Joint Fraud Taskforce will publish their quantitative and qualitative goals.

Emily Thornberry:[\[105429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2022 to Question 98228 on Joint Fraud Taskforce, when her Department will publish the Fraud Action Plan.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 25 January 2022]: The goals of the JFT are to:

- Help prevent the public from falling victim to fraud by working across industry sectors, regulators, the third sector and law enforcement.
- Develop technical innovation and solutions to harden systems and close vulnerabilities that criminals exploit.
- Apply dynamic and meaningful protect messaging designed to induce more cautious behaviour when making financial or data transactions.

Following its relaunch on 21st October, the JFT Board is working with industry to develop quantitative and qualitative targets for each working group. These will be published in the action plan, which will form part of the strategy that will be published in 2022.

Members: Correspondence**Robert Largan:**[\[107754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence of 1 December 2021 from the hon. Member for High Peak, referenced RL31076.

Tom Pursglove:

A response was sent to the hon. Member via email on 4 December 2021. The Home Office has resent its response on 20 January 2022.

NHS: Migrant Workers**Stephen Timms:**[\[109176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much revenue the Immigration Health Surcharge raised in each visa category in each quarter since 2015.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not hold the information in the format requested. Amounts received in Immigration Health Surcharge fees are not recorded or categorised by visa type.

Total Immigration Health Surcharge income data is published annually in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts. See page 161 of the Home Office 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts for the most recent disclosure of Immigration Health Surcharge income.

[HO annual report and accounts 2020-21 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk). Reports relating to previous financial years are available at the following link [HO annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

■ Police

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[108594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the (a) overnight allowance for police officers working away from home overnight, and (b) additional hardship allowance for those without proper accommodation is provided to forces as a taxable benefit.

Kit Malthouse:

Police officers in the federated ranks may be entitled to an away from home overnight allowance and an additional hardship allowance when the eligibility criteria set out in determinations made under the Police Regulations 2003 is met. Allowances are subject to taxation rules made by HM Revenue and Customs.

■ Police: Dogs

Holly Lynch: [\[109299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police dogs retired in each of the last three years.

Holly Lynch: [\[109300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police dogs retire across the UK on average each year.

Holly Lynch: [\[109301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police dogs that retired from service in 2021 (a) remained in the care of their handlers and (b) were rehomed.

Holly Lynch: [\[109302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average cost of a serving police dog's veterinary fees is each year.

Holly Lynch: [\[109303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of financial support for rehoming retired police dogs.

Kit Malthouse:

Information on police dogs is not held by the Home Office. Decisions on the number, make up and deployment of police dogs are made on a force by force basis and are a matter for Chief Constables, working with their Police and Crime Commissioners.

Similarly, decisions on the retirement and re-homing of police dogs are made locally by the Chief Constable after having carefully considered the specific circumstances of

each case. Each force has its own system in place to manage this, which may include charitable organisations and volunteers.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Rachael Maskell:

[\[107631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the main reason is for the delay in implementing the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme; and whether a lack of available capacity in bridging hotels and resettlement homes is a factor in the delay.

Victoria Atkins:

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) commenced on 6th January and will provide up to 20,000 women, children and others at risk with a safe and legal route to resettle in the UK. This follows the immediate evacuation of over 15,000 people to safety in the largest and fastest emergency evacuation in recent history. We have continued to bring people to the UK, with around 1,500 people helped to enter since the evacuation.

The ACRS was not delayed. It was designed at pace, as a bespoke scheme specifically designed to respond to a challenging and complex situation.

It is of course important that we take into account our capacity in the UK to support people, so we can continue to resettle people safely and provide appropriate support including with healthcare, education, jobs and housing.

We are proud that 4000 evacuees have already moved or are being moved into permanent homes in such a short space of time. We continue to encourage councils that have not yet made housing offers, to do so.

■ Refugees: Scotland

Owen Thompson:

[\[106789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing a scheme equivalent to the Scottish Government's New Scots refugee integration strategy on a UK-wide basis.

Kevin Foster:

The UK has a proud history of providing protection to those that need it. This Government is committed to ensuring that they can take positive steps towards integration as they rebuild their lives in the UK and become self-sufficient, providing for themselves and their families and contributing to the economy.

As part of the New Plan for Immigration, we have committed to offering an enhanced integration package for refugees arriving in the UK through safe and legal routes.

This is intended to help refugees to integrate into their communities and become self-sufficient more quickly.

■ UK Border Agency: Training

Peter Gibson:

[\[105736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what training is available to Border Force staff handling asylum applications from members of the LGBTQI community on (a) language and (b) consideration of country of origin.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 25 January 2022]: Border Force staff do not handle asylum applications; however, Asylum Operations who deal with asylum applications, including substantive interview and asylum decisions, ensure all caseworkers receive specialist training in how to approach claims from those who identify as LGBTQI+.

Individuals seeking asylum in the UK are given every opportunity to disclose information relevant to their claim before a decision is taken, including where it may be sensitive or difficult to disclose.

Each case is considered on its individual merits by caseworkers who have received extensive training and all available evidence is carefully and sensitively considered in light of published country information ensuring all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity.

■ UK Visas and Immigration

Judith Cummins:

[\[106735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many cases referred by hon. Members to UK Visas and Immigration are pending without response after 20 working days.

Kevin Foster:

The Department works to a target of responding to 95% of Hon. Members written correspondence within 20 working days.

Performance has been impacted by a very significant increase in the volume of correspondence received, including the unprecedented amount of correspondence about the situation in Afghanistan. Ministers and officials have also had to instigate a remote process for drafting and signing correspondence during the period of COVID-19 restrictions.

The Department recognises that it has not been able to meet service standard in some cases but has implemented an action plan to clear backlogs and drive up performance. The Department has recruited additional resources and expects to return to answering Hon. Member's correspondence within service standard by the end of March 2022.

Data about intake and performance for answering Hon. Members correspondence are published quarterly with the latest Quarter available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/customer-service-operations-data-q3-2021> and this includes data up to and including the end of quarter 3 - 2021.

Judith Cummins:

[\[106736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many cases referred by hon. Members to UK Visas and Immigration are pending without response after 40 working days.

Kevin Foster:

The Department works to a target of responding to 95% of Hon. Members written correspondence within 20 working days.

Performance has been impacted by a very significant increase in the volume of correspondence received, including the unprecedented amount of correspondence about the situation in Afghanistan. Ministers and officials have also had to instigate a remote process for drafting and signing correspondence during the period of COVID-19 restrictions.

The Department recognises it has not been able to meet service standard in some cases but has implemented an action plan to clear backlogs and drive up performance. The Department has recruited additional resources and expects to return to answering Hon. Member's correspondence within service standard by the end of March 2022.

Data about intake and performance in answering Hon. Members and Members of the House of Lords correspondence are published quarterly with the latest Quarter available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/customer-service-operations-data-q3-2021> and this includes data up to and including the end of quarter 3 - 2021.

Judith Cummins:

[\[106737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take in response to UK Visas and Immigration failing to meet its service standards of responding to queries from hon. Members within 20 working days.

Kevin Foster:

The Department recognises that it has not been able to meet service standard in some cases but has implemented an action plan to clear backlogs and drive up performance.

The Department works to a target of responding to 95% of Hon. Members written correspondence within 20 working days and has recruited additional resources to help clear the backlogs. The Department expects to return to answering Hon. Member's correspondence within service standard by the end of March 2022.

■ UK Visas and Immigration: Administrative Delays

Judith Cummins:

[\[106738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to clear existing UK Visas and Immigration backlogs.

Judith Cummins:[\[106739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she estimates that UK Visas and Immigration will have cleared the existing backlog of cases.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office is pursuing a programme of transformation and business improvement initiatives which will speed up decision making, reduce the time people spend in the system and reduce the numbers who are awaiting an interview or decision. This includes increasing the number of decision makers and providing improved training and career progression opportunities to aid retention of staff. We are continuing to develop existing and new technology to help build on recent improvements such as digital interviewing and move away from a paper-based system. We are streamlining and digitalising the case working process to enable more effective workflow, appointment booking and decision-making.

■ **Visas****Layla Moran:**[\[109332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish the review of all Tier 1 (Investor) visas issued between 2008 and 2015.

Kevin Foster:

The review of Tier 1 (Investor) visas granted between June 2008 and April 2015 is being finalised.

It will be published in due course.

■ **Visas: Fees and Charges****Stephen Timms:**[\[109177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the impact on the number of visa applications submitted of the rising costs of visa application fees and ancillary fees; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

An Impact Assessment was published on 12 January alongside the Immigration and Nationality (Fees) (Amendment) Order 2022 and can be viewed through this link [The Immigration and Nationality \(Fees\) \(Amendment\) Order 2022 - Impact Assessment \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk).

An assessment of the impact of migration, borders and citizenship fees will be published alongside any future changes to fee levels set by the Immigration and Nationality (Fees) Regulations.

■ **Visas: Overseas Students****Kirsten Oswald:**[\[106748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of bringing the length of the visit period for international

exchange students who are visiting the UK on a visitor visa in line with that of academics visiting the UK on an academic visitor visa.

Kirsten Oswald: [\[106749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with representatives of universities and other stakeholders on increasing the length of time that short-term exchange students are permitted to stay in the UK.

Kirsten Oswald: [\[106750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential effect of the increased cost of immigration facing EU nationals coming to the UK as a result of the UK leaving the EU on international exchange student placements of over six months.

Kirsten Oswald: [\[106751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of her proposed changes to immigration on the (a) number and (b) duration of stay of international exchange students studying in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

Under the new simplified immigration rules which came into effect on 1 December 2020, study for up to six months at an accredited institution is permitted under the visitor route.

The visitor route is for a person who wants to come to the UK for a temporary period, usually up to 6 months.

Visitors may also learn about and undertake research as part of a course they are studying overseas.

There are no plans to allow visitors to study for more than six months.

■ Windrush Compensation Scheme

Stuart C McDonald: [\[109261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department on 17 January Official Report, cols 9-10, whether her Department has decided not to move the Windrush compensation scheme to an independent body for the reasons given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary.

Kevin Foster:

Moving the operation of the Scheme from the Home Office would risk significantly delaying payments to people.

We can understand the concerns of those who believe the department which caused the issues facing these individuals, is the one also deciding whether individuals are eligible to receive compensation or not. In response to these concerns the

compensation scheme continues to be subject to robust internal scrutiny and regular scrutiny from external stakeholders.

The first stage in deciding a claim for compensation is to confirm an individual's identity and eligibility and this is linked to the immigration status of an individual. It would be difficult to decouple this from the Home Office without increasing the time taken to process an individual's claim and issue payments.

Since the changes we made to the Scheme in December, the amount of compensation paid has risen from less than £3 million to over £32.9 million, with a further £5.8 million having been offered, and there is no cap on the amount of compensation we will pay out .

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Trade Remedies

Gareth Thomas:

[106618]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what changes have been made to the rules on UK trade remedies since the UK's departure from the European Union; and if she will make a statement.

Penny Mordaunt:

The legislation establishing the UK's trade remedies system and all subsequent amendments are publicly available here:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/10/contents>

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/22/contents/enacted>

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/secondary?title=Trade%20Remedies/>

■ Trade Remedies: Complaints

Gareth Thomas:

[106620]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many complaints her Department has received from interested parties regarding trade remedies since the UK's departure from the EU; and if she will make a statement.

Penny Mordaunt:

This Department has not received any formal complaints.

The Trade Remedies Authority is the independent body undertaking trade remedies investigations. They have a reconsiderations process for interested parties. Further information on this can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-trade-remedies-investigations-process/how-we-handle-requests-for-reconsiderations-of-our-decisions>.

JUSTICE**■ Courts: Fines****Steve Reed:**[\[105550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what was the value of court-imposed fines for those (a) imposed in magistrates and crown courts, (b) compensation orders, (c) costs orders, (d) criminal courts charges and (e) victim surcharge orders and unpaid (i) fixed penalty notices and (ii) penalty notices for disorder that have been left unpaid in every year since 2016; what was the total value of those unpaid fines; and what steps his Department is taking to help recover the payments due.

James Cartlidge:

The information requested under (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e) has been provided in the attached table. It is not currently possible to provide the same information specifically for (i) fixed penalty notices and (ii) penalty notices for disorder.

The data shows that the fines balances reduce each year and that the longer it is since the debt was imposed, the more HMCTS have been able to collect. This is often because many offenders can have multiple impositions and are steadily paying them over a number of years.

The Government takes the recovery and enforcement of all financial impositions very seriously and remains committed to ensuring impositions are paid.

The courts will do everything within their powers to trace those who do not pay and use a variety of means to ensure the recovery of criminal fines and financial penalties.

This includes deducting money from an individual offender's earnings or benefits if they are unemployed, or issuing warrants instructing approved enforcement agents to seize and sell goods belonging to the offender. If the offender does not pay as ordered and the money cannot be recovered by other means then the court can take other actions which includes sending them to prison for non-payment of the fine.

Attachments:

1. 105550_table [2022-01-20 105550 V2.xlsx]

Steve Reed:[\[105551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of pursuing offenders for unpaid court-imposed fines since 2016.

James Cartlidge:

The National Compliance and Enforcement Service (NCES) is a division of HMCTS responsible for the collection and enforcement of court-imposed fines on behalf of the courts, and the disbursement of funds to third parties. The total spend position for the NCES over the period in question is provided in the below table:

FINANCIAL YEAR	£000
2016-17	59,930
2017-18	61,184
2018-19	60,433
2019-20	59,958
2020-21	52,029

It is important to understand that costs of collection and enforcement are not separable from the costs of disbursements of compensation to victims, victim surcharge, costs to the Crown Prosecution Service and other Prosecution Costs. Nor is it possible to break down the specific cost of pursuing unpaid court imposed financial penalties against the cost of administering financial penalties that are paid. Furthermore, it should be noted that the NCES shares a number of services with other areas across HMCTS and the MoJ (e.g. shared buildings, IT etc), the cost for which is unable to be separated.

In addition, there are costs to HMCTS if cases are referred back to court for enforcement hearings which we are unable to break down.

■ **Courts: Interpreters**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[105598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what criteria are used to assess the suitability of an interpreting agency for use in court work; and how that work is assessed and monitored against those criteria for individual providers.

James Cartlidge:

As per the Public Contract Regulations 2015, the suppliers with which we have contracts in place were assessed against the publicly published evaluation criteria for that tender. Please find evaluation criteria attached.

Ongoing quality is maintained in a number of forms:

- Monitoring of key performance indicators including, but not limited to, attendance, security and complexity uplifts on bookings, portal availability, helpdesk, complaints, data provision;
- Inclusion of comprehensive audit rights and open book accounting clauses allowing MoJ to check the supplier maintains financial stability and their obligations under the contract;
- Use of sub-contractors is quality assured by an on-boarding approval process and quarterly reviews and audits to ensure compliance from the sub-contractor in accordance with supplier obligations in the contract.

- A quality assurance contract provides independent spot checks of interpreter performance against a predefined checklist, linked to the standards in the contract, in a consistent manner. Those that fail are removed from the approved register until an in-person assessment has been conducted by the QA provider, and that assessment has subsequently been passed and the QA provider is confident that the Language Professional can be reinstated to the register. The language professional will then be mystery shopped again within 6 months of reinstatement.

Attachments:

1. 105598_attachment [2022-01-25 105598 attachment.docx]

■ Hunting: Prosecutions

Matt Western:

[106829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prosecutions there have been for offences relating to hunting with dogs, by police force area, in the latest period for which data are available.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions for offences relating to hunting with dogs, by police force area, in England and Wales, up to December 2020, available in the 'Principal offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code' data tool, which can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987731/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2020.xlsx.

To find the number of prosecutions by police force area for hunting a wild mammal with a dog, under sections 1 and 6 of the Hunting Act 2004:

- Select 'hunting a wild mammal with a dog' in the 'detailed offence' filter (or select '12113' in the 'offence code' filter).
- Use the 'Police Force Area' filter to select a specific police force area or, within the field list, drag the filter for police force area from the filters area to the rows area for a detailed breakdown of all the police force areas.
- The number of prosecutions will be found on Row 32

Other offences that relate to hunting with dogs under the Hunting Act 2004 include:

- Offence code: 12114
- Detailed Offence: Knowingly permitting land to be entered or used in the course of hunting a wild mammal with dogs
- Offence code: 12115
- Detailed offence: Knowingly permitting a dog to be used in the course of hunting a wild mammal
- Offence code: 12116
- Detailed offence: Participating in a hare coursing event

- Offence code: 12117
- Detailed offence: Attending a hare coursing event

■ Legal Aid Scheme

Stuart Anderson:

[\[105735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to ensure equitable access to legal aid.

James Cartlidge:

We are currently carrying out a review of the means test for legal aid. The review, which we plan to publish shortly, is assessing the effectiveness with which the means test protects access to justice, including the income and capital thresholds for civil and criminal legal aid.

We have already made some changes to improve access to legal aid. In December 2020, we removed the £100k cap on the amount of mortgage debt which can be taken into account in the civil means test and expanded the list of compensation/ex-gratia payments which can be disregarded from an applicant's means. As of January 2022, we have removed the means test for applications for legal representation at inquests via the Exceptional Case Funding scheme.

■ Magistrates: Disability

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[106802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published 28 July 2021, what progress his Department has made on using £1 million of funding by spring 2022 to recruit more disabled magistrates in England and Wales as part of a wider effort to improve diversity.

James Cartlidge:

The Government is investing over £1 million to support the recruitment of new and diverse magistrates from under-represented groups such as those with disabilities. On 17 January 2022, in partnership with the judiciary, we introduced a revised, streamlined recruitment process.

The new process has been carefully designed with occupational psychologists in line with current best practice to ensure it is fair, more inclusive and more accessible to all candidates whilst remaining challenging and robust to identify the best applicants.

Online applications replace the previous paper-based form, with the website reaching the highest accessibility standards and adaptable to candidate's needs. As now, applicants will be asked to indicate on their application form if they require any reasonable adjustments, and will be contacted directly to find out how they can be supported through the process. The updated interview includes a mixture of behavioural and situational questions, and no longer includes case study exercises, as similar exercises have been shown to negatively impact individuals with certain protected characteristics.

We will also launch an inclusive national marketing campaign next week designed to encourage more applications from a broader range of people. Importantly, the improved data we will collect via the new digital applicant tracking system will help us to better monitor the diversity of applicants and appointments, including disability, and identify opportunities for further improvements.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Public Appointments**

Kevin Brennan: [\[108472\]](#)

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

James Cartlidge:

References are sought for candidates shortlisted for interview for a range of roles falling under the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

■ **Prison Officers: Pay**

Ellie Reeves: [\[106834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the (a) adequacy of the starting salary of a prison officer and (b) the impact of that salary on recruitment.

Ellie Reeves: [\[106835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the base salary and salary progression of a prison officer and its impact on officer retention.

Victoria Atkins:

Pay and progression for prison officers is determined annually through the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) process.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is currently considering proposals for inclusion in the Government's evidence submission to the PSPRB for the 2022/23 pay round. The adequacy of prison officer salary and progression and its impact on recruitment and retention is factored into those considerations.

The Government's evidence will be published and submitted to the PSPRB in due course.

■ **Prison Officers: Training**

Ellie Reeves: [\[106831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the annual cost was to train a new prison officer in each year since 2010.

Victoria Atkins:

The current estimated cost to recruit and train a new Band 3 Prison Officer is approximately £13,000 as published in the Prison Service Pay Review Body report. Further information can be found on page 55 at: [Prison Service Pay Review Body - Twentieth Report on England and Wales 2021 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\) \(opens in a new tab\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/102122/prison-service-pay-review-body-twentieth-report-on-england-and-wales-2021.pdf).

Please be aware that the figures contained in the document are subject to regular change due to a number of variables and assumptions used to calculate the figures.

We are not able to provide an annual cost to train a new prison officer for each of the previous years to 2010 as this information is not centrally held and would be at disproportionate cost to obtain.

Prisoners' Release: Females

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[109322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent steps he has taken to support women leaving help prison to prevent them from becoming homeless.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[109323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate he has made of the proportion of women who leave prison to homelessness.

Kit Malthouse:

As part of our commitment to eliminate rough sleeping, we are working across Government, with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), the Welsh Government and other Government Departments, to address the barriers offenders face in securing suitable accommodation.

Our Prisons Strategy White Paper sets out our vision that no-one subject to probation supervision is released from prison homeless. By 2024-25 we will spend £200 million a year to reduce reoffending, including improving prison leavers' access to accommodation. This includes expanding our new Community Accommodation Service (CAS), which currently provides up to 12 weeks temporary housing in five probation regions, to all prison leavers in England and Wales at risk of homelessness who are subject to probation supervision.

The CAS service takes account of the needs of women, including those with complex needs, with accommodation provision dedicated to single gender usage as required. Community Probation Practitioners (CPPs), working together with local partners, are responsible for ensuring that vulnerable female prison leavers receive appropriate support. Additional support for female prison leavers can be accessed by CPPs through the Women's Commissioned Rehabilitation Service (CRS). This provision is a holistic service offer, delivered by expert and experienced women's services, that covers a broad range of interventions including accommodation support.

Additionally, our White Paper outlines our commitment to increase the number of Housing Specialists from 20 to 48 across England and Wales, supporting prisons to

be more strategic in their response to reducing homelessness and partnership working.

Accommodation circumstances for offenders are reported annually as official statistics. Statistics show that 4,685 women were released from custody in the year to March 2021, with 50% going into secure, long-term accommodation and a further 10% to bail/probation accommodation. 13% were recorded as being homeless or rough sleeping at the point of release. This data is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-performance-annual-update-to-march-2021>.

Data for the period 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 will be published in July 2022 in the Community Performance Annual report.

■ Prisons: Body Searches

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[107676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when the revised protocol on searching of the person will be published; whether prison officers of the male sex who identify as transgender, with or without a gender recognition certificate, will be permitted to rubdown or strip search female offenders; and whether the revised protocols will also apply to youth custody services.

Victoria Atkins:

The national policy on the searching of prisoners, staff and visitors (PSI 07/2016 – Searching of the Person) is currently under review, and to allow for extensive consultation, is expected to be published later this year.

The updated policy will include directions on transgender staff, with and without Gender Recognition Certificates, conducting searches.

In reviewing the policy, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is consulting with the Government's Legal Department, HMPPS Equalities Team and representatives from external women's and transgender groups. The new policy will be compliant with the Equality Act 2010, Gender Recognition Act 2004 and the European Convention of Human Rights.

■ Prisons: Public Sector

Ellie Reeves: [\[106833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which of the five new build prisons will be public sector prisons.

Victoria Atkins:

In addition to HMP Five Wells in Wellingborough, which is due to open shortly and is privately operated, there are five new build prisons to follow.

The new prison at Glen Parva in Leicestershire will be privately operated, with an operator expected to be announced early this year.

The following four prisons, consisting of a new prison next to the existing HMP Full Sutton and three others, will be a mixture of private and public operation. At least one of the four new prisons will be publicly operated which reaffirms our commitment to a balanced approach to custodial services which includes a mix of public, voluntary and private sector involvement.

■ Reoffenders

Colleen Fletcher:

[106731]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of re-offending rates among (a) under 25s and (b) over 25s in (i) Coventry, (ii) the West Midlands and (iii) England in each of the last five years.

Kit Malthouse:

The overall proven reoffending rate has steadily decreased in more recent years. However, the impact of the COVID19 pandemic has resulted in changes in the rate being more acute. In England, for a January-December 2019 offender cohort, the rate decreased by 2.9 percentage points for those aged 10-24 and by 2.4 percentage points for those aged over 25. For proven reoffending trends in Coventry, West Midlands and England, please refer to the latest published geographical data tool which can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data

/file/1028661/Geographical_data_tool_jan09_dec19_Final.xlsx

We know the likelihood of ex-offenders reoffending is significantly decreased if they have a home, a job and access to healthcare, including substance misuse treatment. In December 2021 the Prisons Strategy White Paper set out our ambitious plans to reduce reoffending and protect the public. We will spend £200 million a year by 2024-25 to improve prison leavers' access to accommodation, employment support and substance misuse treatment and further measures for early intervention to tackle youth offending.

We will also introduce new personalised Resettlement Passports, which will be set up prior to release and will bring together the key information and services that an individual needs to resettle into society.

Our reforms to the Probation Service, supported by additional annual funding of £155 million, will also help reduce reoffending through robust supervision, tougher community sentences, improved local partnership working and delivery of rehabilitative services.

■ Social Security Benefits: Leeds

Hilary Benn: [\[109187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of appeals to the tribunal over (a) personal independence payment, (b) employment support allowance and (c) universal credit decisions have been successful in each of the last two years in Leeds.

Hilary Benn: [\[109188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the current average waiting time is for an appeal against a personal independence payment, employment support allowance or universal credit decision to be heard by the tribunal in (a) Leeds, (b) West Yorkshire and (c) England.

James Cartlidge:

Information about the outcomes of and waiting times for appeals in the First-tier Tribunal (Social Security and Child Support) (SSCS) is published at:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics.

Decisions on benefit – typically, on a person’s entitlement to benefit, or its rate of payment - can be overturned on appeal for a variety of reasons. For instance, further evidence, including oral testimony, may be provided at the hearing. HM Courts & Tribunals Service cannot comment on decisions made by the independent tribunal judiciary.

Waiting times are calculated from receipt of an appeal to its final disposal. An appeal is not necessarily disposed of at its first hearing. The final disposal decision on the appeal may be reached after an earlier hearing had been adjourned (which may be directed by the judge for a variety of reasons, such as to seek further evidence), or after an earlier hearing date had been postponed (again, for a variety of reasons, often at the request of the appellant). An appeal may also have been decided at an earlier date by SSCS, only for the case to have gone on to the Upper Tribunal, to be returned once again to the First-tier, for its final disposal.

■ Wayland Prison: Solar Power

Afzal Khan: [\[109339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which company supplied the solar panels recently installed at HMP Wayland.

Victoria Atkins:

The solar panels at HMP Wayland were supplied by EQUANS (formally ENGIE).

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Buildings: Disability****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[106795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy on Ensuring the safety of disabled people, whether his Department's research to develop robust evidence to inform policy in England on the means of escape from buildings, care homes and specialised housing for disabled people has concluded; and when the findings of that review will be published.

Christopher Pincher:

We commissioned research on the means of escape for disabled people. This project is reviewing the current approach to evacuating disabled persons across a range of building types, based on people's lived experience, and using computer modelling to assess effectiveness of different evacuation options. It is looking at the benefit of assistance devices (e.g., evacuation chairs) and evacuation lifts in comparison to providing safe refuges for people to await assistance. This work is ongoing. We also recognise that specialised housing and care homes present a different challenge for fire safety, we are reviewing the effectiveness of current guidance through further ongoing research. The first reports are expected in early 2022, and further research may be required after that, to ensure we have robust evidence to inform policy options.

■ Council Tax: Rates and Rating**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[106627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps is he taking to reform Council Tax bandings to make them more fair and equitable.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government currently has no plans to reform the council tax banding of properties in England. The council tax system incorporates a wide range of discounts and exemptions, and each local authority provides council tax support to reduce bills for people facing financial difficulty.

Mr Barry Sheerman:[\[106628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions he has had with the head of the Valuation Office Agency on the service that it provides for people who wish to appeal their council tax band.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Secretary of State has not had any discussions with the head of the Valuation Office Agency on the services that it provides. The Valuation Office Agency is an executive agency of HM Revenue and Customs.

■ Flats: Insulation

Andrew Rosindell: [\[106667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what support he will make available to leaseholders in flats with ACM cladding that are in buildings less than 11 metres high.

Christopher Pincher:

Longstanding independent safety advice is clear that height is a crucial factor in assessing risk. The Building Safety Bill will deliver improvements across the entire built environment, including for buildings under 11m.

■ Housing: Disability

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[106801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Raising accessibility standards for new homes consultation, which closed on 1 December 2020, when his Department plans to publish the findings of that consultation.

Christopher Pincher:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer given to PQ 102722 on 20 January 2022.

■ Local Government: Cornwall

Mike Amesbury: [\[105716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential financial challenges facing Cornwall Council.

Mike Amesbury: [\[105717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to maintain jobs and services at Cornwall Council.

Mike Amesbury: [\[105718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment his Department has made of Cornwall Council's ability to fulfil its statutory duties.

Mike Amesbury: [\[105720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of job losses at Cornwall Council on its ability to carry out (a) its functions and (b) support the levelling up agenda.

Kemi Badenoch:

It is for locally elected councils to make decisions around services and priorities in their local areas.

All local councils are being supported by the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2022/23 which makes available an additional £3.5 billion. This is an

increase in local authority funding for 2022/23 of over 4% in real terms, which will ensure councils across the country have the resources they need to deliver key services. For Cornwall Council this means Core Spending Power increasing from £513.5 million to £549.3 million. In addition, Cornwall Council has also received £99.1 million from Future High Streets Fund and the towns fund, to support the levelling up agenda in 4 towns across the county.

Officials from the Department regularly speak with a range of local authorities around their finances as part of ongoing engagement with the sector. Officials are also in regular communication with Cornwall Council in relation to the levelling up agenda. Any local council which is worried about their finances is encouraged to talk to the Department as soon as possible.

■ **Local Government: Coronavirus**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[105721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that councils are able to support their communities and maintain jobs during the outbreak of the Omicron variant of covid-19.

Kemi Badenoch:

Throughout the pandemic the Government has provided significant funding to local authorities to support the important work they have done to keep the public safe, and to help protect the NHS. We have allocated over £13 billion directly to councils in England since the start of the pandemic to tackle the impacts of COVID-19. Over £6 billion of which is unringfenced in recognition that local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the major COVID-19 pressures in their local area. Of this Cornwall has received £133.77 million in COVID-19 funding with £61.36 million being unringfenced for 2020/22.

■ **Local Government: Devolution**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[109291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has a timescale for publishing the plan for the devolution of North Yorkshire.

Neil O'Brien:

We are committed to devolving more power away from Whitehall to people and places across the UK. We are reviewing the exciting proposals prepared by the leaders of North Yorkshire and the City of York for a devolution deal and we look forward to discussing those proposals further with them soon. We will be saying more about our plans to strengthen local leadership in the forthcoming White Paper.

Local Government: Video Conferencing**Sir Peter Bottomley:** [\[106616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will (a) enable and (b) encourage local and parish councils to hold remote and hybrid meetings; and if he will make a statement.

Kemi Badenoch:

We launched a call for evidence on 25 March to gather views and inform a longer-term decision about whether to make express provision for councils to meet remotely on a permanent basis. The call for evidence closed on 17 June.

The Department has considered the responses to the consultation and the Government will respond shortly.

Daisy Cooper: [\[106896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 5 January to Question 94508 on Local Government: Meetings, on what date his Department plans to publish its response to the consultation on whether to make express provision for councils to meet remotely on a permanent basis.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Department has considered the responses to the consultation and the Government will respond shortly.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Diaries**Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[106891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will publish in full the Ministerial diary of the former Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for 20 May 2020.

Eddie Hughes:

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).

Non-domestic Rates: Airports**Henry Smith:** [\[105471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the value is of (a) business rates paid by airports in England and (b) support distributed to airports through the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme in England during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

Data on the amount of business rates paid by type of business in England is not collected

The renewed Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS) that the Chancellor announced at the Autumn Budget provides support for eligible businesses with their fixed costs for a further six months, up to the equivalent of their business rates liabilities for the second half of the 2021-22 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £4 million. The Scheme has been renewed twice and in total around £175 million has been made available.

Henry Smith:

[\[105472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Business Rates Relief Fund, whether his Department made an assessment of how much support airports would potentially have been entitled to before being deemed ineligible for that fund.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund was introduced to enable local authorities to provide targeted support to sectors who were affected by the pandemic but ineligible for previous support linked to business rates

For that reason, those airports in England which have received support for their fixed costs, based on the equivalent of their business rates liabilities, through the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS) are not eligible for this relief

The renewed Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS) that the Chancellor announced at the Autumn Budget provides support for eligible businesses with their fixed costs for a further six months, up to the equivalent of their business rates liabilities for the second half of the 2021-22 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £4 million.

Henry Smith:

[\[105473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Business Rates Relief Fund, whether his Department made an assessment of the potential value of discounts that would have been awarded to airports in England in the event that airports had been permitted to pursue covid-19-related Material Change of Circumstance appeals with the Valuation Office Agency.

Kemi Badenoch:

Parliament recently passed legislation to rule out coronavirus as grounds for a 'material change of circumstances' appeal of rateable value. It is a core principle of the business rates system that market-wide economic changes affecting property values, such as the pandemic, should only be considered at general revaluations. Prior to this legislation being introduced, the Valuation Office Agency were at an early stage of considering their response to the material change of circumstances appeals. Although discussions had taken place no valuations had been agreed.

■ Non-domestic Rates: Tax Allowances

Henry Smith: [\[105470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the value is of business rates relief provided to (a) the retail sector, (b) the hospitality sector, (c) the leisure sector and (d) airports in England during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The total value of business rates relief provided to the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors in England was £11.1 billion in 2020/21, and is forecasted to be £5.8 billion in 2021/22

The renewed Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS) that the Chancellor announced at the Autumn Budget provides support for eligible businesses with their fixed costs for a further six months, up to the equivalent of their business rates liabilities for the second half of the 2021-22 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £4 million.

■ Property Development

Jason McCartney: [\[106685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to introduce the direction on local planning authorities to consult with him on developments that affect ancient woodlands; and when he plans launch the consultation on revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Christopher Pincher:

In *Planning for the Future* we make clear that, under the reforms proposed, local authorities would use the plan-making process to ensure the continued protection and enhancement of areas important for biodiversity, including ancient woodland.

The consultation direction has been committed to and further details on this will follow in due course. While the necessary changes are awaited there is, in the meantime the option for requests to be made for individual applications to be called in for determination by the Secretary of State, using the broad powers under section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

As part of our reforms, we have set out that the National Planning Policy Framework will be revised. Our approach to planning reform remains under very active consideration, in the context of my departments' wider mission to level-up our country. The way forward will be announced as soon as possible.

■ Regional Planning and Development

Jim Shannon: [\[106700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment the Government has made of whether local authorities may need additional support to deliver the proposals set out in its forthcoming Levelling Up white paper.

Kemi Badenoch:

Core Spending Power for local government is expected to rise from £50.4 billion in 2021-22 to up to £53.9 billion in 2022-23. The forthcoming Levelling Up White Paper will set out our plans for strengthening accountable local leadership. This is alongside recent investments including the Levelling Up Fund, UK Community Renewal Fund and Towns Fund where Government is working closely with councils right across the United Kingdom.

Rachael Maskell:[\[109290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to publish the Levelling Up White Paper.

Neil O'Brien:

Levelling up is a transformative agenda and the Department's priority is to produce a White Paper which matches our ambition, 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.

Work is progressing well and we plan to publish the White Paper shortly.

■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus**Dr Luke Evans:**[\[106900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps the Government is taking to provide (a) financial and (b) other support to local high streets to assist with recovery from covid-19 restrictions in advance of the spring trading period.

Neil O'Brien:

This Government is fully committed to supporting the businesses and communities that make our high streets and town centres successful as the nation responds to the impacts of COVID-19. We have provided a comprehensive package of around £400 billion of direct support to the economy during this financial year and last, which has helped to safeguard jobs, businesses and public services in every region and nation of the UK. This package includes business grants, the coronavirus loan schemes, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, as well as deferral of income tax payments. In addition, on 21 December 2021 the Chancellor announced further support of over £700 million in grant support for businesses most impacted by the Omicron variant, as part of an overall package of £1 billion to support businesses across the UK.

We are taking further concrete steps towards reviving our high streets and town centres by committing billions of pounds to support economic growth and regeneration for high streets, through the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund, which will invest in infrastructure to improve everyday local life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets. There is also the £220 million UK-wide Community Renewal Fund, the £150 million Community Ownership Fund, and the £3.6 billion

Towns Fund, which includes support for 101 Town Deals and 72 Future High Streets Fund projects.

Beyond substantial funding offers, Government is providing support to local leadership with the High Streets Task Force. Over five years this is providing hands-on support to local areas to develop data-driven innovative strategies and to connect local areas to relevant experts. On 20th March, we were pleased to announce the next 70 local authorities due to receive bespoke expert support, which has taken place over 2021 and will continue into 2022. We will be announcing a further tranche of local authorities to receive in-person expert support from the Task Force in due course.

In addition to this, the Build Back Better High Streets strategy published in July 2021 forms a key part of Government's plan to level up and will deliver visible changes to local areas and communities across England. To address adaptation and reinvention of our high streets, in September 2020 we also introduced reforms to the use classes to enable more flexible use of existing buildings. Through these reforms we will help create more vibrant, mixed use town centre areas, attracting people to shop, work, live and for leisure activities, ensuring they remain viable now and in the future.

Reviving our high streets and town centres is essential to this Government's commitments to level up the country. We will shortly be publishing the Levelling Up White Paper, which will set out in more detail how this Government will be helping places around the country.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Aaron Bell:

[\[108637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his timetable is for opening applications to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund; and when his Department plans to publish full details of the application process.

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.

The Government will publish further details on the fund in due course.

Ben Lake:[\[109318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department plans to publish details of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund application process.

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.

The Government will publish further details on the fund in due course.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Economic Situation: Merseyside and Northern Ireland****Alison McGovern:**[\[905218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment he has made of the economic connections between Northern Ireland and Merseyside; and if he will make a statement.

Conor Burns:

This Government is protecting and enhancing the connections between Northern Ireland and Merseyside through the Union Connectivity Review. We have accepted the Review's primary recommendation, for the establishment of a strategic UK-wide transport network which will improve access to our ferry ports.

■ NHS: Northern Ireland**Karin Smyth:**[\[905219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of resources for tackling NHS waiting times in Northern Ireland.

Conor Burns:

The Executive has committed to transforming the health service through its Elective Care Framework, and to reducing waiting lists by 2026. In support, the Government is providing £445 million for the transformation of public services in Northern Ireland. This is in addition to the £15 billion per year we provide on average for this purpose, which is the largest funding settlement since devolution.

■ Skilled Workers: Northern Ireland**David Simmonds:** [\[905220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps his Department is taking to improve skills in Northern Ireland.

Conor Burns:

While responsibility for skills is devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive, we are also investing in Northern Ireland's skills as we level up the UK. Made possible through £15 million of Government funding from the New Deal for Northern Ireland, the 'Skill Up' initiative will fully fund further education colleges and universities to deliver approximately 15,000 training places to support key growth sectors. The Government has also committed £617 million through City & Growth Deals, with skills a key part of the Belfast Region City deal.

TRANSPORT**■ Blue Badge Scheme: Cancer****Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[107649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending blue badge eligibility to people undergoing treatment for cancer.

Wendy Morton:

The Blue Badge scheme is primarily about helping those with permanent mobility issues, access the goods and services they need to use. Applications are not dependent upon condition, but are based on the need of the applicant to park closer to their destination. Anyone may be entitled to a badge if they meet the eligibility criteria. The Department has recently made changes to the online application process to make it easier and quicker for some people with life limiting diagnoses to receive a badge.

■ Department for Transport: Public Appointments**Kevin Brennan:** [\[109192\]](#)

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

Andrew Stephenson:

Applicants for public appointments are asked to provide details of two referees. The Governance Code on Public Appointments sets out that the Advisory Assessment Panel must satisfy itself 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 line with the Governance Code, candidates are asked to declare relevant interests and these are discussed at interview.

■ Diesel Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions

Grahame Morris: [\[109210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) assessments his Department has undertaken on the risk of exposure to diesel engine exhaust emissions for staff in his Department.

Grahame Morris: [\[109211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department provides guidance to its staff on the risks of exposure to diesel engine exhaust emissions.

Grahame Morris: [\[109212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what (a) preventative and (b) control measures he has put in place to help tackle the exposure of staff in his Department to diesel engine exhaust emissions.

Trudy Harrison:

DfT have completed multiple diesel emission monitoring exercises by trained people to ensure staff safety and wellbeing. DfT have also completed CoSHH assessments for exposure to vehicle fumes.

DfT staff are aware of the risk of exposure and have access to all relevant risk assessments, COSHH documentation and Safe Systems of Work guidance.

DfT have risk assessments in place for working on our own sites and for staff working off site. These follow all aspects of Health and Safety Executive guidance in relation to diesel emissions in the workplace. (a) preventative measures include exhaust extraction systems and, (b) additional control measures include maintaining good ventilation within workplaces.

Grahame Morris: [\[109213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government is taking to monitor emissions produced by diesel engine exhausts.

Trudy Harrison:

Exhaust emissions from diesel engines used in road transport and in non-road mobile machinery are subject to stringent approval requirements. Manufacturers must evidence that vehicles or engines comply with the latest environmental standards before being placed on the market.

The latest standards for road vehicles include assessment of emissions over a wide range of driving conditions during on-road testing. This has resulted in significant reductions in the real-world emissions of new diesel vehicles.

Grahame Morris: [\[109214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) assessments have been made within National Highways concerning departmental staff being exposed to diesel engine exhaust emissions.

Trudy Harrison:

National Highways own and maintain a standard within their Health Safety and Wellbeing management system, for the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH). As part of this, risk assessments of operational activities are completed to identify and manage any occupational health risks. Specific activity risk assessments are completed where required, and controls are put in place to mitigate or minimise risk wherever possible.

When National Highways' Departmental staff are undertaking work for, or on behalf, of National Highways, they are covered by the COSHH Regulations 2002. The COSHH Regulations 2002 (as amended), EH40/2005 (Fourth Edition 2020) contain the list of relevant workplace exposure threshold limits.

National Highways' staff are assessed for operational health hazards, and safety critical medicals is included as part of general health assessments, with an additional function test where required. National Highways is due to carry out an occupational hygiene assessment over the next four months which will assess its current, and any new, occupational health risks. This will be undertaken by an independent occupational hygiene specialist to assess two key operational on road roles: Traffic Officers and Highways Inspectors. It will provide an up to date review on occupational health risks and how they are controlled to prevent ill health or injury, identifying areas of improvement and recommendations for National Highways.

■ Electric Scooters: Hire Services

Gill Furniss: [\[109308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to report on his findings on e-scooter trials.

Trudy Harrison:

Evidence and data from trials and other sources continues to grow. The Department and its evaluation contractor are analysing this information and we expect to publish findings later this year.

■ Motorways: Safety

Gill Furniss: [\[109309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many miles of ALR Smart Motorways are without an Emergency Refuge Area at least every (a) 0.75 miles and (b) one mile.

Gill Furniss: [\[109310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Emergency Refuge Areas (ERAs) would require construction to ensure that all ALR Smart Motorways have one at least every one mile in addition to the extra 150 ERAs already pledged.

Gill Furniss:[\[109311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the estimated cost of retrofitting all current ALR Smart Motorways with an Emergency Refuge Area at least every one mile in addition to the £390 million already announced.

Trudy Harrison:

£390 million has already been committed towards retrofitting, which will see 150 additional emergency areas being added to ALR motorways in operation and construction by 2025. A decision on whether to retrofit across the remainder of ALR smart motorways will be considered as part of the formulation of the third Road Investment Strategy.

As of December 2021, 50.7 miles of operational All Lane Running motorways had emergency area average spacing between at least 0.75 miles and 1 mile apart. Work will start immediately on retrofitting the remaining operational network, so that it meets the latest standard of emergency area spacing being 0.75 mile where feasible, up to a maximum of 1 mile.

■ Parking: Pedestrian Areas**Navendu Mishra:**[\[106908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has plans to change (a) traffic regulation orders or (a) pavement parking prohibition NM13303 in response to its 2020 consultation, Pavement parking: options for change.

Trudy Harrison:

Ministers are carefully considering the consultation findings and are actively considering the options for addressing pavement parking. We will publish the formal consultation response and announce next steps as soon as possible.

■ Railways: Travel Information**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[109321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the (a) cost of and (b) staff hours needed to complete his Department's review into tannoy announcements.

Wendy Morton:

Officials are working closely with Rail Delivery Group and train operating companies to develop the plan for implementing reductions to onboard announcements. Implementation will take place in line with existing maintenance schedules to minimise cost.

■ **Taxis: Disability**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[106810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published 28 July 2021, what recent steps his Department has taken to encourage local authorities to require drivers to complete disability awareness training.

Wendy Morton:

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.

■ **Trams**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[106781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made on the potential merits of trams to small cities such as York.

Trudy Harrison:

My Department continues to work with all Local Authorities and with the industry bodies, including UK Tram and the Confederation of Passenger transport, to advise Local Authorities on how to meet their local transport needs, whether through bus, tram or other modes.

■ **Travel: Costs**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[108611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the affordability of cost of travel for people who work shift patterns and are on low pay and zero hours contracts; and what steps his Department is taking to ensure that transport is affordable and accessible to all commuters to and from work.

Wendy Morton:

We have recently introduced flexible season tickets on rail, which provide better value to most part-time commuters than buying daily tickets or traditional seasons. We have also saved a generation of passengers a third off their rail fares, including the 16-17 Saver and 26-30 Railcards and, most recently, the Veterans Railcard. These provide substantial discounts to off-peak travel that many shift workers can take advantage of.

During this Parliament the Government will invest £1.2 billion of new funding to deliver improvements in bus services, fares and infrastructure in England outside London.

TREASURY

■ Business: Coronavirus

Kate Hollern:

[109257]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the number of entities that have self-reported funds paid out due to fraud or error in relation to the coronavirus support schemes.

Lucy Frazer:

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.

Claimants can return monies that they are not entitled to in a number of ways, for example, via an online digital service or by making an entry in their income or corporation tax return. As HMRC does not yet have all the returns for the periods in which the grants were paid, they are not currently able to quantify the numbers of entities who have returned grants.

As set out in the document that accompanied HMRC's 2020-21 Annual Report & Accounts, claimants have repaid more than £350 million to correct mistakes without HMRC intervention in addition to the compliance results for the schemes. HMRC's 2020-21 Annual Report & Accounts can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/measuring-error-and-fraud-in-the-covid-19-schemes>

■ Cash Dispensing

Dan Carden:

[R] [109327]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on local economies of the number of free-to-use ATMs across the UK.

Dan Carden:

[R] [109328]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the reduction in free-to-use cash machines since 2017 on access to cash across the UK.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that cash remains an important part of daily life for millions of people across the UK, which is why it has committed to legislate to protect access to cash.

Last year, the Government held an Access to Cash Consultation on proposals for new laws to make sure people only need to travel a reasonable distance to pay in or take out cash. The Government's proposals intend to support the continued use of cash in people's daily lives and help to enable local businesses to continue accepting cash by ensuring they can access deposit facilities. The Government will set out next steps in due course.

Regarding access to free-to-use ATMs, LINK (the scheme that runs the UK's largest ATM network) has commitments to protect the broad geographic spread of free-to-use ATMs and is held to account against these commitments by the Payment Systems Regulator. LINK has committed to protect free-to-use ATMs more than one kilometre away from the next nearest free ATM or Post Office, and free access to cash on high streets (where there is a cluster of five or more retailers) that do not have a free-to-use ATM or a Post Office counter within one kilometre.

LINK also publishes the total number of free-to-use ATMs across the UK. As of October 2021, LINK reported that there were around 41,000 free-to-use ATMs in the UK. LINK's Monthly ATM Footprint Report also publishes information monthly on the break down by constituency.

More broadly, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) publishes data on access to cash coverage across the UK. As of the second quarter of 2021, the FCA reported that nearly 96% of the UK population are within 2km of a free-to-use cash access point.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Aviation**

Clive Lewis:

[106811]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much funding the Government provided to the aviation industry via the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Helen Whately:

HM Revenue and Customs regularly published statistics on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS).

The statistics published in August 2020 can be found on gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-august-2020>.

These statistics report that employers classified under Passenger air transport and Freight air transport and space transport (Standard Industry Classification 2007, groups 51.1 and 51.2) claimed £283 million for staff on furlough between the start of the scheme and 31 July 2020.

Statistics published on 3 June 2021 report that employers in the Passenger air transport and Freight air transport and space transport sectors claimed £295 million from 1 November 2020 to 30 April 2021. These figures can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-3-june-2021>.

Further statistics published on 16 December 2021 report that employers in the Passenger air transport and Freight air transport and space transport sectors claimed £172 million from 1 May 2021 to 30 September 2021. These figures can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-16-december-2021>.

There are no figures available for the value of CJRS claims for the Passenger air transport and Freight air transport and space sectors from 1 August 2020 to 31 October 2020.

■ Hospitality Industry: VAT

Gavin Robinson:

[\[109255\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to extend the temporary VAT rate of 12.5 per cent for the hospitality sector beyond March 2022.

Lucy Frazer:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July 2020 to support the cash flow and viability of around 150,000 businesses and protect over 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors. As announced at Spring Budget 2021, the Government extended the 5 per cent temporary reduced rate of VAT for the tourism and hospitality sectors until the end of September 2021. On 1 October 2021, a new reduced rate of 12.5 per cent was introduced for these goods and services to help ease affected businesses back to the standard rate. This new rate will end on 31 March 2022.

This relief has cost over £8 billion and, whilst all taxes are kept under review, there are no plans to extend the 12.5 per cent reduced rate of VAT. The Government has been clear that this relief is a temporary measure designed to support the sectors that have been severely affected by COVID-19. It is appropriate that as restrictions are lifted and demand for goods and services in these sectors increases, the temporary tax reliefs are first reduced, and then removed, to rebuild and strengthen the public finances.

■ Inflation

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[109203\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to tackle inflation.

John Glen:

The Government's commitment to price stability remains absolute. Monetary policy is the responsibility of the independent Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Bank of England, which has the primary objective of maintaining price stability. Since the MPC became responsible for controlling inflation it has averaged close to the 2% target.

We understand the pressure that a higher cost of living places on people. The government is working with international partners to tackle global supply chain

disruption and providing support worth around £12 billion this financial year and next to help people with the cost of living. This includes cutting the Universal Credit taper rate to make sure work pays, freezing alcohol and fuel duties to keep costs down, and providing targeted support to help vulnerable households with their energy bills and other essentials.

■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services

Drew Hendry: [\[109274\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he has taken to ensure that the HMRC telephone helpline services provide accurate tax codes for residents of devolved nations where income tax codes are divergent.

Drew Hendry: [\[109275\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with HMRC on ensuring accurate address locations are maintained to ensure tax payers addresses reflect where people live in a devolved Nation with divergent income tax rates.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC staff have access to relevant guidance to produce the right tax codes for people in devolved nations. HMRC also provides a telephone service for people who need help understanding their devolved income tax. This can be accessed by calling the normal telephone number, 0300 200 3300, and then asking for help with Scottish or Welsh income tax.

HMRC determines the residency status of individuals using address data it holds and identifies Scottish and Welsh taxpayers using this data. Special 'S' and 'C' codes are issued to employers based on the residency status identified. Taxpayers can change their address data using their Personal Tax Account and should contact HMRC if they believe their tax code is wrong. Information on how to contact HMRC can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/contact-hmrc>

HMRC regularly checks the accuracy of address data to ensure taxpayers receive the code appropriate to their residency status, and they work with employers to ensure that they are operating the right codes and monitor that this is happening. A full report of HMRC's activities in this area is published each year. The latest versions are here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scottish-income-tax-hmrc-annual-report-2021/scottish-income-tax-hmrc-annual-report-2021>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/welsh-rates-of-income-tax-hmrc-annual-report-2021>

■ Revenue and Customs: Working Hours

Chris Stephens: [\[106763\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 2 December 2021 to Question 81163 on Treasury: Working Hours, whether records required by Regulation 9

of the Working Time Regulations 1998 are kept by HM Revenue and Customs for two years.

Lucy Frazer:

In line with Regulation 9 of the Working Time Regulations 1998, HMRC keep records of staff working hours. Standard weekly working hours and patterns are recorded on the online HMRC HR system and the data, as well as any notification of changes to working hours or patterns, is retained until the staff are age 78. This is in accordance with the HMRC Departmental Retention and Disposal Policy.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Conversion Therapy

Nia Griffith:

[\[109196\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions she has had with the (a) Scottish Government and (b) Northern Ireland Executive to ensure that legislation banning sexual orientation and gender identity conversion therapy will provide the same level of protections for all LGBT+ people in the UK.

Nia Griffith:

[\[109354\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policy on legal consent of the policies of the recently enacted Canadian legislation on sexual orientation and gender identity conversion therapy in Canada.

Mike Freer:

The Government has been liaising with Territorial Offices and the devolved administrations including the Scottish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive on this important issue. It is positive to note that developments in all four parts of the UK are such that there is work underway, at different stages, to end conversion practices often known as conversion therapy.

Officials will continue to work with their counterparts to discuss the UK Government's proposals for England and Wales and share advice and progress on the approach to banning conversion therapy practices. We will share responses to our current public consultation relating to Scotland and Northern Ireland with relevant officials and we look forward to receiving further details of the Scottish Expert Advisory Group's findings once they are developed. We have also provided the Scottish Parliament with written evidence on our plans to ban conversion therapy.

We are engaging with a wide range of international jurisdictions including Canada, France, New Zealand and Malta to understand the approaches they have taken or are developing to ban conversion therapy and to share our own developments too.

■ Disability: Commonhold and Leasehold**Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[106800\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy, published 28 July 2021, when her Department plans to open its consultation on the requirement for landlords to make reasonable adjustments to the common parts of leasehold and commonhold homes.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government intends to publish this consultation as soon as possible.

■ Sexual Harassment: Employment**Jim Shannon:** [\[109229\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to (a) raise awareness of and (b) tackle the matter of sexual harassment of young women in the workplace.

Kemi Badenoch:

Every woman should be able to live without fear of harassment or violence in the workplace as much as anywhere else. In July 2021, as part of our strategy to tackle violence against women and girls, the Government announced a new package of measures which will strengthen protections for those affected by harassment at work.

We will introduce a new duty on employers to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, as well as explicit protections against harassment by third parties. We are also supporting the Equality and Human Rights Commission to develop a statutory Code of Practice on workplace harassment, as well as preparing our own practical guidance for employers on preventing this issue.

In addition, the Government will be shortly launching a communications campaign to raise awareness and challenge behaviours that constitute violence against women and girls, including workplace harassment.

The steps we are taking will not only raise awareness of the nature and prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace, but also motivate employers to prioritise prevention and ultimately improve workplace practices and culture.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Department for Work and Pensions: Diaries****Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[106885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish in full her Ministerial diary for 20 May 2020.

Guy Opperman:

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).

Department for Work and Pensions: Public Appointments**Kevin Brennan:**[\[109193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department seeks references for candidates appointed to public positions which fall under the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Guy Opperman:

Candidates that reach interview stage for public appointments are asked to provide referees which are followed up by the Department.

In line with the Governance Code on Public Appointments, candidates are also asked to declare relevant interests which are discussed at interview stage.

The Advisory Assessment Panel must satisfy itself 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.

Employment: Disability**Dame Angela Eagle:**[\[105373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure equal employment opportunities for disabled people in Wallasey constituency.

Chloe Smith:

In Wallasey's jobcentres, Work Coaches, aided by Disability Employment Advisers, tailor support to claimant's individual needs, taking account of local provision, training, and employment opportunities.

This Government is committed to improving the lives of disabled people and delivering the most ambitious disability reform agenda in a generation. DWP delivers a range of national programmes, as well as initiatives in partnership with the health system, to support disabled people to stay in or move into work. These include the Work and Health Programme, Employment Advisors in Improving Access to Psychological Therapy and Intensive Personalised Employment Support.

Government: Procurement**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[105664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Part One of the National Disability Strategy published 28 July 2021, (a) whether her Department created a Disability Commissioning Taskforce of disabled people's user-led organisations to improve disability organisations' access to government contracts as planned in 2021 and (b) if she will publish a list of members of that taskforce.

Chloe Smith:

The Disability Commissioning Taskforce was approved in January 2021, under the leadership of the VCSE Crown Representative Claire Dove CBE. It will meet for the first time on 26th January.

■ Inflation**Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[109202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on potential steps to protect low income families from inflation.

David Rutley:

Ministers in the Department for Work and Pensions engage regularly with their Ministerial counterparts in other Departments, taking a collective approach to the policies and interventions that can make a difference.

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

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

In addition, Universal Credit recipients in work are now benefitting from a reduction in the Universal Credit taper rate from 63% to 55%, while eligible in-work claimants can also benefit from changes to the Work Allowance. These measures represent, for the lowest paid in society, an effective tax cut of around £2.2b in 2022-23 and are now benefitting almost two million of the lowest paid workers by £1,000 a year on average.

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

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

■ Pensioners: Utilities

Jessica Morden:

[\[106676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, on what date in 2021 her Department notified utility suppliers of those (a) in receipt of the Guarantee Element of Pension Credit and (b) in the core group for the Warm Home Discount.

Guy Opperman:

The warm home discount scheme is the responsibility of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

However, the Department for Work and Pensions operates a data match with relevant energy suppliers to ensure customers in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit (known as the core group) receive an automatic rebate on their energy bill where possible.

The qualifying date to determine warm home discount eligibility for 2021/22 was the 4 July 2021. The department completed this year's exercise by 9 October 2021.

The department also undertakes a further exercise in mid-November, this is to capture any Pension Credit Guarantee Credit claims that may have been backdated.

■ Poverty: Children

Rachael Maskell:

[\[106773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to eradicate child poverty.

David Rutley:

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

With the success of the vaccine rollout and record job vacancies, our focus now is on continuing to support parents 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.

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fund to help them with essentials. The Household Support Fund provides £421 million to help vulnerable people in England with the cost of food, utilities and wider essentials. The Barnett Formula applies in the usual way, with the devolved administrations receiving almost £80 million.

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

■ Universal Credit

Steve McCabe:

[\[109184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment has been made on the impact of taking a partner's income into account for universal credit eligibility, including with regard to disabled claimants.

David Rutley:

No assessment has been made.

Universal Credit is a household benefit. A Universal Credit award is calculated on the basis of the set benefit rate based on individual household circumstances, against any other income the household has available, to ensure fairness of treatment for all claimants. This is a long standing principle of means-tested benefits. Income does not include any Personal Independence Payment the disabled person may be receiving, as it is disregarded in the calculation of Universal Credit.

For Universal Credit claimants with health conditions and disabilities which restrict, wholly or partly, their capability for work, additional financial help is available. Those with limited capability for work (LCW) or limited capability for work related activity (LCWRA) have:

- a work allowance, and
- in couple claims where one is working, access to help with childcare costs.

Claimants who are determined to have LCWRA are entitled to the award of an additional amount of benefit – the LCWRA addition – which is £343.63 per month (2021-22 rates).

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Special Health Authority for Independent Maternity Investigations**

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Sajid Javid):

[\[HCWS560\]](#)

I wish to inform the house of the Government's plans to establish a Special Health Authority under secondary legislation to continue the Maternity Investigation Programme which is currently a function the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch.

Plans to establish the Health Services Safety Investigations Body as a Non-Departmental Public Body are contained in the Health and Care Bill 2021. The Health Services Safety Investigations Body will take forward the work of the current Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch's national programme once fully operational (expected to be April 2023). The scope of the Health Services Safety Investigations Body's investigations in the Bill does not include the current Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch's Maternity Investigations Programme. This is because conducting investigations under 'safe space' is a key element of the new Health Services Safety Investigations Body. The Maternity Investigation Programme investigations do not follow 'safe space' principles.

The Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch became responsible for conducting independent investigations relating to intrapartum stillbirth, early neonatal death, or severe brain injury diagnosed in the first seven days of life and also maternal deaths (approx. 1,000 every year) on 1 April 2018. In 2020-21, the Maternity Investigation Programme completed 1,024 reports and made more than 1,500 safety recommendations to individual NHS trusts addressing a wide array of issues.

The Government considers that independent, standardised, family-centred investigations should continue beyond April 2023 once the new Health Services Safety Investigations Body is established. The new Special Health Authority will:

- provide independent, standardised, and family-focussed investigations of maternity cases that provide families with answers to their questions about why their loved ones died or were seriously injured;
- provide learning to the health system at local, regional and national level via reports for the purpose of improving clinical and safety practices in Trusts to prevent similar incidents and deaths occurring;
- analyse the incoming data from investigations to identify key trends and provide system-wide learning in these areas including identifying where improvements are being made or there is lack of improvement;
- be a system expert in standards for maternity investigations and support Trusts to improve local investigations; and
- collaborate with system partners to escalate safety concerns and share intelligence.

The Special Health Authority will be established for up to five years from 2022-23 to enable maximum learning to be achieved and to equip NHS Trusts with the expertise, resources, and capacity to take on maternity safety incident investigations in the future.

Learning from these investigations is key for meeting the Government's commitment to 'make the NHS the best place in the world to give birth through personalised, high-quality support'; and our National Maternity Safety Ambition to halve the 2010 rates of stillbirths, neonatal and maternal deaths and brain injuries in babies occurring during or soon after birth by 2025.

PRIME MINISTER

■ **Appointments to the UK Delegation to the United Kingdom-European Union Parliamentary Partnership Assembly**

Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):

[\[HCWS559\]](#)

Article 11 of the UK-EU trade and co-operation agreement states: "The European Parliament and the Parliament of the United Kingdom may establish a Parliamentary Partnership Assembly" —consisting of Members of both Parliaments— "as a forum to exchange views on the partnership." In December, the House of Commons and House of Lords endorsed the establishment of the Assembly. Both Houses agreed that the procedures currently applying to the nomination, support and funding of delegations to other treaty-based parliamentary assemblies will apply.

This statement sets out the United Kingdom delegation to the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly. The Government also takes this opportunity to congratulate Roberta Metsola on her election as the new President of the European Parliament.

The UK delegation is:

Full representatives

Stuart Anderson MP

Lord Bach

Simon Baynes MP

Hilary Benn MP (**Vice Chair**)

Andrew Bowie MP

Baroness Crawley

Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP

Lord Gilbert of Panteg

Lord Godson

Sir Robert Goodwill MP

Lord Hannan of Kingsclere

Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town

Sir Oliver Heald MP (**Leader and Co-Chair**)

Sir Mark Hendrick MP

Rupa Huq MP

Darren Jones MP

The Earl of Kinnoull (**Vice Chair**)

Lord Kirkhope of Harrogate

Andrea Leadsom MP

Lord Liddle

Sir Tony Lloyd MP

Baroness Ludford

Baroness Mobarik

David Morris MP

David Mundell MP

Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne

Neil Parish MP

Lord Ricketts

Chris Skidmore MP

Karin Smyth MP

Lord Teverson

Kelly Tolhurst MP

Valerie Vaz MP

Phillipa Whitford MP

Mike Wood MP

Substitutes

Baroness Bull

James Daly MP

Marsha De Cordova MP

Dame Angela Eagle MP

Baroness Foster of Oxtou

Kate Griffiths MP

Luke Hall MP

Sally-Ann Hart MP

Robin Millar MP

Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

Alyn Smith MP

Baroness Suttie

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Help To Claim

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Welfare Delivery (David Rutley):
[[HCWS561](#)]

The Department for Work and Pensions has announced today, on gov.uk, the outcome of the Future Support Offer grant competition. The link to the announcement can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/funding-boost-to-citizens-advice-to-deliver-help-to-claim-universal-credit-support>

Citizens Advice, in partnership with Citizens Advice Scotland, were successful and will deliver independent support from April 2022 following a further £21.3 million investment. The provision will continue to cover England, Scotland and Wales for 12 months, and ensures that free confidential and impartial support is available to help people make a new Universal Credit claim and manage their claim, up to receiving their first correct payment.

The 'Future Support Offer' name, used during the competition to indicate that DWP was looking for future provision, will revert to 'Help to Claim'. The decision to retain the name reflects the fact that 'Help to Claim' is a recognisable brand, both to people who will be using the support and to the staff who will be providing that support.

Since April 2019, 'Help to Claim' has supported over half a million people, with 9 in 10 people rating their overall experience as good or very good and would recommend it to friends and family.

From April 2022, the support will be provided through telephony and digital channels. For those individuals who are unable to access support via these channels, they will be able to go to their local jobcentre, where jobcentre staff will identify the right support to meet their needs. This support is already in place and available to those individuals who choose to seek support from the Department directly in making a claim to Universal Credit.

The Department is committed to providing the best possible support for all our claimants, including the most vulnerable in society, in both making and maintaining their claim.