



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 25 April 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:34 P.M., 25 April 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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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

■ **Advanced Research and Invention Agency: Pay**

Chi Onwurah: [\[155732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what salary offer was made to Dr Peter Highnam to join the Advanced Research and Invention Agency as its CEO.

George Freeman:

Dr Peter Highnam has withdrawn from accepting the CEO role for personal reasons. Once the agency is operational, full remuneration details of ARIA's senior leadership team will be published in the usual way and included in the agency's annual reports and accounts.

■ **Biofuels**

Geraint Davies: [\[150959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many responses were received to the tender process to select a new provider to take over the running of the Government's Biomass Suppliers List with effect from 1 July 2021.

Greg Hands:

The Biomass Suppliers List was publicly tendered from January to February 2021. The Department received 13 expressions of interest and two tenders. Following evaluation, BEIS appointed Woodsure to administer the List for two years.

Geraint Davies: [\[150960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish a biomass strategy 2022.

Greg Hands:

The Government intends to publish the Biomass Strategy later this year.

■ **Carbon Emissions: Health**

Geraint Davies: [\[150968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 10 December 2021 to Question 88605, Carbon Emissions: Health, what policies his Department has implemented in response to the report by the Climate Change Committee's UK Health Expert Advisory Group entitled, Sustainable Health Equity: Achieving a Net Zero UK.

Greg Hands:

The Government considered the Climate Change Committee's advice, alongside a range of relevant evidence, when setting the sixth carbon budget and to inform policy

development. The Government's Net Zero Strategy, published in October last year, sets out the Government's vision to transition to net zero by 2050, including to grasp the health benefits from changes such as better insulated homes, cleaner air and more walking and cycling.

■ Economic and Social Research Council: Public Appointments

Chi Onwurah:

[\[155735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason he vetoed the appointment of Professor Jonathan Michie as a chair of the Economic and Social Research Council.

George Freeman:

The initial recruitment campaign returned a strong field of candidates and several were considered by Ministers. However, none were ultimately deemed suitable. Another campaign will start shortly with a view to attracting a wider range of candidates.

■ Electricity and Natural Gas: Prices

Emily Thornberry:

[\[156412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will summarise the four options being examined by Ofgem to reduce wholesale prices for gas and electricity; and when he expects decisions on the lead options to be announced and implemented.

Greg Hands:

Ofgem, as the independent regulator of the GB gas and electricity markets, continues to examine ways to reduce the impact of the recent unprecedented rise in wholesale gas prices on energy consumers.

■ Electricity: Consumers

Patrick Grady:

[\[156512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the total number of domestic electricity consumers was in the UK in each of the last five years.

Greg Hands:

BEIS publishes statistics on the number of domestic electricity customers in Great Britain and also Northern Ireland. These statistics were last updated on the 31st of March 2022.^[1]^[2] [3]

A summary of the historic number of meter points from these published statistics is provided in table 1. (Figures are only available up to 2020 for Northern Ireland).

Table 1 - Total number of domestic electricity customers 2017 -2021

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
GB	28,217,000	28,439,000	28,663,000	28,831,000	29,082,000
Northern Ireland	886,000	895,000	904,000	907,000	-
Total	29,103,000	29,334,000	29,567,000	29,738,000	N/A

Note: the GB figures are taken from the December total for each year. Also, the total number of customers reported in the above statistics is based on the number of electricity meter points. As a result, these values are higher than from the total number of households in the UK, owing to some household having multiple meters.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/quarterly-domestic-energy-switching-statistics>

[2] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sub-national-electricity-consumption-statistics-in-northern-ireland>

[3] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sub-national-electricity-consumption-statistics-in-northern-ireland>

Patrick Grady:

[156513]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what forecasts his Department has made for the total number of domestic electricity consumers in each of the next five years.

Greg Hands:

BEIS does not publish formal forecasts on future electricity customer numbers. However, as part of the supporting analysis for the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) consultation[1] an estimated profile of future domestic electricity meter points in Great Britain was included.

The Department does not hold an estimate on the number of future domestic electricity customers in Northern Ireland.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/technical-proposals-for-the-energy-bills-support-scheme>

■ Energy Company Obligation: Disability

Jonathan Ashworth:

[156477]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment has been made of the impact of his Department's decision to disqualify some disabled people from support through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme on those who will no longer be eligible once the change comes into place.

Greg Hands:

The current Energy Company Obligation scheme, ECO4, has been designed to focus support on households with the lowest incomes and alleviate fuel poverty. This includes households with disabled people on the lowest incomes. The scheme is designed to improve the energy efficiency of homes, through the installation of insulation or heating measures, rather than provide a specific financial benefit. The scheme is delivered by energy suppliers, and eligibility for the scheme does not guarantee support.

Energy Supply: Disability**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[156475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of support provided by energy suppliers to disabled customers through programmes such as benefit entitlement checks and debt write-off.

Jonathan Ashworth:[\[156476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to encourage energy suppliers to identify and support disabled customers with their energy costs.

Greg Hands:

In the Sustainable Warmth Strategy, the Government outlined how it considers the needs of low-income households when designing fuel poverty policy.

Under the Warm Home Discount scheme, Ofgem reports on the Industry Initiatives supporting vulnerable households through measures including benefit entitlement checks and debt write-off. The 2020-2021 report is available at:

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/warm-home-discount-annual-report-scheme-year-10>.

Ofgem requires energy suppliers to support disabled customers through a Priority Services Register. Their most recent report is available at:

https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-10/Ofgem%20Consumer%20Protection%20Report%20Autumn%202021_Final.pdf.

Energy: Meters**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[150135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of (a) the number of installed smart meters that are not on the national database, (b) the number of individuals being charged for electricity supplies on the basis of smart meters that are not on the national database, (c) the extent of improper billing by electricity suppliers on the basis of smart meters that are not on the national database and (d) what steps he is taking to ensure that all installed smart meters are recorded on the national database.

Greg Hands:

There is no national database for smart electricity or gas meter billing information. Billing is the responsibility of individual energy suppliers. Energy consumption is recorded and securely held by the meter whether smart or traditional. Energy suppliers access this data remotely or via manual meters reads for billing purposes.

Energy: Prices**Apsana Begum:**[\[151287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reasons the energy price cap is higher for those in prepayment meters than default tariffs.

Greg Hands:

Ofgem, as the independent regulator, is responsible for setting the level of the price cap.

Ofgem have set out that the infrastructure that sits behind prepayment meters has higher operating costs than for customers on credit meters paying via direct debit.

Apsana Begum:[\[151288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of the higher price cap for pre-payment meters on (a) low income families and (b) people such as property guardians who are unable to change from a pre-payment meter.

Greg Hands:

Ofgem, as independent regulator, is responsible for setting the level of the price cap.

Protecting consumers, and especially vulnerable consumers, is a top priority of this government. To help people with the costs of energy, the Government has announced a package of support measures, including a £200 rebate for households delivered via their energy bill this autumn. This is in addition to other schemes like the Warm Home Discount which support the most vulnerable and low-income households. In addition, Winter Fuel Payments and Cold Weather Payments are available to those in receipt of qualifying benefits.

Jonathan Ashworth:[\[156473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the extent of disabled people's exposure to higher than average energy costs; and if he will take steps to reflect the potential impact of disabled people's exposure to higher than average energy costs in the eligibility criteria for the Warm Home Discount.

Greg Hands:

The Warm Home Discount reforms will better target automatic rebates to fuel poor households on the lowest incomes, including those with disabilities. The Department's analysis models an increase in the number of recipients who declare they have a long-term illness or disability by 160,000. The proportion of rebates

received by households with a disability or long-term illness will remain higher than the proportion of the fuel poor population or overall population with a disability.

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[156636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the benefits of providing residents who are local to energy and nuclear plants with discounts to their energy bills.

Greg Hands:

It is important that communities can participate in and benefit from the deployment of new low carbon energy technologies in their local areas. As set out in its recent British Energy Security Strategy, the Government is developing onshore wind partnerships in England that will enable supportive communities to host new onshore wind infrastructure and enjoy the benefits of doing so, through developers supporting for example, local energy discounts and new community infrastructure projects.

Renewable and nuclear projects can also bring wider socio-economic benefits to local people and businesses, including increasing local employment, creating regional supply chains and investing in new training facilities in the community.

■ Energy: Standing Charges

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[151306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to equalize energy standing charges between the regions of the UK.

Greg Hands:

The standing charge element of an energy bill reflects the on-going costs that fall on energy suppliers to provide and maintain a live supply regardless of a consumer's usage. One component of these costs relates to distribution. As it costs more to distribute electricity to some regions than others, there are regional variations in standing charges to reflect higher costs to serve.

For millions of households on default and standard variable tariffs the level of standing charge is protected by the energy price cap rate set by Ofgem.

■ Firewood

Geraint Davies:

[\[150954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2022 to Question 98190 on Firewood, what assessment he has made of the reasons for the reduction in domestic wood consumption in 2018 of 67 per cent.

Greg Hands:

Domestic wood consumption was revised in July 2021 to incorporate the results of research undertaken by the Department for the Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (Defra): [link here](#).

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy compared the research findings with the existing methodology for the Digest of UK Energy Statistics and described methodological reasons that contributed to the reduction in estimated domestic wood consumption in an article published in March 2021: [link here](#).

■ House Insurance

Dan Jarvis: [\[155748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether financial support is available to people who require home insurance where their home is built above a coal mine colliery.

Greg Hands:

There is dedicated support available for anyone whose home is damaged through historic coal mining. Utilising the powerful remedies of the Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991, the Coal Authority, one of BEIS Partner Organisations, will assess and carry out repairs to any properties damaged by coal mining subsidence.

■ Industry: Economic Growth

Rachael Maskell: [\[151196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of industry clusters as a means to grow the economy.

Greg Hands:

Accelerating decarbonisation in clusters can unlock the anticipated benefits of emissions reduction, enhancing industrial competitiveness, mobilising private investment, and developing skills and employment across the UK.

The Government has provided opportunities to unlock shared infrastructure to drive the future of the industrial heartlands by providing multi-million funding through the Industrial Decarbonisation Challenge and giving the opportunity for cluster projects to access support under the Government's CCUS programme.

■ Liquefied Petroleum Gas: Scotland

Chris Stephens: [\[155802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he will make an assessment of any factors that may impact LPG supply in Scotland; and if he will take steps to work with all parties to ensure taxi drivers in Scotland have sufficient access to LPG fuel.

Greg Hands:

The supply of LPG remains sufficient to meet demand across the UK. BEIS works closely with industry to monitor the LPG supply position throughout the year and proactively take steps to mitigate any risks that may affect distribution to customers and essential services.

■ Members: Correspondence**Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[155681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department plans to respond to the letter of 25 February 2022 to the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation from the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall.

George Freeman:

I have been in touch with the hon. Member on 20 April 2022 to organise a meeting.

■ Nuclear Power Stations: China**Caroline Lucas:**[\[151043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what information he (a) holds and (b) has requested from (i) EDF, (ii) ONR and (iii) the Chinese authorities on the causes of the closure of Taishan nuclear power plant; and if he will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

The Government continues to engage regularly with representatives from both EDF Energy and the UK's Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) on a wide range of matters relating to nuclear reactors. The Government understands that investigations are still ongoing at Taishan into the root cause of the failed fuel issue. The ONR remains in contact with their international counterparts, including the Chinese and French regulators.

Caroline Lucas:[\[151044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had discussions with (a) EDF, (b) ONR and (c) his Chinese counterpart on (a) reports of potential generic faults in the design of key safety interior components of the first completed prototype EPR reactor pressure vessel at Taishan nuclear power plant and (b) potential implications for the EPR being (i) constructed at Hinkley Point in Somerset and (ii) proposed for Sizewell C in Suffolk; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Lucas:[\[151045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of potential generic faults in the design of key safety interior components of the first completed prototype EPR reactor pressure vessel at Taishan nuclear power plant on the EPR being (i) constructed at Hinkley Point in Somerset and (ii) proposed for Sizewell C in Suffolk; and if he will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

The Government continues to engage regularly with representatives from both EDF Energy and the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) on a wide range of matters relating to nuclear reactors. The Government understands that investigations are still ongoing at Taishan into the root cause of the failed fuel issue. The ONR, the UK's independent nuclear regulator, have reported that Unit 1 of the Taishan plant is not currently operational while the analysis and review of root causes is ongoing. The

ONR remains in contact with their international counterparts, including the Chinese and French regulators. The ONR will ensure that the developer of Hinkley Point C considers and addresses the learning from Taishan. If the ONR judged that any reactor was unsafe, they would not allow it to be built or to operate in the UK.

■ **Power Failures: Rural Areas**

Craig Whittaker: [\[151054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to improve communications on power failures on the low voltage network in the upland and wooded areas of the country with people living in those areas.

Greg Hands:

The Department is leading a review following Storm Arwen in 2021 into electricity network resilience during storm events. This includes identification of improvements to customer communications across Great Britain. Final recommendations will be published by the end of May.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Energy**

Dr Luke Evans: [\[151285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what guidance his Department is providing to private rented tenants wishing to encourage their landlords to apply for Government home energy efficiency schemes to improve the energy efficiency of rented properties.

Greg Hands:

The Government committed in the Clean Growth Strategy to look at a trajectory to improve as many privately rented homes as possible to Energy Performance Band C by 2030, where practical, cost-effective, and affordable.

The £500m Sustainable Warmth Competition, which brings together two fuel poverty schemes; Local Authority Delivery and the Home Upgrade Grant, will deliver energy efficiency upgrades by March 2023 to eligible households living on and off the gas grid. BEIS is working with local authorities across England to promote energy efficient measures to all residents. BEIS encourages interested private tenants to discuss the benefits of the schemes and their eligibility with their landlord before contacting their local authority.

■ **Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme**

Geraint Davies: [\[150969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he has taken to ensure that payments made under the Government's Renewable Heat Incentive scheme are provided to biomass boilers using wood fuel that meet certain (a) sustainability and (b) additional legal requirements.

Greg Hands:

The Renewable Heat Incentive scheme was introduced in 2011. In 2015, the Government introduced new legislation which required all biomass boilers on the scheme to adhere to certain land and sustainability criteria. The Government has also introduced a new fuel quality standard and annual maintenance checks for biomass boilers on the scheme, in line with its 2019 Clean Air Strategy. Both requirements came into force on 01 April 2022.

The scheme is administered by Ofgem who carry out frequent audits to ensure compliance.

Universities: Research**Rachael Maskell:**[\[151197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to utilise university research capability to develop economic clusters.

George Freeman:

BEIS's £40 billion R&D settlement across the Spending Review period, includes funding for university research and for universities to collaborate with business which will be critical to delivering the ambitions of our Innovation Strategy, and will contribute to the development of clusters across the UK, and support economic growth.

The Levelling Up White Paper sets out how we will support the growth of R&D hotspots across the UK by increasing domestic public R&D investment outside the Greater South East by at least one third over the Spending Review period and at least 40 percent by 2030, and piloting new Innovation Accelerators.

The White Paper also announced our new open data tool, co-developed by BEIS and NESTA, which provides high quality and accessible evidence to help develop and grow R&D clusters across the UK.

Warm Home Discount Scheme**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[156474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Government Response to the Warm Home Discount: Better targeted support from 2022 consultation, what the eligibility criteria is for the new Core Group 2 for that Discount.

Greg Hands:

The Warm Home Discount Core Group 2 will focus support to low-income households who are struggling to heat their homes. Eligibility will be linked to receipt of a qualifying means-tested benefit and tax credits and having high energy costs derived from property characteristics. These reforms will ensure that rebates are provided to fuel poor households on the lowest incomes.

The full eligibility criteria, including a list of the qualifying benefits, can be found in the [Government's response](#) to the consultation.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme: Carers

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[150088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to extend the Warm Home Discount scheme to include carers on the lowest incomes.

Greg Hands:

The Government is reforming the Warm Home Discount to better focus support towards households on the lowest incomes who are struggling to heat their homes, as outlined in the [Government Response](#) to the consultation published on 1st April. Eligibility will therefore be linked to receipt of a qualifying means-tested benefit and having high energy costs. Carers on the lowest incomes in receipt of one of the qualifying means-tested benefits and with high energy costs, or in receipt of the Guarantee Credit element of the Pension Credit, would therefore be eligible for a rebate.

■ Wood-burning Stoves: Ecolabelling

Geraint Davies: [\[150961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the availability of eco-label accreditation for producers of wood-burning stoves in the UK.

Greg Hands:

Producers and manufacturers of wood burning stoves in the UK must demonstrate compliance by following the conformity assessment procedures set out in the Ecodesign and Energy Labelling regulations, prior to placing a product on the market. The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is the UK appointed market surveillance authority (MSA) responsible for ensuring manufacturers meet their obligations towards these regulations.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Advertising: Contracts

Kate Osamor: [\[154235\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that independent news publishers have fair and reasonable access to national media advertising contracts, such as the All in, all together campaign, funded by the Government.

Nigel Adams:

The All in, All together campaign is a unique and unprecedented partnership with the newspaper industry. It has been deliberately structured to support smaller regional and local titles by providing an equal amount of funding to that of national titles. As part of this, we have utilised advertising and paid for editorial in over 600 national, regional, local and community titles across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

All of the titles within the partnership have been selected independently by our media planning and buying agency, OmniGOV. Individual titles are selected by OmniGOV based on their ability to communicate with key audiences in a measurable and effective way.

■ Airbus A321: Registration**Emily Thornberry:**[\[155613\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reasons (a) Airbus A321 flight registration G-GBNI was re-painted in UK government livery and (b) Airbus A321 flight registration G-XATW had its UK government livery removed during their respective visits to Southend Airport from 29 March to 3 April and 3 to 12 April; and what costs to the public purse arose from making those changes.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

G-GBNI was painted with the 'Global UK' livery and G-XATW had this livery removed during the visits to Southend Airport as part of a planned exchange of two identical airframes in line with contractual agreements/obligations.

HM Government has only leased one airframe and I can confirm that there was no extra cost to the taxpayer.

■ Cabinet Office: Information Officers**Deidre Brock:**[\[155780\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many communications staff are employed by the Department (a) full time (b) part time and (c) on flexible working arrangements.

Deidre Brock:[\[155782\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many communications staff are employed by the COP26 unit (a) full time, (b) part time and (c) on flexible working arrangements as of 19 April 2022.

Deidre Brock:[\[155787\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many communications staff are employed by the Prime Minister's Department (a) full time, (b) part time and (c) on flexible working arrangements as of 19 April 2022.

Nigel Adams:

The Government Communication Service supports the Government's priorities, improves people's lives and enables the effective delivery and operation of our public services.

The number of GCS staff working in the Cabinet Office, including No10 and the COP26 campaign, is currently 413.18 full time equivalent (FTE). 391 FTE are employed on full-time contracts, with 22.18 FTE employed on part-time contracts. We do not centrally hold details on flexible working arrangements.

■ Cabinet: Public Opinion

Angela Rayner: [\[156487\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department spent on (a) focus groups and (b) polling services in 2021.

Nigel Adams:

We do not record data on these specific expenditure types.

■ Companies: Human Rights

Fabian Hamilton: [\[153758\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 28 March 2022 to Question 143578, whether the updated guidance in the Public Contracts Regulations will explicitly incorporate provisions for UK incorporated companies operating globally, to help ensure adequate protections for citizens of foreign nations, particularly in Latin America.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

The Regulations require contracting authorities to exclude bidders where they have established by verification or are otherwise aware that the bidder has been convicted of certain offences. These include offences related to participation in a criminal organisation, corruption, fraud, terrorist offences, money laundering or terrorist financing, and child labour and other forms of trafficking in human beings. These requirements apply both to convictions in the UK and equivalent convictions overseas. In certain circumstances, civil matters may be relevant to the discretionary exclusion grounds, for example, grave professional misconduct which renders the supplier's integrity questionable.

■ Coronavirus: Health Education

Matt Western: [\[154281\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much has been spent from the public purse on advertisements in local newspapers related to tackling covid-19.

Matt Western: [\[154282\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much has been spent from the public purse on advertisements on commercial radio related to tackling covid-19.

Matt Western: [\[154283\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much has been spent from the public purse on advertisements in the Evening Standard newspaper related to tackling covid-19.

Matt Western: [\[154284\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much has been spent from the public purse on advertisements in The Times newspaper related to tackling covid-19.

Matt Western: [\[154285\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much has been spent from the public purse on advertisements in The Telegraph newspaper related to tackling covid-19.

Matt Western: [\[154286\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much has been spent from the public purse on advertisements in The Guardian newspaper related to tackling covid-19.

Nigel Adams:

The Government developed a strong national campaign to provide information and reassurance to the public. As part of this, we utilised advertising in over 600 national, regional and local titles across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

As with any media planning approach, titles were selected on their ability to engage with audiences at a national, regional and local level. All of these titles have been selected independently by our media planning and buying agency, OmniGOV.

The spend breakdown requested is not held by the Cabinet Office as this information will be held by OmniGov. The Cabinet Office also publishes expenditure, including on public information campaigns, on a rolling monthly basis on GOV.UK as part of routine government transparency arrangements.

■ Government Departments: Local Press

Matt Western: [\[154275\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much has been spent from the public purse on advertisements in local newspapers related to the UK's exit from the European Union in each of the last five years.

Matt Western: [\[154276\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much has been spent from the public purse on advertisements on commercial radio stations related to the UK's exit from the European Union in each of the last five years.

Matt Western: [\[154277\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much has been spent from the public purse on advertisements in the Evening Standard newspaper related to the UK's exit from the European Union in each of the last five years.

Matt Western: [\[154278\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much has been spent from the public purse on advertisements in the Times newspaper related to the UK's exit from the European Union in each of the last five years.

Matt Western: [\[154279\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much has been spent from the public purse on advertisements in The Telegraph newspaper related to the UK's exit from the European Union in each of the last five years.

Matt Western: [\[154280\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much has been spent from the public purse on advertisements in the Guardian newspaper related to the UK's exit from the European Union in each of the last five years.

Nigel Adams:

The Government developed a strong national campaign to provide information and reassurance to the public. As part of this, we utilised advertising in over 600 national, regional and local titles across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

As with any media planning approach, titles were selected on their ability to engage with audiences at a national, regional and local level. All of these titles have been selected independently by our media planning and buying agency, OmniGOV.

The spend breakdown requested is not held by the Cabinet Office as this information will be held by OmniGov. The Cabinet Office also publishes expenditure, including on public information campaigns, on a rolling monthly basis on GOV.UK as part of routine government transparency arrangements.

■ Leadership College for Government

Lisa Nandy: [\[155709\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Leadership College for Government will open; and in which locations that College will be based.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The Leadership College for Government has already been established. A formal launch event will be held in the Summer to mark this step we are taking to reform leadership and management skills.

The Government Campus for Skills has partnered with the College of Policing and the Emergency Planning College to provide physical locations in the Midlands, the North East, and Yorkshire and The Humber for in-person training, bringing civil servants closer to the communities they serve. Over time, the Government Campus for Skills aims to establish more connections across the U.K., having a presence in all 9 regions. The Leadership College for Government will use these facilities, as it is a part of the Government Campus for Skills.

■ Local Broadcasting: Radio

Ben Everitt:

[\[154487\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of using community radio stations as a means of promoting national Government campaigns.

Nigel Adams:

The Government is strongly supportive of the community radio sector and recognises the great value that it offers to communities across the UK. Community radio plays an important role in our cross channel strategy, with the merits of its use being assessed in relation to this.

Government public information campaigns utilise a wide range of channels to maximise reach and engagement and to ensure our messaging reaches as many people as possible. The government has recently worked with over 35 community radio stations on a weekly basis and this includes the use of paid-for advertising on community radio.

■ Public Sector: Conduct

Nigel Mills:

[\[155742\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress his Department has made on the standards in public life workstream under the Open Government Partnership; when he plans to initiate the co-creation process with civil society; and what his target date is for the final commitments.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The UK's fifth National Action Plan was published in January 2022. Owing to the necessary implications of Covid-safe working practices, engagement between government and civil society has taken place exclusively via online platforms. This has enabled the involvement of a greater number of stakeholders from across the UK.

The Government will amend and develop the Plan with civil society over the course of 2022, with a multi-stakeholder forum due to meet in May to reflect on the commitment areas and discuss next steps. A timeline for amendments will then be published.

■ Public Sector: South Yorkshire

Nick Fletcher:

[\[151327\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he could list the (a) national headquarters of government agencies and UK wide or English statutory bodies, (b) other English non-departmental public bodies and (c) central functions of Government departments that are based in South Yorkshire, broken down by (i) location, (ii) employment numbers and (iii) year of establishment.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

Government Agencies, statutory bodies, non-departmental public bodies and central functions of Government departments are located across the United Kingdom, including in South Yorkshire.

The Cabinet Office has published as Open Data on data.gov.uk basic information on the location of Government Departments, agencies, public bodies and functions (<https://data.gov.uk/dataset/3145b9dd-bf34-4cbf-8c40-1f726f9db261/occupation>).

The number of staff employed at each site and year of establishment is not held centrally.

■ Treasury: Disclosure of Information**Emily Thornberry:****[155610]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the cost to the public purse has been as at 19 April 2022 in terms of (a) staff hours and (b) other resources committed to the leak enquiry being conducted into the source of reports of (a) the non-domiciled status of the wife of the Chancellor of the Exchequer published in the media on 6 April 2022, and (b) the Green Card status of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his wife published in the media on 7 April 2022.

Michael Ellis:

It is a long-established practice of Her Majesty's Government not to comment on whether a leak inquiry has been established, its conduct or outcome.

■ United Kingdom Security Vetting: Standards**John Spellar:****[153744]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment has he made of the (a) efficiency and (b) effectiveness of UK Security Vetting.

Michael Ellis:

UK Security Vetting is subject to an agreed set of Key Performance Indicator (KPI) measures which are monitored by the government at ministerial level and by the customers serviced by UKSV.

In relation to the effectiveness of UK Security Vetting, National Security Vetting is conducted and security clearances provided by UK Security Vetting in line with a robust set of Personnel Security Controls and Security Policy Framework as set out by the Cabinet Office and adhered to across government and by industry partners. Work is ongoing within the Government Security Group to improve and modernise the effectiveness of vetting overall, in line with the Government's wider modernisation agenda and to keep pace with the threats faced by the UK today.

COP26**■ Asylum: Rwanda****Layla Moran:**[\[155902\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what assessment he has made of the impact of the Government's proposed transportation of asylum seekers to Rwanda on meeting the UK's COP26 obligations.

Alok Sharma:

The UK remains committed to honouring its obligations on climate change, including those contained in the Glasgow Climate Pact.

The UK continues to work closely with the Government of Rwanda on climate issues, including ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in June. We are also working in our COP Presidency year to help ensure the world stays on course to meet its commitments and maintains ambitious efforts to keep 1.5 degrees within reach.

■ Fossil Fuels: Russia**Rachael Maskell:**[\[150225\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) relevant stakeholders on integrating divestment in Russian supply of oil and gas with COP26 objectives to cut climate degradation.

Alok Sharma:

Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine demonstrates the integral link between climate change, energy security and the vulnerability caused by our dependence on fossil fuels. I have discussed these matters with stakeholders in the UK and around the world, whilst recognising that governments need to deal with their immediate and acute energy needs.

Though the United Kingdom is not heavily reliant on imports of Russian hydrocarbons, the Government has set out steps to bolster UK energy security in the recent British Energy Security Strategy.

Through the policies and targets included within the Strategy, the UK will source much more clean, home-grown power from renewables and nuclear energy, reduce demand for energy by investing in efficiency measures, while ensuring there is a fair and managed transition with respect to oil and gas reserves in the North Sea.

DEFENCE**■ A400M Aircraft and Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft: Finance****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[155594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the planned equipment investments for (a) A400M and (b) F-35b will be delegated to the RAF's TLB.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[155595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether there will be a third tranche purchase of F-35b.

Jeremy Quin:

Funding for a second tranche of F-35 Lightning has been delegated to Air Command as part of our recent annual budget cycle. Funding for Atlas A400M which not yet been delegated. A decision on future tranches of F-35B will be made in due course.

■ **Afghanistan: Refugees**

John Healey: [\[156377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 28 February 2022 to Question 115842 on Afghanistan: Refugees, how many Afghans with confirmed eligibility for relocation to the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy are in Afghanistan as of 1 April 2022.

James Heappey:

As of 25 of April, there are 684 ARAP principals with confirmed eligibility for relocation to the UK who were in Afghanistan at the time of their application. It is not always possible to know whether all eligible personnel are still in the country as some have eligibility for resettlement to other allied countries and/or many have already travelled to a neighbouring country.

■ **Air Force and Army: Teesside International Airport**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[153770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which landing slots are reserved by the (a) Army and (b) RAF at Teesside International Airport.

Jeremy Quin:

Military aircraft visiting Teesside operate on an ad hoc basis, booking with one of the aerodrome handling agents under Prior Permission Required protocols. A range of civilian aerospace companies which provide contracted aviation services to the military are also based at the airport. However, their operation and movements at Teesside are the responsibility of the companies, Civil Aviation Authority and Department for Transport.

■ **Ajax Vehicles**

John Healey: [\[153748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what date his Department expects the Government Furnished Equipment Combat Mk II headset upgrade will be (a) in service with the Army and (b) fully rolled out to all Army personnel.

Jeremy Quin:

To ensure effective protection of our personnel the headset used varies depending on the activity being conducted.

There are currently three headset models in use by the British Army including the Combat Mk II, Crewbrief and Crewgard. The Army has well developed plans for upgrading and procuring headsets. This includes refurbishment of Crewgard headsets and procurement of new dual layer headsets from 2022.

John Healey:

[\[153749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what other responsibilities and duties the SRO for the Armoured Cavalry Programme has outside of the Ajax Programme; and how much of their time each of those duties occupies.

Jeremy Quin:

As referenced in the answer I gave on 22 March 2022 to question 140401 from the Rt Hon. Member for North Durham (Kevan Jones) the current SRO is essential full time on Ajax with his only additional responsibility being acting as the Head of Profession in the Ministry of Defence which estimates accounts for around five percent of his time.

Attachments:

1. Ajax Vehicles [140401 - Ajax Vehicles.docx]

■ Antiship Missiles

Dave Doogan:

[\[155916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total serviceable UK stock is of Harpoon missiles of any mark.

Jeremy Quin:

Disclosure detailing the serviceability and readiness states of Harpoon missiles would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability and effectiveness of the Armed Forces and compromise operational security. I am therefore withholding the information requested.

■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and War Pensions

Owen Thompson:

[\[155830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the debate on War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Payments, on 28 March 2022, Official Report, c 654-74, whether he has taken steps to establish an independent inquiry into the process for War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation payments.

Leo Docherty:

There are no plans for an inquiry into the process for War Pensions or Armed Forces Compensation payments. The existing process remains effective, fit for purpose, and functioning satisfactorily. Where issues are identified, the Ministry of Defence is committed to addressing these and remedial action is taken swiftly to ensure the process remains as efficient, transparent, and empathic as possible.

■ Armed Forces: Offences against Children

Stephanie Peacock: [\[155877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what data his Department collects on the number of Armed Forces personnel with adverse childhood experiences.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not have a definition for what constitutes "adverse childhood experiences". Such a term could refer to circumstances ranging from socioeconomic factors, such as a deprived background, through to serious criminal matters, such as being a victim of child abuse. Although there is no centralised definition, and therefore no central data collection in this area, the MOD would hold some data on certain matters which may be considered adverse childhood experiences. For example, socioeconomic background may be recorded in voluntary diversity declarations, while incidents of childhood abuse may be recorded in confidential medical records or as part of a mental health assessment during recruitment medicals. In-line with our data protection obligations, the MOD requests only the minimum of personal data required for our purposes, both during and after recruitment, which does not routinely include information about any adverse childhood experiences.

■ Armed Forces: Sexual Offences

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[155764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what specialist support his Department provides for men in the Armed Forces who have reported sexual assaults during (a) initiation ceremonies and (b) service careers.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[155765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what independent specialist services are available for victims of sexual assault and abuse from the (a) LGBTQ+ and (b) BAME communities (i) during and (ii) after military service.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is committed to the welfare of its people. The Armed Forces promote equity in Service for all those affected by sexual assault and abuse, and there are multiple forms of support and assistance available, both within and external to Defence, for all our personnel, including men and the LGBTQ+ and BAME communities, both during and post-service.

Whilst in service, available support includes unit welfare officers, the chain of command, and pastoral support via the chaplaincy. Further assistance is also available via the *Aurora* service which provides confidential independent support to any serving member who is experiencing sexual violence, domestic abuse, or stalking. There is also *Togetherall*, an independent digital mental health support tool operated by the NHS in partnership with the MOD, through which Service personnel,

veterans, and their family members can anonymously access tailored self-help courses.

Independent support is also available via the charitable sector. For example, the *Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association* (SSAFA) provides help to all Service personnel and veterans with any mental or emotional health concerns. SSAFA can sign-post individuals to specific organisations for further targeted support. There is also *The Samaritans*, who work with the MOD and other charities to support Serving personnel, veterans, and their families.

For men specifically, examples include *The Male Survivors Partnership* which offers a free counselling service for men, and those supporting them, who have experienced sexual abuse or sexual violence. Also *Survivors UK* provide a helpline, face-to-face counselling, and support groups for men who have been raped or sexually abused. For LGBTQ+ personnel, *Galop*, for instance, operates helplines which facilitate access to caseworker who can design tailored assistance for LGBTQ+ personnel who have experienced abuse and violence. Also *Fighting with Pride* also signposts sources of help for LGBTQ+ veterans and work with a wide range of organisations.

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[155874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if his Department will respond to the recommendations listed in the 2021 Forward Assist Privileged Access Interview Report entitled, *El Hombre Invisible: Male Veterans Share their Lived Experience of Military Sexual Trauma in the British Armed Forces*.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has not reviewed this report, nor has it been approached to formally respond. Defence does not routinely review or respond to third party reports which have not been commissioned by the Department.

The MOD does not recognise the term 'Military Sexual Trauma', although we recognise it is used elsewhere as a means of referring to cases of sexual assault or sexual harassment which occur whilst in service. Defence has been clear that there is no place for this behaviour in the Armed Forces. All allegations will be thoroughly investigated, and appropriate support provided to victims, be they serving or veteran. We recognise the great courage it takes to come forward and report a sexual offence. Personnel who come forward can have full confidence that all allegations are thoroughly investigated; Commanding Officers must always refer any allegation of rape and sexual assault, or any other offence which may have a sexual element, to the Service Police. Anyone found to fall short of the Services' high standards or to have committed an offence is dealt with appropriately, up to and including imprisonment and dismissal from service.

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[155876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of sharing records of convicted perpetrators of military sexual assault with civilian police upon discharge from the Armed Forces.

Leo Docherty:

It is already the case that civilian police forces have access to this information. Any offence for which there has been a conviction will be recorded on the Police National Computer, which is visible to both the Service Police and civilian police forces. Any persons who have been placed on the Violent and Sexual Offences Register (ViSOR) will be visible to both the Service Police and civilian police and will be managed through the civilian police's Offender Management Teams. Work is ongoing to improve the day-to-day data sharing between the civilian police and Service Police.

Stephanie Peacock:[\[155878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the levels of military initiation rituals which humiliate and sexually abuse serving personnel.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) regards any involvement of personnel in any form of initiation ceremony as unacceptable. Humiliating fellow personnel is bullying, while sexual abuse is a criminal offence; both are unacceptable behaviours and neither are tolerated. Allegations concerning initiation ceremonies will be formally investigated and, if substantiated, may result in disciplinary and/or administrative action being taken against those involved. Soliciting or coercing another to undertake any such activity is also unacceptable. Fortunately, the occurrence of such initiations remains rare across all three Services of the Armed Forces, however, even one such event is too many, and the MOD is committed to tackling any unacceptable behaviours present among our Service personnel.

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Repairs and Maintenance**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[155598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish a breakdown of funding from the public purse allocated to the maintenance of the UK's Mastiff fleet since 2015.

Jeremy Quin:

The Mastiff fleet is part of the British Army's COUGAR fleet, comprising of Mastiff, Ridgeback and Wolfhound platforms. Maintenance costs are attributed to the fleet as a whole, meaning we are unable to break out specific Mastiff costs.

■ Army: Costs**John Healey:**[\[155583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 17 November to Question 73729, what recent estimate he has made of the average cost to the British Army of employing an infantry soldier; and what estimate he has made of that cost in 2021-22.

James Heappey:

The average cost (Basic Pay/ Employer National Insurance/ Pension) of an Infantry soldier in the Other Ranks of the British Army is given below:

	FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING
	31 March 2022
Infantry (Other Ranks)	£47,616.50

Source: Defence Statistics (Cost Modelling)

Table Notes:

1. The Average Cost in the table above represents Basic Pay/ Employer National Insurance/ Pension only and does not include other costs such as those associated with recruitment, training, clothing, stock consumption, infrastructure, or medical/dental care.
2. The Basic Pay includes X-Factor payments.
3. The Employer National Insurance would be 0% for some of the populations (I.e., general population under the age of 21 and apprentices under the age of 25).
4. The Average Cost was determined using the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) payroll data. Payment records for 12 months were averaged (mean) for each Infantry soldier to create a monthly estimate of their cost. That monthly estimate was then averaged (mean) across the whole of the Infantry and the result was multiplied by 12 to create the Average (annual) Cost.
5. The Financial Year for statistical purposes runs from 1 April to 31 March.

The information for financial year ending 31 March 2021 can be found in the response to PQ73729 at the following link: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-12/73729>

■ **Army: Housing**

John Healey:

[\[155585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total accommodation cost to the Army for infantry personnel was in each year since 2010.

Jeremy Quin:

The Department is unable to provide this information, as we do not record or hold the detail by trade.

■ **Army: Recruitment**

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[153784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether it is still his policy to reduce the Army to 73,000 trained regulars as set out in his policy paper, Future Soldier: Transforming the British Army, published in November 2021.

James Heappey:

There are currently no plans to reverse the decision to reduce the number of regular Army personnel.

The Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper made clear that we must focus on Defence capability rather than troop numbers in response to changing threats and priorities. The British Army will be a whole force of over 100,000 Regulars and Reservists which will be able to respond faster and more effectively, matched to both current and future threats.

■ **Army: Training****John Healey:**[\[155584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the full cost of training a regular army recruit undertaking phase one basic training, including (a) staff, (b) accommodation and (c) logistics costs; and how long that training takes.

Leo Docherty:

The Basic Training course at the Army Training Centre (Pirbright) is 14 weeks. This is the shortest basic training course for Regular soldiers, and recruits go on from Pirbright to train in their trade for longer periods which vary depending on their selected job role.

The average cost of basic training for a soldier successfully passing the Army Training Centre (Pirbright) is estimated at approximately £33,800. This can be broken down as follows:

COST CATEGORY	£THOUSAND/TRAINEE	NOTE
Clothing	2.0	
Ammunition	0.4	
Trainee Pay	10.5	
Other stock consumption	0.8	Includes ration packs and respirators
Workforce	11.9	Direct and indirect Workforce costs for both military and civilian staff
Infrastructure	6.7	Accommodation and training facilities
Administration Overhead	1.6	
Total	33.8	

Note : These are the latest available costings and are based on data for the financial year 2020/21

■ **Artillery: Armoured Fighting Vehicles**

Jack Lopresti: [\[155693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Mobile Fires Platform programme is planned to focus on certain types of armoured vehicles.

Jeremy Quin:

Work is ongoing to evaluate potential vehicle types against the requirements for Mobile Fires Platform (MFP) as they mature.

■ **Artillery: Procurement**

Jack Lopresti: [\[155692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress has been made on the Mobile Fires Platform programme; and when the procurement process is planned to commence.

Jeremy Quin:

Work continues to refine the requirements for Mobile Fires Platform and evaluate potential procurement routes.

■ **AWE: Contracts**

Deidre Brock: [\[154064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has paid to AWE Management Ltd under the Atomic Weapons Establishment management and operation contract in each year since 2000.

Jeremy Quin:

The following table shows the costs of AWE ML under the Management and Operations contract for each financial year since 2000-01, at outturn prices.

FINANCIAL YEAR	£ MILLION
2000-01	275
2001-02	264
2002-03	258
2003-04	286
2004-05	354
2005-06	493
2006-07	687

FINANCIAL YEAR	£ MILLION
2007-08	894
2008-09	800
2009-10	870
2010-11	944
2011-12	941
2012-13	830
2013-14	901
2014-15	921
2015-16	887
2016-17	815
2017-18	867
2018-19	901
2019-20	994
2020-21	984
2021-22	266*

*On 1 July 2021 the contract between AWE ML and MOD ended as AWE ML reverted to direct Government ownership, becoming a Non-Departmental Public Body wholly owned by the MOD.

■ Defence Business Services: Blackpool

John Healey:

[\[153750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 5 April 2022 to Question 148053, on Defence Business Services: Blackpool, which other sites were considered; and if he will define and explain the process of down selection in that case.

Jeremy Quin:

The down selection to a recommended option went through a two-stage process, with four headline options: Option 1 - Do minimum (Benchmark Option), staff remaining in their current locations with Cheadle Hulme staff relocated locally to alternative privately leased accommodation; Option 2 - Consolidate at Manchester; Option 3 - Consolidate at Liverpool; Option 4 - Consolidate at Blackpool.

At the end of Stage One in May 2021 the Manchester options were discounted as the most expensive and not demonstrating value for money.

Blackpool was down selected as the preferred option at the end of Stage Two in September 2021, by comparing the qualitative benefits and through life costs of potential sites based on several factors, including lease and set up costs, ease of transition, and compliance against the Statement of Requirement.

John Healey:

[\[153751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 5 April 2022 to Question 148050, on Defence Business Services: Blackpool, whether the business case has been put before the Ministry of Defence Investment Approvals Committee; and on what date the last meeting of that Committee took place.

Jeremy Quin:

Following the downselection of Blackpool, a full Business Case is now being finalised. It is expected to be submitted for consideration by the Ministry of Defence Investment Approvals Committee by the end of May 2022.

■ **Defence Equipment: Finance**

John Healey:

[\[156381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 9 of the NAO's Equipment Plan 2021 to 2031, what plans his Department has to achieve £7 billion in planned cost reductions over the next 10 years.

Jeremy Quin:

As outlined in the recent Equipment Plan 2021, the Department's top level budget holders (TLBs) have planned £7 billion of cost reductions over ten years. This total includes some of the savings decisions taken in the Integrated Review to delete or descope large programmes for which there are clear plans but which were not yet finalised at April 2021. Informed by the priorities of the Integrated Review the Department has also agreed proposals with TLBs to reduce costs in areas of spending consisting of many smaller projects, which make up a substantial portion of the equipment plan, and further savings. Based on previous experience, the Department judges the scale of savings as achievable, and are now developing more detailed plans to build confidence in delivery.

■ **Kenya: Military Aid**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[155923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the relationship between the British Army Training Unit Kenya and the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in Kenya is.

James Heapey:

The British Army have never trained on the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.

■ Leidos: Contracts

Deidre Brock:

[\[154057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has paid to Leidos for the operation of the Logistics, Commodities and Services Transformation Programme in each year since 2015.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 27 April 2021 to Question 185922.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-22/185922>

Updated figures are shown below which indicate payments the Ministry of Defence has made to Leidos to operate the Logistics, Commodities and Services Transformation programme from 2020-21 to 2022-23 to date.

YEAR	£MILLION (EX-VAT)
2020-21	355
2021-22	416
2022-23	16

The cost for 2021-22 has yet to be finalised and fully paid. The figure for 2022-23 covers the period 1 April 2022 to 19 April 2022.

Attachments:

1. Leidos Contracts [185922 - Leidos Contracts.docx]

■ Maritime Patrol Aircraft

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[155597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the UK's sovereign defence capability in relation to Maritime Patrol Aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

The RAF's fleet of Poseidon aircraft is now meeting the UK's Maritime Patrol Aircraft requirements. I refer the Rt hon. Gentleman to the Answer provided to him by the then Minister for Defence Procurement (Harriett Baldwin) on 14 March 2017, to question 67302.

Attachments:

1. 67302 - Maritime Patrol Aircraft [67302 - Maritime Patrol Aircraft.docx]

■ Military Aircraft

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[155596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of (a) the UK's defence sovereign capability and (b) European defence sovereign capability in relation to rotary aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

The Defence Security and Industrial Strategy (DSIS) articulates the value Ministry of Defence (MOD) places on the operational independence of our rotary wing fleet alongside integration with allies. This includes the requirement to retain, in the UK, the know-how to support and upgrade our fleets to respond quickly to changing threats and operational needs. MOD continues to work with allies and industrial partners to explore future requirements, including the potential for co-development. The UK is taking a lead in NATO on the Next Generation Rotorcraft Capability (NGRC) Project.

■ Military Bases

Stephen Morgan:

[\[151258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made for the implications of his policies of the National Audit Office, Optimising the defence estate, published in June 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

The Department has carefully considered the four main recommendations from the National Audit Office Report and has already implemented a number of measures to enhance delivery of our estate optimisation plans, including: a re-baselining of the disposals schedule; a review of the Defence Estates Optimisation Portfolio governance model; plans to adopt a new Delivery, Commercial & Procurement Strategy; and improved data collection.

■ Ministry of Defence: Buildings

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[155593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the £500 million allocated to preventative maintenance for the Defence Estate in preventing further deterioration.

Jeremy Quin:

As part of Defence's settlement, an additional £500 million will be invested over the course of the Spending Review Years to supplement existing investment plans. This additional investment has been assessed as deliverable and enables the Department to make quicker progress to address key estate risks, improve the condition of our most important assets and provide the first step to a more sustainable estate, including moving towards a preventative maintenance regime.

This combined with Top Level Budget investment plans, renewal of contracts, modernising the estate via the Defence Estate Optimisation Portfolio and the ambition set out within the recently published Strategy for Defence Infrastructure, demonstrates the commitment to redress the long-term challenges inherent in our estate.

■ Ministry of Defence: Capita

Mr Mark Francois:

[153787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will provide details of all contracts which his Department holds with Capita, broken down by (a) value, (b) commencement date and (c) estimated completion date.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) currently has 67 contracts with Capita plc and its subsidiaries which have future end dates. The attached table contains the requested information.

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

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

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

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

Attachments:

1. 153787 - Open Capita Contracts [Open Capita Contracts.docx]

■ Ministry of Defence: Civil Servants

John Healey:

[155586]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many civil servants in his Department work on (a) press, media relations and communications, (b) policy, (c) social media engagement and (d) strategy.

Leo Docherty:

The Directorate of Defence Communications (DDC) in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) Head Office currently has 62 civil servants employed in media relations and communications roles. These roles include, for example, news, campaigns, strategy and planning, digital, and internal communications. Information for the rest of the Department, and for the specific categories in this question, is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Ministry of Defence: Staff**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[153789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many senior personnel in his Department have applied for clearance from the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments for positions with Capita in each of the last ten years.

Jeremy Quin:

The Department is aware of nine senior personnel having applied for such clearance to join Capita across the last ten years.

■ NATO**Alex Norris:** [\[154319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing a centre for democratic resilience within NATO HQ; and if he will make a statement.

James Heapey:

NATO is a values based Alliance and should play an important role in promoting the rules based international order and defending its values. This is already reflected in the NATO 2030 agenda and will be in the next NATO Strategic Concept. It will be important to understand how such a centre would add value to existing initiatives in NATO and other fora which perform similar functions, such as the centres of excellence on hybrid and strategic communications.

■ Nuclear Weapons**Kirsten Oswald:** [\[156494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what data his Department holds on whether the special weapons referred to in the US's 2023 Defense Budget request for infrastructure investment at a storage site in the UK will be B61-12 nuclear bombs.

James Heapey:

The Ministry of Defence is unable to comment on US spending decisions and capabilities, which are a matter for the US Government.

■ Radioactive Materials: Safety**Deidre Brock:** [\[154063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many safety improvement notices have been issued by the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator in each year since 2010.

Jeremy Quin:

The table below provides the number of Improvement Notices issued by the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator since 2010.

2010	2
2011	-
2012	-
2013	-
2014	-
2015	-
2016	2
2017	1
2018	2
2019	2
2020	1
2021	1
2022	-

■ RAF Lakenheath: Nuclear Weapons

Caroline Lucas: [\[156418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the underground storage vaults at RAF Lakenheath are being upgraded (a) generally and (b) specifically to allow the storage of B61-12 nuclear bombs; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

The MOD is unable to comment on US spending decisions and capabilities, which are a matter for the US Government. It remains longstanding UK and NATO policy to neither confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons at a given location.

■ Ukraine: Armed Conflict

John Healey: [\[155582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has been placed on war footing in response to the invasion of Ukraine; and whether his Department is on war footing as of 19 April 2022.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence reprioritised personnel to fulfil the additional policy, planning and delivery capability required to deliver Defence's response to the heightened level of alert on Ukraine. This enhanced staffing remains in place. We will continue to assess these requirements in response to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

■ Ukraine: Challenger Tanks

Dave Doogan:

[\[155917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has (a) undertaken or (b) plans to undertake an urgent assessment of the Challenger 3 upgrade programme in the context of the role played by heavy armour in recent months in Ukraine.

Jeremy Quin:

The Department constantly reviews threats and threat innovations from ongoing conflicts to ensure our strategic approach remains threat-led. Any findings are cascaded through the appropriate channels to ensure our procurement activity remains relevant.

■ Ukraine: Military Aid

Carla Lockhart:

[\[154515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his oral statement to the House of 9 March 2022 on Ukraine, whether the Government has successfully delivered the consignment of anti-tank Javelin missiles to Ukraine; and how many of those missiles it will supply.

James Heapey:

I can confirm that 218 anti-tank Javelin missiles, have been successfully delivered to Ukraine. The Prime Minister announced, on 8 April 2022, that a further consignment of Javelin missiles will be delivered in due course.

Dave Doogan:

[\[155918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what (a) strategic framework or (b) other protocol his Department has developed for the comprehensive replenishment of arms and material stocks following the Government's provision of support to Ukraine; and what his Department's timeframe for that replenishment is.

Jeremy Quin:

Defence keeps weapons stockpile levels and requirements under constant review. These considerations have also informed the numbers of munitions granted in kind to the armed forces of Ukraine.

Delivery schedules for platforms and weapons are under continual review and subject to adjustment in accordance with evolving Defence requirements. We are unable to release any details of current holdings or stockpile requirements for any types of munition for reasons of safeguarding operational security.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Emily Thornberry:

[\[156413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Prime Minister's speech on action to tackle illegal migration on 14 April 2022, how many existing Royal Navy vessels will be re-deployed primarily to undertake patrol duties in the Channel throughout the rest

of 2022-23; which vessels will be re-deployed for that task; and where those vessels will be re-deployed from.

James Heapey:

Assets made available for the task are up to one Offshore Patrol Vessel, six P2000s, three rigid-hull inflatable boats and one Wildcat helicopter. They are available for operations dependent on crossing numbers and, if required, will be deployed on a priority basis from existing tasks in UK waters, such as escorting foreign vessels, maritime security patrols and training.

The Wildcat helicopter is from Royal Navy Air Station Yeovilton and the naval vessels are based at Her Majesty's Naval Base Portsmouth (with the six P2000s currently deployed to the Dover area from their base ports around the UK).

■ **Veterans UK: Complaints**

Owen Thompson:

[\[156546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many complaints have been submitted to Veterans UK in each of the last five years (a) in total and (b) per 100,000 veterans residing in the UK.

Leo Docherty:

The total number of formal complaints submitted to the Customer Resolution Team (CRT) is detailed in the below table:

FINANCIAL YEAR	NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS
2017-18	347
2018-19	332
2019-20	341
2020-21	174
2021-22	201

The total number of veterans residing in the UK is not held as veterans are not tracked once they leave Service. However, it is worth noting that as at 31 March 2021 there were 101,960 War Pensions in payment and 3,975 Guaranteed Income Payments (GIPs) under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS).

Owen Thompson:

[\[156547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of complaints submitted to Veterans UK have been transferred to the Customer Relations Team in each of the last five years.

Leo Docherty:

The total number of formal complaints submitted to Veterans UK for the last five financial years (1 April to 31 March) is detailed in the below table:

FINANCIAL YEAR	NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS
2017-18	347
2018-19	332
2019-20	341
2020-21	174
2021-22	201

All formal complaints made to Veterans UK are passed to the Customer Resolution Team to investigate and respond accordingly. Any informal complaints made and resolved immediately by case managers are not recorded.

Owen Thompson:**[156548]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the number of complaints submitted to Veterans UK in each of the last five years, by reason for or topic of complaint.

Leo Docherty:

Although there are no plans to publish the number of complaints made to Veterans UK, the results of the customer satisfaction survey was recently published at; <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/dbs-veterans-customer-satisfaction-results-2021>.

Veterans UK is working hard to improve the quality of its service. Oversight of its performance is maintained through internal governance and customer satisfaction is measured through engagement with external organisations.

Owen Thompson:**[156549]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many complaints submitted to Veterans UK have been transferred to the (a) Head and (b) Assistant Head of Veterans UK in each year in the last five years.

Leo Docherty:

The total number of complaints submitted to Veterans UK Customer Resolution Team (CRT) for each financial year is detailed in the table below:

FINANCIAL YEAR	NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS
2017-18	347
2018-19	332

FINANCIAL YEAR	NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS
2019-20	341
2020-21	174
2021-22	201

For the financial year 2021-22, a total of 201 complaints were received by the CRT.

119 were resolved at the first stage of the complaint resolution process.

42 were resolved at the second stage by the Head of CRT (previously known as an Assistant Head of Veterans UK).

40 were escalated to the Head of Veterans UK.

A breakdown of data prior to 2021 is not held.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Channel Four Television and Netflix: Streaming

Chris Elmore:

[\[157485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of Netflix's loss of 200,000 subscribers and more than 35 per cent fall in market value in the first quarter of 2022 compared with Channel 4's streaming growth of 23 per cent in 2021.

Julia Lopez:

Netflix's first quarter results for 2022 saw overall subscriber numbers decline for the first time in many years. The company put this down to a number of factors including increased competition from new streaming services.

These results highlight the ever more competitive environment that even well-funded global players face.

Though Channel 4 has been reporting strong digital growth, its current ownership and operating model constrain its ability to respond to these market dynamics. The Government believes that having greater access to capital under private ownership and the ability to produce and sell its own content will give Channel 4 the best range of tools to succeed for decades to come.

The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has consulted with Cabinet colleagues on their decision to pursue a change of Channel 4's ownership model. The Government will set out the future plan for Channel 4 in a White Paper shortly.

■ Channel Four Television: Privatisation

Steve McCabe: [\[153724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps ensure that Channel 4 will commit to implementing programmes similar to the 4Skills scheme once that station has been privatised.

Steve McCabe: [\[153725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the privatisation of Channel 4 on his policies on levelling up in the context of that station's employment scheme for disadvantaged people living outside London and the relocation of its headquarters to Leeds.

Julia Lopez:

The Government values Channel 4's work in developing skills and talent pipelines, particularly in the nations and regions, through schemes like 4Skills. The Government would expect any new owner to have a business interest in continuing to support the development of talent and skills across the UK creative industries.

The Government will set out the future plan for Channel 4 in a White Paper shortly.

Steve McCabe: [\[153728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the ability of Channel 4 to compete with Netflix and Amazon following the privatisation of that station.

Julia Lopez:

The arrival in the UK of global media and streaming groups means that Channel 4, as with other public service broadcasters (PSBs), faces growing competition for audiences, programmes and talent from new global groups with greater spending power. Netflix, for example, spent £779m on UK original productions in 2020, over two times more than Channel 4.

Channel 4 and these global streamers are necessarily different, but the markets Channel 4 operates within have been radically changed by the arrival of such competitors, and Channel 4 will need different tools to succeed in the future.

Under its current ownership model, Channel 4 has limited ability to borrow money or raise private sector capital by issuing shares. The current setup also effectively stops Channel 4 from making its own content. This means Channel 4 is heavily reliant on advertising revenues which are cyclical and also moving to digital platforms - linear TV ad revenues fell 31% from 2015 to 2020.

Private ownership could allow Channel 4 to diversify its revenue through greater access to capital and an ability to make and own content. This would drive investment at greater pace into content and technology, allowing it to compete more effectively with the likes of Netflix and Amazon without losing what makes Channel 4 so distinctive. The required investment to do this at scale and pace is best provided

under private ownership, rather than leaving taxpayers exposed to the associated risk under public ownership.

The Government will set out the future of Channel 4 in a White Paper shortly.

Ruth Jones: [\[154378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with the Welsh government on proposals to privatise Channel 4.

Julia Lopez:

The Government consulted extensively on a change of ownership of Channel 4, and the views and evidence gathered from a wide range of stakeholders – including from stakeholders in Wales – has informed the government’s assessment and wider policy-making.

Following this consultation, the Secretary of State has come to a decision that, although Channel 4 as a business is currently performing well, public ownership is holding it back in the face of a rapidly-changing and competitive media landscape. The Secretary of State has consulted with Cabinet colleagues on that decision.

The Government will set out its plan for Channel 4 in a White Paper shortly. The Government will also publish a rationale for its decision regarding Channel 4’s ownership model.

■ **Chelsea Football Club: Sales**

Layla Moran: [\[155905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government has had any involvement in the proposed sale of Chelsea Football Club.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government has been clear that it would like to see the club sold to an appropriate new owner before the end of the season. The process for any bid continues to be run by the club, and it will be for them to decide the precise terms of a proposed sale.

At the point the club has a preferred bidder we would expect them to apply for a licence to enable the sale. The Government will consider the merits of this licence application on its own terms, noting that we can only impose conditions on a licence which authorises the sale of the club if they are linked to the sanctions policy.

■ **Creative Wales: Unboxed**

Hywel Williams: [\[150102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish a break down of expenditure by Creative Wales on each commissioned event taking place in Wales including (a) GALWAD, (b) About Us, (c) Green Space, Dark Skies, (d) StoryTrails and (e) Dreamachine, as part of the Unboxed festival.

Nigel Huddleston:

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK is delivered at arm's length from the government by a subsidiary of the Organising Committee of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, alongside a strategic delivery body appointed by each of the devolved administrations. Creative Wales, the delivery body acting on behalf of the Welsh Government, is responsible for commissioning GALWAD, Wales's lead UNBOXED project.

As well as GALWAD, four more UNBOXED projects will present work in Wales: About Us, Green Space Dark Skies, StoryTrails and Dreamachine. These have been funded by the UK Government. Creative Wales is providing general advice and support to those projects in Wales. The individual commission values for the projects funded by HM Government have not been published at this time, but will be released in due course. The first UNBOXED project, About Us, visited Caernarfon earlier this month, where it was seen by around 16,000 people.

■ Cybersecurity: Education**Chris Elmore:**[\[155867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking with the Department for Education to promote early years cyber security education.

Julia Lopez:

DCMS works closely with the Department for Education and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) to ensure that children across the UK can freely access cyber security learning and resources. This includes the 'CyberSprinters' online game for 7-11 year olds, developed by NCSC, and 'Cyber Explorers', our recently launched online learning platform for 11 -14 year olds. Cyber Explorers supports teachers by complementing the school curriculum whilst widening the diversity of pupils who may be open to considering a future career in cyber security. We are not currently offering cyber security education to children under 7 years of age though online safety is taught to pupils from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4 (age 5 – 16) as part of the computing curriculum. The curriculum covers the principles of e-safety with progression in content to reflect the different and escalating risks that young people face in life. The e-safety content focuses on the underpinning knowledge and behaviours that can help pupils to navigate the online world safely and confidently, regardless of device, platform or app.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Aviation**Sarah Olney:**[\[154260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to Greening Government Commitments Annual Report, April 2019 to March 2020, published in October 2021 by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reason there was an increase in the number of domestic flights taken by her Department

between 2009-10 and 2019-20; and if she will provide a breakdown by (a) origin and (b) destination of those flights in 2019-20.

Julia Lopez:

The increase in domestic flights taken by DCMS officials in 2019/20 compared to 2009/10 can be explained by the following:

- The department is less London centric, increasing its presence across the UK.
- The department has increased in size from 454 FTE in 2009/10 to 1,304 FTE in 2019/20, a 187% increase. The increase in FTE is contributed to by the increased remit of the department, specifically within digital and international policy.

A total of 246 domestic flights were taken by DCMS officials between April 2019 and March 2020, to attend external meetings and conferences.

A breakdown of the flight data, detailing the origin and destination of flights taken in 2019/20 can be found in the attached PDF.

Attachments:

1. A breakdown of the flight data. [WPQ 154260 breakdown of the flight data.pdf]

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Information Officers**

Deidre Brock:

[\[155789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many communications staff are employed by her Department (a) full time, (b) part time and (c) on flexible working arrangements as of 19 April 2022.

Julia Lopez:

The number of staff working in the DCMS central Communications team to deliver the communications function is currently 44 (41.63 FTE). 36 are employed on full time contracts, 8 are employed on part time contracts. DCMS has a flexible working policy, which is available to all staff.

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Public Expenditure**

Liam Byrne:

[\[153765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2022 to Question 131081 on Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Public Expenditure, if she will specify the funding associated with each programme in each of the next three years.

Julia Lopez:

The programmes provided within the Answer of 7 March 2022 that are managed by DCMS from which some funds are provided to local government and local spending bodies are set out below. Profiles are liable to change during the Main Estimates and Supplementary Estimates processes.

- 5G Testbeds and Trials Programme “Urban Connected Communities Project”

Trials new 5G services and applications to individuals and businesses. This project has now finished.

- 5G Testbeds and Trials Programme “5G Create” scheme

Aims to explore and develop new use-cases and 5G technical capabilities. The total funding provided for the 5GTT programme is £6m in 2022-23 only.

- Building Digital UK Superfast

Aims to ensure that delivery of superfast broadband can reach a number of under-served local areas. The total funding provided for this programme is £7m in 2022-23, £5m in 2023-24 and £7m in 2024-25.

- Cultural Investment Fund

Invests in cultural infrastructure, local museums and neighbourhood libraries to benefit communities across the country. The total funding provided for this programme is up to £150m over 2022-23 - 2024-25.

- Life Chances Fund

Provides top-up funding contributions to Social Impact Bond projects through outcomes-based contracts. These contracts involve social investors and are locally commissioned. The total fund is £70m and will be paid as outcomes are achieved over the Spending Review period.

- Local Digital Skills Partnerships Catalyst Fund

Brings government together with national and local businesses and charities to address the digital skills gap in a collaborative way. The total fund over the lifespan of Local Digital Skills Partnerships programme (Catalyst Fund) is £1.3m.

- Local Full Fibre Networks

Aims to stimulate investment, create UK digital leadership, and drive productivity and growth in UK digital products and services. This programme is now finished and no funding is provided in this Spending Review period.

- Rural Connected Communities competition

Funds 5G research and development projects. The total funding provided for the 5GTT programme is £6m in 2022-23 only.

- UK City of Culture

The UK City of Culture competition is a key part of DCMS’s broader offer to level up opportunity across the UK. It invites places across the UK to set out their vision for culture-led regeneration and takes place every four years. Funding of £1.615m in 2022-23 and £1m in 2023-24 will be provided to the Coventry City of Culture Trust (the organising body for the current titleholder).

- Youth Investment Fund

Aims to create, expand and improve local youth facilities and their services, in order to drive positive outcomes for young people. The £368m investment over 22/23 -

24/25 will be targeted at those localities with most need in accordance with levelling up principles. Local authorities will be able to bid into this fund as will civil society youth service providers.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Public Opinion

Angela Rayner: [\[156485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much her Department spent on (a) focus groups and (b) polling services in 2021.

Julia Lopez:

The Department spent £51,455 (excluding VAT) on distinct focus groups commissioned to an external Supplier in 2021. More broadly, the Department spent £403,688.37 (excluding VAT) on research and evaluation services, which encompassed the use of focus groups and polling services to some degree, in 2021.

■ Gambling

Carolyn Harris: [\[154185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will introduce an affordability system for gambling, incorporating assessments of average bets and average levels of disposable income, to prevent extreme financial losses and avoidable harm.

Chris Philp:

The Government and Gambling Commission recognise the benefits of considering a customer's financial circumstances as part of an assessment of whether their levels and patterns of spend are likely to be harmful, and also that any such checks need to be proportionate. The Gambling Commission's consultation and call for evidence on Remote Customer Interaction (including on issues to do with affordability) received over 13,000 responses and the Commission published an [interim update](#) on its website outlining next steps. We will continue to work closely with the Commission on this issue in the run up to publishing our white paper on our Review of the Gambling Act 2005.

■ Gamstop

Carolyn Harris: [\[154186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when the results of the GAMSTOP single customer view trial will be made publicly available.

Carolyn Harris: [\[154187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the results of the GAMSTOP single customer view trial will be independently assessed.

Chris Philp:

In October 2019, the Gambling Commission called on the industry to work together to develop a single customer view which could support interventions across multiple

operators to prevent harmful gambling. Operators have appointed GAMSTOP, which operates the national online self-exclusion scheme, as the technical provider for a pilot scheme which is currently progressing within the Information Commissioner's Office sandbox process. This means the industry's technical solution can be closely scrutinised by both the ICO and the Gambling Commission. The Commission's most recent update can be found [here](#) and the ICO's most recent update can be found [here](#). Results from the trials will be released in due course, and we will work closely with both organisations to consider next steps.

■ Historic Buildings: Ukraine

Ruth Jones:

[\[154540\]](#)

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 risk of damage to historic wooden churches near conflict zones in Ukraine, including those moved to the National Museum of Folk Architecture and Life of Ukraine in Pyrohiv on the southern outskirts of Kyiv.

Nigel Huddleston:

The UK is working with UNESCO, Blue Shield International, the British Council, and other partners to monitor whether Russia is meeting its obligations under the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. This requires Russia to avoid damaging significant heritage sites, monuments, or other cultural property in Ukraine, including historic wooden churches.

Through the Cultural Protection Fund – a partnership between DCMS and the British Council – Her Majesty's Government is also directly supporting the Cultural Emergency Response for Ukraine, an international effort co-ordinated by the Prince Claus Fund working directly with affected cultural heritage organisations and individuals on the ground in Ukraine to monitor the risks, document damage, and share information on threats to Ukrainian cultural heritage.

■ Holiday Accommodation

Rachael Maskell:

[\[156520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make it her policy to enable local authorities to cap the number of short-term holiday lets in a given area as part of any registration scheme for short-term holiday lets.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Tourism Recovery Plan, published in June 2021, included a commitment to consult on a Tourism Accommodation Registration Scheme in England.

Ahead of this, however, the government intends to launch a call for evidence that will seek views on a range of issues that arise from the increase in short term and holiday letting.

First, I want to gather information that will improve the government's understanding of the benefits and challenges of the increase in short-term and holiday letting we have seen in England in recent years. Second, I want to gather initial views on what would

and would not constitute a proportionate response to addressing some of the challenges.

This evidence will help us determine whether there are options the government should pursue through a consultation.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[156521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) the scheme operating in Nice and (b) other French schemes for regulating the short term holiday let market as part of an assessment of the effectiveness of models to curb an excess of short-term holiday lets.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Tourism Recovery Plan, published in June 2021, included a commitment to consult on a Tourism Accommodation Registration Scheme in England.

Ahead of this, however, the government intends to launch a call for evidence that will seek views on a range of issues that arise from the increase in short term and holiday letting.

The call for evidence will include a summary of approaches taken in other cities and countries globally, as some other countries have implemented measures in response to increases in short-term and holiday letting.

■ Semiconductor Devices

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[155718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that UK access to semiconductors is not hindered by lack of domestic production.

Chris Philp:

The Government recognises the importance of semiconductor technology to the global economy. Semiconductors are a fundamental enabling technology for electronic devices and the UK holds current and historical strengths in certain aspects of the semiconductor supply chain, notably design.

The Government is reviewing its approach to the semiconductors sector, working closely with industry experts and representative bodies. We are considering how best to mitigate the risk of future disruption to technology supply chains, and ensure that the UK can continue to get access to the chips it needs. This will include considering how to strengthen the UK's own semiconductor sector and work with international partners to improve long term resilience within the global semiconductor ecosystem.

■ Telephone Systems

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[153922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to work with Ofcom to ensure that people who still use landlines after the PSTN

switchover process is completed in 2025 are able to access landline payment plans (a) without broadband internet connection included and (b) that only charge them for their phone usage time instead of operating as a set monthly payment plan.

Julia Lopez:

PSTN's replacement, VoIP technology, requires a minimum stable connection speed of just 0.5Mbps, and, for current landline-only customers on BT and KCOM (the universal service providers), it will be possible to order a VoIP landline without purchasing a general internet connection.

Pricing in the telecoms market is ultimately a commercial decision and is a matter for the independent telecoms regulator Ofcom. That being said, the government is clear that the PSTN migration should not be used as an opportunity for providers to exploit consumers with disproportionate costs for the necessary upgrades.

EDUCATION

■ **British Students Abroad: Russia and Ukraine**

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[151066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 29 March 2022 to Question 146609 on British Students Abroad: Russia and Ukraine, what assessment he has made of the capacity in UK universities to enable students who were in Ukraine and Russia to transfer to courses in the UK in accordance with the approach outlined in that Answer; and if he will make it his policy to issue updates on that matter through regular Ministerial Statements.

Michelle Donelan:

Universities in Ukraine are striving to maintain the education of their students under extremely challenging conditions. The department is working closely with the Medical Schools Council and the Council of Deans of Health who are liaising with universities in Ukraine. This is to help ensure online learning materials are available to medical students to continue their education remotely.

Universities in England are autonomous and responsible for their own admissions. However, I have urged higher education (HE) providers to look at how they can support students returning from Ukraine to continue their studies in the UK and show as much flexibility as possible.

Individuals will need to consider their own circumstances and what is right for them. Students who wish to explore their options with HE providers in England should engage in conversations with their preferred provider to understand the full range of options available specifically to them. This may include studying related courses in the biological sciences or subjects allied to medicine.

■ Children in Care: Quarantine

Daisy Cooper:

[\[150268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to issue guidance to end the need for young people in care homes being asked to self-isolate when they come into contact with members of staff and other residents who test positive for covid-19.

Will Quince:

From 1 April 2022, the UK Health and Security Agency has issued updated guidance on health protection in schools and other childcare facilities. The guidance contains practical advice on managing a range of infections and outlines the steps regarding self-isolation for those with a positive COVID-19 test result.

This replaces all guidance previously issued for the children's social care sector. It is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities>.

■ Children: Body Searches

Helen Hayes:

[\[156555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the suitability of the current guidance issued to (a) schools, and (b) local safeguarding partnerships regarding police searches of children following the case of Child Q.

Helen Hayes:

[\[156557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of children searched by police officers in (a) primary schools and (b) secondary schools in each year since 2017, and how many of these were conducted without a responsible adult present.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department is clear that any use of strip search must be carried out in accordance with the law and with full regard for the dignity and welfare of the individual being searched, particularly if the individual being searched is a child.

The department is currently reviewing the 'Searching, screening and confiscation' guidance. As part of this review, officials are engaging with teaching unions, the third sector and other government departments, including the Home Office, to gather views on changes for consideration. This includes the roles of parents, the police and teachers in these challenging situations. We will aim to publish revised guidance in the summer alongside the recently consulted on 'Behaviour in Schools' guidance, and the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance. This will ensure that all schools are clear on their duties relating to safeguarding and protecting the welfare of all pupils. This coordinated approach will enable us to take a comprehensive view of what improvements can be made across our school safeguarding advice and guidance.

Regarding local safeguarding partnerships, the department does not issue specific guidance to safeguarding partners on how they should operate. Police, health, and

local authorities have an equal and shared statutory duty to safeguard and protect the welfare of children in their local, and to publish arrangements setting out how this will be done. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 Code C, sets out the circumstances under which strip searches can be used.

Neither the Department for Education or the Home Office holds figures on the number of pupils searched by police officers in primary schools or secondary schools in each year since 2017, or how many of these were conducted without a responsible adult present.

■ Children: Ukraine

Ben Everitt:

[154483]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support Ukrainian child refugees' access education once in the UK.

Mr Robin Walker:

The government has set up two schemes to support those fleeing the war: the Ukraine Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine. All children and young people arriving under the Ukraine Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine have the right to access state education whilst in the UK. Attending school is vital in helping children integrate into the communities in which they are living.

Ukrainian parents will apply for a school place through the in-year admissions process. The department is working with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on developing a welcome pack for Ukrainian migrants. This will include details of the education offer and guidance on navigating the education system. General advice on school admissions can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/schools-admissions>.

Local authorities will work with families to enable all children to attend school in the local area as soon as possible, even if these places are not in the immediate vicinity of their accommodation. The department understands the challenge of finding suitable school places for new arrivals and will work with local authorities where helpful to make this as smooth as possible.

To support schools' efforts, Oak National Academy have rolled out an auto-translate function across all 10,000 of its online lessons. This means Ukrainian children can access education in their native language.

The department has ensured Ukrainians have access, if they need it, to the same childcare entitlements, as well as university and college courses as a UK citizen.

Schools are responsible for ensuring that all their pupils, including refugees and migrants who have a first language other than English, develop the English language skills they need to access the curriculum and achieve their potential.

Ukrainians aged 19+ and their family members settled under the Ukraine Family Scheme and the Homes for Ukraine in the UK, can access training to gain the skills they need to move on with their lives. This includes provision funded through the

adult education budget, including English for speakers of other languages, and Level 3 free courses for job offer.

■ Curriculum

Jim Shannon:

[\[150164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has held discussions with schools on the potential merits of including in the curriculum learning on veganism, fast fashion and climate change.

Mr Robin Walker:

Education has a critical role to play in giving all children and young people the knowledge and skills they need to create a greener, more sustainable world, and to tackle both the causes and impact of climate change.

The national curriculum framework sets out the minimum content that schools are expected to teach in each subject. Topics relating to climate change are already taught in subjects such as geography, science and citizenship. Teachers have the flexibility to cover topics in greater depth where they deem it appropriate, including topics such as veganism and fast fashion.

Pupils are taught about healthy eating through the statutory health education curriculum. They should know what constitutes a healthy diet, the characteristics of a poor diet, and risks associated with unhealthy eating, including for example, obesity and tooth decay. Schools are free to teach about the benefits of a vegan diet if they wish to do so.

Healthy eating and opportunities to develop pupils' cooking skills are also covered in the design and technology (D&T) curriculum. Cooking and nutrition is a discrete strand of the D&T curriculum and is compulsory in maintained schools for key stages 1 to 3. The curriculum aims to teach children how to cook, with an emphasis on savoury dishes, and how to apply the principles of healthy eating and nutrition. We have also introduced a new food preparation and nutrition GCSE to provide pupils with practical cookery experience and teach them about the underlying scientific concepts of nutrition and healthy eating.

As with other aspects of the curriculum, schools have flexibility over how they deliver these subjects, and are able to go into further depth into subjects such as veganism should they wish. Schools can develop an integrated approach that is sensitive to the needs and background of their pupils.

The department has established a unit devoted to climate change and sustainability, and at COP26, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education presented a draft Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy for the Education and Children's Services. This strategy set out key action to drive excellence in climate education including professional development for science teachers, a model Primary Science Curriculum, and free access to quality teaching resources.

While refining this strategy for publication in April 2022, the unit engaged widely with young people, expert bodies, teachers, and unions. The inclusion of topics connected to climate change and sustainability across the curriculum has been discussed with relevant parties at length. The finalised version of this strategy was published on 21 April 2022.

■ Department for Education: Apprentices

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[151068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Public Sector Apprenticeships Target, how many apprentices were employed in his Department in the financial year 2021-22; what proportion of the total workforce in 2021-22 were apprentices; and what his Department's return in respect of the Public Sector Apprenticeships Target was.

Alex Burghart:

The department is currently collating and quality assuring data on apprenticeships for the 2021/22 financial year. Final figures are not yet available. The Cabinet Office, on behalf of the Civil Service, will be publishing a full breakdown of departmental performance on apprenticeships in the autumn in line with previous years. We are not yet able to say what proportion of the workforce were apprentices during the 2020/21 financial year.

Over the four years of the target 2017-2020, the department exceeded the target with 2.6% of the workforce starting an apprenticeship during this period. We have taken steps to increase our apprenticeship starts through advertising the majority of external vacancies at junior grades as apprenticeships since September 2020 and we are therefore on track to exceed the target during the 2021/22 academic year.

■ Department for Education: Cybersecurity

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[151073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the comments made by the Director of GCHQ on 31 March 2022 on the standard of the UK's cybersecurity, whether he has made a recent assessment of the cybersecurity and resilience to cyber attack of (a) his Department, (b) Ofqual and Ofsted and (c) the (i) executive agencies, (ii) the executive non-departmental public bodies, (iii) advisory non-departmental public bodies and (iv) other public bodies for which he is responsible; and if he will make a statement.

Michelle Donelan:

The department follows standard government security assessments to review and monitor cyber security and resilience. Departmental health security checks are carried out annually to track actions and progress.

We do not directly assess the cyber security resilience of agencies and arm's length bodies (ALBs). The department's agencies and ALBs are responsible for maintaining their IT systems and cyber security, and are supported by the Cyber Security Division to provide advice, guidance and support to adhere to and maintain good cyber

security standards. The Cyber Security Division has a dedicated team who are responsible for the ongoing relationship with the department's agencies and ALBs, and for providing regular targeted communications to raise awareness for any identified emerging threats and provide guidance to address and mitigate.

The department also works closely with partners such as Jisc to ensure that the same guidance, standards and support are available for higher and further education establishments.

■ Department for Education: Parking

Bridget Phillipson: [\[151074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many car parking spaces have been made available to staff (a) free of charge and (b) at a charge at each of the office premises operated by (a) his Department, (b) Ofqual and Ofsted, (c) his executive agencies, (d) his executive non-departmental public bodies, (e) his advisory non-departmental public bodies and (f) other public bodies for which he is responsible; and if he will make a statement.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[151075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much revenue his Department has raised by charging staff for car parking spaces at each of the office premises operated by (a) his Department, (b) Ofqual and Ofsted, (c) his executive agencies, (d) his executive non-departmental public bodies, (e) his advisory non-departmental public bodies and (f) other public bodies for which he is responsible; and if he will make a statement.

Michelle Donelan:

The attached table includes data to support the response relating to the Department for Education and arm's length bodies.

Attachments:

1. 151074_151075_table [151074_151075_car_parking_spaces.pdf]

■ Department for Education: Parliamentary Questions

Bridget Phillipson: [\[151069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average number of working days is that it has taken him in the (a) 2021-22 Parliamentary Session as a whole and (b) in the 2021-22 Parliamentary Session (i) up to 15 September 2021 and (ii) from 16 September 2021 to 31 March 2022 to respond to (A) named day Parliamentary Questions and (B) all other Parliamentary Questions; and how many questions of each type he received in each of those periods.

Michelle Donelan:

The department attaches great importance to the effective and timely handling of correspondence from members of parliament, including written parliamentary questions. Performance for the 2021/22 parliamentary session is above the Procedure Committee target of 85% throughout the period.

The below table provides the average number of working days that it has taken for the department to respond to 'Named Day' and 'Ordinary' written parliamentary questions (WPQ) during the 2021/22 Parliamentary Session to the 31 March 2022. It also includes the totals received and the percentage of questions answered within their respective parliamentary deadlines.

	PQ TYPE	WPQ RECEIVED & DUE FOR ANSWER	% ANSWERED ON TIME	AVERAG E WORKING DAYS TO RESPOND	
	2021/22 Parliamentary Session	Named Day WPQs	1,181	86.6%	3.8
Ordinary WPQs	1,914	88.2%	5.7		
Total	3,095	87.6%	-		
	WPQs received 11/05/21 - 15/09/21	Named Day WPQs	388	90.5%	4.1
Ordinary WPQs	603	85.4%	5.9		
Total	991	87.4%	-		
	WPQs received 16/09/21 - 31/03/22	Named Day WPQs	793	84.7%	3.6
Ordinary WPQs	1,311	89.5%	5.6		
Total	2,104	87.7%	-		

FOOTNOTES:

1. Data is based on the number of written parliamentary questions (WPQs) received and answered by the Department for Education as at 07/04/22.
2. MPs may table questions, specifying the date on which they should receive an answer (a Named Day WPQ). MPs must give a minimum of two days notice. However, they may also pick a date further in the future. This can impact the average number of working days to respond.
3. Recess periods can impact the due date for answering WPQs, this will also have an impact on the average number of working days to respond.
4. An average length of time to respond is not given for the overall totals.

■ Department for Education: Telephones

Matt Western:

[\[151233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much his Department has spent on phone bills each of the last 5 years.

Michelle Donelan:

The table below details the department's spend, by telephony type, on bills over the last five years for the period 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2022. The table highlights the breakdown on a financial year (April – March) basis.

FINANCIAL YEAR/SERVICE	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Mobile Telephony	£651,220.09	£492,834.91	£240,573.06	£374,504.50	£280,877.58
Fixed Line Telephony	£661,250.81	£491,787.50	£619,918.22	£219,930.80	£65,537.20
Soft Phone Telephony	N/A	N/A	£1,022.04	£66,229.95	£152,634.64

■ Department for Education: Travel

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[151077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking in respect of each public body for which he is responsible to encourage (a) active travel by staff, (b) the use of public transport by staff and (c) a reduction in the carbon emissions associated with staff commuting.

Michelle Donelan:

Where staff are required to travel on official business, the departmental policy encourages the use of sustainable modes of transport. Public transport should always be considered first whilst value for money must be a priority. Staff are encouraged to use the cycle to work scheme and can also be reimbursed for using their own bicycles.

The department and responsible public bodies are committed to reducing the overall greenhouse gas emissions. This is progressed as part of our committed targets under the Greening Government Commitments.

■ Educational Institutions: Ukraine

Drew Hendry:

[\[151189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to ensure UK educational institutions avoid relationships with non-UK organisations that (a) hold or (b) host items taken from Ukrainian territory.

Michelle Donelan:

Alongside our allies, we are united in support for Ukraine. I, alongside my hon. Friend, the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation, have recently written to the higher education sector to outline our expectation that universities review their partnerships with Russia and take appropriate action.

This includes taking action on research partnerships as well as asking universities to review their broader investments arrangements. The department is pleased that the sector appears to already be taking a proactive approach when it comes to reviewing their financial arrangements connected to Russia. Institutions will be bound by new rules restricting Russian investment in line with other British businesses.

I am continuing to ask that all universities conduct due diligence when entering into all international partnerships and accepting foreign investment, in line with Universities UK guidance on 'Managing risks in Internationalisation'.

■ Foster Care: Refugees**Navendu Mishra:**[\[155940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will ask local authorities to show flexibility with regard to the clearance of uncleared adults within homes with in-place fostered children, to enable foster families to accommodate Ukrainian families including adults.

Will Quince:

The decision to become a host family should involve everyone living in the household including children, whose views, wishes and feeling should be taken into account. There will be additional considerations when the household includes children in foster care.

Foster carers are required to give written notice to their fostering provider when there is a change in the composition of the household. We would expect foster carers to contact their fostering service provider and the local authority/authorities for any children already living in their care when considering applying to the Homes for Ukraine Scheme (where the local authority is not their fostering service provider).

If a foster carer has capacity to take additional children, we encourage fostering agencies to explore with them what support the foster carer can provide, including to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children already in the country and those who continue to arrive.

Local authorities are responsible for safeguarding all children that they look after according to existing guidance and the statutory framework. The department expects them to work together with fostering agencies where there is a change to the fostering household composition to ensure that children that they look after are safeguarded.

Further Education: Finance**Bridget Phillipson:**[\[155694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Written Ministerial Statement of 19 April 2022 on the Further Education Capital Transformation Fund, HCWS769, for each college listed as being in receipt of funds which (a) Parliamentary constituency and (b) lower tier local authority that college or facility is located in; and for what reason that information was not supplied as part of the statement.

Alex Burghart:

The written ministerial statement of [19 April 2022](#) announced the outcomes of the bidding round for the Further Education Capital Transformation Programme and listed the 62 further education colleges that were successful.

The table attached sets out the lower tier local authority and the parliamentary constituency that each of the projects for the 62 successful colleges are located in.

For the purposes of announcing the outcomes in a written ministerial statement, it was considered sufficient to list the 62 colleges along with the region they are located in.

Attachments:

1. 155694_table [155694_FECTF_Successful_Bids_Table.xls]

Higher Education: Finance**Matt Western:**[\[151232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the membership of the higher education financial sustainability group is.

Michelle Donelan:

The membership of the higher education Financial Sustainability Oversight Group is:

Department for Education:

- Deputy Director of Higher Education Reform (Chair).
- Deputy Director of Higher Education and Further Education Finance Business Partnering.
- Deputy Director for Further Education Quality, College Improvement and Sponsorship.
- Head of Higher Education Restructuring Regime and Financial Sustainability.
- Higher Education Finance Business Partner.
- Senior Economist.

Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy:

- Deputy Director, Impact and Research.
- Head of Policy for University Research and Knowledge Exchange.

- Lead Policy Analyst for UK Research & Innovation Institutions and System.
- Research Officer for UK Research & Institutions and System.

The Office for Students:

- Director of Resources, Finance and Transformation.
- Head of Sector Level Finance Data and Analysis.
- Head of Student Protection.

UK Research and Innovation:

- Head of Sustainability, Research England.

Additional members whose skills, knowledge, and experience are required are invited to attend all or part of a meeting, as and when appropriate.

■ Multi-academy Trusts: Finance

Stephen Morgan: [\[155900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish a breakdown of academy trust revenue reserves for 2020-21 by trust.

Stephen Morgan: [\[155901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish a breakdown of academy trust revenue reserves for 2020-21 by region.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department has published information about academy trust revenue reserves for the 2020/21 academic year at a national level here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-trust-revenue-reserves-2020-to-2021>. This analyses data is available on the Schools Financial Benchmarking website: <https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk/>, which shows the revenue reserves at trust level as reported in academy trusts' Academy Accounts Return (AAR) for 2020/21. This can be found under 'AAR 2020/21' at: <https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk/Help/DataSources>.

Information on trust revenue reserves will be published at a regional level in the 2020/21 Sector Annual Report and Accounts, which will be published in autumn 2022.

■ National Curriculum Tests

Munira Wilson: [\[155928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department made of the effect on children of his decision to continue with Key Stage 1 SATs examinations in 2022 prior to the announcement of that decision.

Mr Robin Walker:

The decision to return to a full programme of primary assessments in 2021/22 was considered carefully and consulted many, including teachers, school leaders and unions.

The department recognises that pupils will have missed a critical period of their learning due to partial school closures in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years. It is vital that the department knows the impact of COVID-19 on this cohort of pupils nationally, including at the end of Key Stage 1, and can give support to schools that need it the most.

Munira Wilson:[\[155929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the resumption of Key Stage (a) 1 and (2) SATs examinations do not have a negative impact on the wellbeing of children.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department knows that the pandemic has impacted the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, and will have an impact in the longer-term. We expect leaders and teachers to consider their pupils' mental health and wellbeing as a priority and identify those who may need additional support.

With regard to assessments, although schools should encourage all pupils to work hard and achieve well, the department does not recommend that they devote excessive preparation time to assessment, and certainly not at the expense of pupils' mental health and wellbeing. Schools should support a culture of wellbeing amongst staff and pupils.

Children and young people's mental health and wellbeing is a priority for this government. The department is continuing to help schools support children and young people's wellbeing. In May 2021 we announced more than £17 million of mental health funding to improve mental health and wellbeing support in schools and colleges. This includes £9.5 million dedicated to training senior mental health leads in over 8,000 schools and colleges, with an additional £3 million announced this year to extend this training to even more schools and colleges. The training will equip leads with the skills and knowledge to develop a culture and ethos that promotes positive mental health wellbeing, as well as how to make the best use of local resources to support children and young people experiencing issues such as anxiety.

The department has also recently brought together all its sources of advice for schools and colleges into a single site on GOV.UK, which includes signposting to external sources of mental health and wellbeing support for teachers, school staff and school leaders.

Munira Wilson:[\[155930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of children that will complete their curriculum studies prior to the next round of Key Stage 2 SATs examinations.

Mr Robin Walker:

The final decision about entering individual pupils for the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2) assessments is for the pupil's headteacher, as outlined in the department's assessment and reporting arrangements guidance. If a pupil is working at the overall standard of a given test or assessment and is moving on to Key Stage 3 (KS3) in the following academic year, they should be entered for that particular test or assessment. This includes where they may not have covered all aspects of the curriculum in as much detail as would have been the case without the disruption over the last two years due to the pandemic.

If the headteacher decides that a pupil is working below the overall standard and should not be entered for the end of KS2 assessments, schools will still need to undertake an appropriate form of assessment using either the pre-key stage standard (for pupils engaged in subject specific study) or the engagement model (for pupils not engaged in subject specific study).

A key purpose of assessments this academic year is to gain an understanding of the impact of the pandemic, precisely because almost all children will have missed some time in education over the last two years. Headteachers will be best placed to judge if the absence of a pupil has been so significant that the pupil is not working at the overall standard as a result.

■ National Tutoring Programme

Stephen Morgan: [\[154341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the impact on the public purse of the cancellation of his Department's contract with Randstad for the delivery of the National Tutoring Programme.

Stephen Morgan: [\[154342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what procurement process his Department plans to undertake for the appointment of the new provider of the National Tutoring Programme.

Stephen Morgan: [\[154343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish all (a) tender documents and (b) supporting information in respect of the procurement of a new provider for the National Tutoring Programme.

Stephen Morgan: [\[154344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will publish data on the number of courses completed through the National Tutoring Programme since its inception.

Stephen Morgan: [\[154345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many National Tutoring Programme sessions have been cancelled during the academic year 2021-2022.

Stephen Morgan: [\[154346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will publish data on the absence rate from National Tutoring Programme sessions during the academic year 2021-2022.

Stephen Morgan: [\[154350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, on what date he decided to end his Department's contract with Randstad for the delivery of National Tutoring Programme.

Stephen Morgan: [\[154351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, on what date his Department informed Randstad of the decision to end its contract with that organisation for the delivery of National Tutoring Programme.

Mr Robin Walker:

The initial term of Randstad's contract expires on 31 August 2022, and the department has chosen not to exercise the option to extend it for another year. We announced this on 31 March. The decision not to extend Randstad's contract will not result in any further costs. The final cost of delivering this year's programme will be confirmed once the current contract ends.

The department is launching a competitive procurement process in April to appoint one or more delivery partner for the National Tutoring Programme in the 2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years. All tender documents will be published through the usual commercial channels. The delivery partner(s) will be responsible for quality assurance, recruiting and deploying academic mentors and offering training. This new approach for our delivery partner(s) is in line with wider reforms to the programme, including providing all funding directly to schools, which will make the programme simpler and more flexible.

The department expects to appoint the delivery partner(s) for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years in June. We will also publish full guidance for schools in the summer term. This will set the parameters around how the funding should be used and provide advice on how schools can make best use of their funding to develop an effective tutoring offer for their pupils.

Up to 13 March 2022, the department estimates that at least 1,198,239 starts had been made by pupils on courses of tuition provided through the National Tutoring Programme since its launch in November 2020. An estimated 311,000 starts were made by pupils on courses of tuition provided through the programme in the 2020/21 academic year.

Up to 10th March 2022, the department estimates that 674,941 starts had been made by pupils on courses of tuition provided through school led tutoring on NTP in the 2021/22 academic year. A further 128,776 starts were made by pupils on courses provided through tuition partners and 83,805 starts were made by pupils on courses provided through academic mentors.

The latest figures on starts made were published on 31 March, as detailed above. The department will be publishing more information about the programme in the future.

We regularly review the programme to ensure improvement. Based on lessons learnt from the current programme and the feedback from schools, we have made changes to the programme for next year and this was communicated on 31 March 2022.

■ **Oak National Academy: Remote Education**

Stephen Morgan:

[\[154353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has plans to ensure that access to Oak National Academy's online content remains zero rated so that pupils can access remote education without facing extra data charges.

Mr Robin Walker:

As part of the department establishing a new arms-length curriculum body incorporating Oak National Academy, the department will continue working with Oak National Academy's team to ensure that content remains free to access.

■ **Office for Students: Directors**

Matt Western:

[\[151228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Office for Students on setting the salary of non-executive directors.

Michelle Donelan:

Under Schedule 1, Section 4(2) of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, it is for my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education to set the terms and conditions of a person's appointment as a member of the Office for Students (OfS). Under Schedule 1, section 6(1), the OfS must pay to members of the OfS such remuneration as the Secretary of State may determine.

As outlined in the Governance Code for Public Appointments, there is a requirement for ministers to agree the remuneration of appointees of the boards of public bodies prior to a competition opening. The remuneration of £9,180 per annum for non-executive directors of the OfS board was approved by ministers when the OfS was established, and is approved each time a new competition is launched.

■ **Office for Students: Political Impartiality**

Matt Western:

[\[151227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the appointment of Rachel Houchen as a non-executive director of the Office for Students (OfS), if will make an assessment of the political impartiality of the OfS.

Michelle Donelan:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, appoints non-executive directors to the Board of the Office for Students in accordance with Schedule 1 of the

Higher Education and Research Act 2017 and the Governance Code for Public Appointments, which can be found here:

<https://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/regulating-appointments/governance-code/>.

Rachel Houchen is not a member of any political party but, in any event, under section 9.2 of the Governance Code, political activity is not a bar to an appointment on the board of an arms-length body.

Rachel Houchen was appointed following a fair and open competition, in line with the Governance Code for Public Appointments.

■ Overseas Students: Ukraine

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[156400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer to Question 141156 on Overseas Students: Ukraine, whether students who arrive in the UK on the (a) Homes for Ukraine Scheme and (b) the family route are eligible for student finance.

Michelle Donelan:

We are extending access to higher education (HE) student support, home fee status, tuition fee caps, Advanced learner loans and further education 19+ funding for those who are granted leave under one of the three schemes for Ukrainians introduced recently by the Home Office.

This ensures Ukrainians who have been affected by the war in Ukraine can access support on the same basis as those within other protection-based categories (such as refugees).

In line with those within existing protection-based categories, these persons would not be required to meet a three-year period of ordinary residence for HE support, Advanced Learner Loans or further education 19+ funding but would need only to have been ordinarily resident in the UK since their grant of leave.

Access to student support is crucial in enabling them to attend education to improve their skills and enhance the ability of Ukrainians to contribute to the UK, or to the rebuilding of their home country.

■ Pupils: Body Searches

Ms Diane Abbott: [\[153696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken to review (a) guidance and training for teachers and school staff and (b) guidelines on child safeguarding in relation to strip and intimate searches undertaken by police officers on school grounds.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department is currently reviewing the 'searching, screening and confiscation at school' guidance. As part of this review, officials are engaging with teaching unions, the third sector and other government departments, including the Home Office, to

gather views on changes for consideration, including the roles of parents, the police and teachers in these challenging situations.

The department will aim to publish revised guidance in the summer, alongside the recently consulted on 'behaviour in schools' guidance, and the 'keeping children safe in education' guidance. This will ensure that all schools are clear on their duties relating to safeguarding and protecting the welfare of all pupils. This co-ordinated approach will enable the department to take a comprehensive view of what improvements can be made across our school safeguarding advice and guidance, and whether changes are needed to the 'working together to safeguard children' statutory guidance.

■ Religion: Education

Janet Daby:

[\[154374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his recently published Schools White Paper, what steps he is taking to ensure all children receive high-quality provision of religious education.

Janet Daby:

[\[154375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Schools White Paper published on 28 March 2022, what plans he has to ensure that religious education remains a critical part of the school curriculum despite not being an EBacc subject.

Janet Daby:

[\[154376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Schools White Paper published on 28 March 2022, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the proposals in that White Paper on Standard Advisory Councils on Religious Education and Agreed Syllabus Conferences as the existing bodies used to determine the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Schools White Paper, Opportunity for All, sets out the department's long-term vision for the school system. Religious education (RE) remains a core part. The government believes that RE is an important subject, developing an individual's knowledge and understanding of the religions and beliefs which form part of contemporary society, as well as serving to inform their own values and behaviour. RE can also contribute to pupils' personal development and well-being by promoting mutual respect and tolerance in a diverse society.

RE will continue to form an essential part of a school's curriculum following the publication of the Schools White Paper. It remains a compulsory subject that must be taught in all state funded schools, including academies, to all pupils up to the age of 18.

In the Schools White Paper, the department committed to establishing a new arms-length curriculum body. It will work with teachers to co-design, create, and continually improve packages of optional, free, and adaptable digital curriculum resources and

video lessons for all subjects, including RE at key stages 1-4. This will help teachers deliver a high-quality curriculum informed by the best available evidence. This sector-led approach will draw on expertise and inputs from across the country, involving teachers, schools, trusts, subject associations, national centres of excellence, and educational publishers.

The Schools White Paper sets out the department's long-term vision for a school system that helps every child to fulfil their potential. However, there is still more technical work to be done along the way to realise this vision. The department recognises the important role that Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACRE) play in supporting the provision of RE in maintained schools. The department is aware that the ambition for a fully trust-led system will have an impact on SACREs. This is something that will be considered as we move towards greater academisation.

■ Scholarships

Matt Western: [\[151230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when applications to the National Scholarship Scheme to open.

Michelle Donelan:

We are currently considering options for the design of the scholarship, which will determine the date for rolling out the scheme.

As part of the higher education reform consultation, we welcome views on how the eligibility for a national scholarship scheme should be set to support students and address ongoing financial barriers that can restrict high achieving, disadvantaged students from achieving their full academic potential whilst studying in higher education.

■ Schools: Admissions

Theresa Villiers: [\[R\] \[156397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether school applications from Ukrainian refugees will be assessed according to the same criteria as other children.

Theresa Villiers: [\[R\] \[156398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether local councils have additional obligations regarding school places in respect of Ukrainian refugees, as compared to other children.

Theresa Villiers: [\[R\] \[156399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether local authority obligations to provide school places for Ukrainian refugee children arriving under the family reunion route apply in the area where they live or in the area where their sponsoring family member lives.

Mr Robin Walker:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education wrote to all directors of children's services on 1 April 2022 asking them to assist refugees from Ukraine in finding school places as quickly as possible. The department followed this up with a similar message to every local authority admission officer on 4 April 2022.

Admission authorities in England must always apply their published admission arrangements. There are no exceptions for Ukrainians or children of any other nationality.

Local authorities in England do not have additional school admission obligations in relation to refugees from Ukraine, they have the same right to a school place as any other child resident in the UK. Local authorities in England have a duty to provide sufficient school places for children living in their area. Parents have a duty to ensure any of their children who are of compulsory school age receive a suitable education.

It is not necessary to have a fixed home address in order to be allocated a school and admission authorities would be in breach of their legal obligations if they refused admission on this basis. The school admissions code states that admission arrangements must be clear about how a child's home address will be determined.

The department provides advice, in Ukrainian and Russian, to parents on finding a school place in the Ukraine welcome pack, similar to the advice we provide Hong Kong British National (Overseas) and Afghan migrants. The department have also recently updated our website giving advice to local authorities and schools on the admission rights of foreign nationals.

■ Schools: Construction**Bridget Phillipson:**[\[151065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to change the current framework governing the opening of new schools.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Schools White Paper, published on 28 March 2022, set out our intention to open new mainstream free schools in the areas where they are most needed, prioritising proposals located in Education Investment Areas. The department is currently reviewing the process for approving new free schools and will publish more details in due course. We will keep the wider framework for opening schools under review as part of our discussions on the proposals put forward in the White Paper.

■ Schools: Disciplinary Proceedings**Mr Steve Baker:**[\[153920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure that teachers and other education staff can choose to be accompanied to disciplinary or grievance hearings by a person other than a trade union representative or colleague.

Mr Robin Walker:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, is supportive in principle of a change to the Employment Relations Act 1999 to give teachers who are not members of a trade union the right to be accompanied by a representative of another professional body, such as Edapt, to disciplinary and grievance meetings.

■ **Schools: Finance****Steve McCabe:**[\[153723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of projected inflation rates on real-terms funding for schools.

Mr Robin Walker:

This government continues to deliver year on year, real terms per pupil increases to school funding, with the total core school budget increasing to £56.8 billion by 2024/25, a £7 billion cash increase, compared with 2021/22.

Future increases in funding have been frontloaded to rapidly get money to schools, so that in 2022/23 alone core schools funding will increase by £4 billion compared to 2021/22. This means that the total funding allocated to schools and high needs will see a 7% cash terms per pupil boost in 2022/23, compared to 2021/22. As part of this investment, mainstream school funding for 5-16 year olds is increasing by £2.5 billion in 2022/23, compared to this year. This is equivalent to an average 5.8% cash increase per pupil.

More information on school revenue funding from 2010/2011 through to 2022/2023, including the department's latest statistical release from January 2022, is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-funding-statistics>.

■ **Schools: Uniforms****Emma Hardy:**[\[154328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the publication on 19 November 2021 of statutory guidance on the cost of school uniforms, what measures his Department has put in place to support a parent or parents who consider the cost of their children's uniform is neither reasonable nor affordable at the start of the new school year in September 2022.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department published new statutory guidance on the cost of school uniforms in November 2021 to ensure the cost is reasonable and secures the best value for money for parents. The department expects governing boards to be compliant with much of the guidance by September 2022 and fully compliant by Summer 2023. The department's statutory guidance on the cost of school uniform can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cost-of-school-uniforms/cost-of-school-uniforms>.

The guidance is clear that disputes around school uniform are to be resolved locally and pursued in accordance with a school's complaints policy. In law, governing boards must have a complaints procedure in place to deal with issues such as a complaint about school uniforms.

Parents should be able to lodge their complaints or objections easily. The department expects the governing board to consult and work closely with parents to arrive at a mutually acceptable outcome.

If, having gone through the school's complaints process, a parent is not satisfied by the way the school has addressed their concerns, they can complain to the department.

■ Special Educational Needs

Munira Wilson:

[\[155931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of children with special educational needs and disabilities that do not currently have a place in an education setting.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not held for all children with special educational needs and disabilities. However, the department holds data from local authorities on the number of children with education, health and care (EHC) plans awaiting education provision, available in the publication 'Education, Health and Care plans' at <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>.

Our latest published figure, in May 2021, for the number of children of compulsory school age who have an EHC plan and were not in education was 1,460, this represents 0.3% of all EHC plans.

■ Special Educational Needs: Tribunals

Alex Cunningham:

[\[155725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the current requirement for parents to consider mediation before accessing the SEND Tribunal; and for what reason he has concluded that mediation should become mandatory before accessing that tribunal.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[155726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the policy proposal in his March 2022 SEND Review to make mediation mandatory before allowing families to go to the SEND Tribunal, what assessment he has made of the impact this will have on access to support for families with disabled children.

Will Quince:

Throughout the SEND Review, parents and carers told the department how lengthy, stressful, and often expensive, the tribunal process can be.

In the current system, in most cases, families must secure a mediation certificate before registering an appeal with the tribunal, but they do not have to participate in the mediation itself. If the parent or young person does decide to proceed with mediation then the local authority must ensure that a mediation session takes place within 30 days. There were 4,100 mediation cases held during 2020. Of these, only 1,100 (27%) were followed by appeals to the tribunal.

Waiting for a SEND tribunal hearing can take significantly longer - the tribunal has a performance measure that 75% of appeals should be brought to hearing and the decision issued within 22 weeks.

This government's proposals seek to resolve issues earlier and improve relationships locally by strengthening mediation, including consulting on making it mandatory. Parents will still be able to go to tribunal if necessary.

The Green Paper is now out for public consultation on its proposals until 1 July.

■ Students: Housing

Matt Western:

[\[151231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to use the provisions in the Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act 2022 to reveal the beneficial owners of purpose-built student accommodation.

Michelle Donelan:

The Register of Overseas Entities forms part of the Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act 2022, which received Royal Assent on 15 March 2022. Once the register opens for registrations, new acquisitions by overseas entities, including of purpose-built student accommodation, will have to be registered across the UK.

Overseas companies already owning land in England and Wales, and Scotland, will be required to register their beneficial owners within six months. This will already include the beneficial owners of purpose-built student accommodation, if applicable. Any overseas entity disposing of its property holdings between 28 February 2022 and the end of the transition period will be required to provide information to Companies House about the beneficial owners of the entity at the time of disposal. This includes where the disposal relates to any student accommodation.

■ Students: Loans

Matt Western:

[\[151234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the impact of the rise in inflation on the purchasing power of the average size maintenance loan.

Michelle Donelan:

We are freezing maximum tuition fees for the 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years. By 2024/25, maximum fees will have been frozen for seven years.

Students from the lowest-income households have access to the largest ever amounts of support for their living costs in cash terms. Maximum grants and loans for

living costs were increased by 3.1% this academic year, and we have announced that they will increase by a further 2.3% next year.

Many providers have hardship funds that students can apply to for assistance should individuals' finances be affected in academic year 2021/22. The government is also making available discretionary funding of £144 million to be provided to support vulnerable people and individuals on low incomes.

Grant funding to the Office for Students (OfS) for the 2021/22 financial year included an allocation of £5 million to higher education providers in England in order to provide additional support for student hardship.

In our guidance to the OfS on funding for the 2021/22 financial year we made clear that the OfS should protect the £256 million allocation for the student premiums to support disadvantaged students and those that need additional help. The 2022/23 financial year guidance to the OfS confirms universities will continue to be able to support students in hardship through the student premium. Ministers' Strategic Priorities Grant guidance letter to the OfS asks that the OfS looks to protect the student premium in cash terms for financial year 2022/23.

Advice is available from providers and from other sources online to help students manage their money while they are attending their courses.

Steve McCabe: [\[153740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the mechanism for determining student loan interest in light of the projected volatility of inflation rates.

Steve McCabe: [\[153741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of levels of interest on student loans on levels of enrolment at universities.

Steve McCabe: [\[153742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the implications of projected increases in student loan interest rates exceeding that paid by homeowners on mortgages.

Michelle Donelan:

The mechanism for setting student loan interest rates is set out in legislation. The interest rate for Plan 2 and Plan 3 loans are set annually with reference to the Retail Price Index (RPI) from the previous March. The rates take effect from 1 September.

The March RPI figure this year is a demonstration of the unusual events currently affecting all aspects of the economy and our society. The government has not yet made a decision on what interest rates will be applied to student loans from September. We will be considering all options over the coming months and will confirm in due course the rates to apply from 1 September.

Student loans remove financial barriers to higher education (HE). Unlike commercial alternatives, student loans are available to all eligible students, regardless of

background or financial history. Student loans offer unique protections to borrowers. Monthly repayments are calculated as a fixed percentage of earnings above the relevant repayment threshold and do not change based on interest rates or the amount borrowed. If income is below the relevant repayment threshold, or a borrower is not earning, then they do not have to make repayments at all. Any outstanding debt, including interest accrued, is written off after the loan term ends (or in case of death or disability) at no detriment to the borrower. There are no commercial loans that offer this level of protection.

Interest rates affect lifetime repayments only for those who will repay their loans in full within the loan term (or who come very close to doing so), principally high earners and/or those with small loan balances. Currently, only 23% of borrowers who enter full-time higher education next year are forecast to repay their loans in full.

To further protect borrowers the government, by law, must cap maximum student loan rates to ensure the interest rate charged on the loan is in line with market rates for comparable unsecured personal loans. The government monitors student loan rates against the Bank of England's data series for the effective interest rates on new and existing unsecured personal loans. It is misleading to compare student loan interest rates to rates for mortgages or other loans secured against assets.

We are determined that the cost of living should not deter those from less advantaged backgrounds from applying to and thriving at university a record number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds were accepted onto HE courses in 2021. Students can also benefit from many of the measures this government has taken to help with the cost of living, including raising the National Minimum Wage, reducing VAT, freezing alcohol and fuel duty, the Energy Rebate Scheme and capping the cost of energy.

We announced in February that we will be reducing interest rates for new borrowers and so from the 2023/24 academic year, new graduates will not, in real terms, repay more than they borrow. Alongside our wider reforms, this will help to make sure that students from all walks of life can continue to receive the highest-quality education from our world-leading HE sector.

Catherine West:

[\[155860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the impact on graduate disposable incomes of the increase in student loan interest rates.

Michelle Donelan:

The government has not yet made a decision on what interest rates will be applied to student loans from September 2022. We will be considering all options over the coming months and will confirm in due course the rates to apply from 1 September.

Changes to student loan interest rates will not increase monthly student loan repayments. Monthly repayments are calculated as a fixed percentage of earnings above the relevant repayment threshold and do not change based on interest rates or the amount borrowed. If income is below the relevant repayment threshold, or a

borrower is not earning, then they do not have to make repayments at all. Any outstanding debt, including interest accrued, is written off after the loan term ends (or in case of death or disability) at no detriment to the borrower. There are no commercial loans that offer this level of protection.

Over a lifetime, the Institute for Fiscal Studies has made clear that changes in interest rates have a limited long-term impact on repayments. Interest rates affect lifetime repayments only for those who will repay their loans in full within the loan term (or who come very close to doing so), principally high earners and/or those with small loan balances. Currently only 23% of borrowers who enter full-time higher education (HE) next year are forecast to repay their loans in full.

To further protect borrowers, the government, by law, must cap maximum student loan rates to ensure the interest rate charged on the loan is in line with market rates for comparable unsecured personal loans. The government monitors student loan rates against the Bank of England's data series for the effective interest rates on new and existing unsecured personal loans.

We announced in February 2022 that we will be reducing interest rates for new borrowers and so from 2023/24, new graduates will not, in real terms, repay more than they borrow. Alongside our wider reforms, this will help to make sure that students from all walks of life can continue to receive the highest-quality education from our world-leading HE sector.

■ Teachers: Coronavirus

Justin Madders:

[\[154075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has undertaken an assessment of the impact of teacher absences due to covid-19 on pupil behaviour.

Mr Robin Walker:

The government acknowledges that COVID-19 and its consequences, such as teacher absences, have had a significant impact on children and young people's behaviour.

School leaders and staff have worked incredibly hard to make sure pupils have been able to remain in school, while dealing with higher levels of staff absence than normal. It is the department's priority to support schools to deliver face to face, high quality education. We reintroduced the COVID-19 workforce fund to support schools and colleges facing the greatest staffing and funding pressures to continue to deliver face-to-face, high-quality education to all pupils. In deploying staff, headteachers should be satisfied that the person has the appropriate skills, expertise and experience to carry out the work. This includes ensuring that safe ratios are met and specific training undertaken, for any interventions or care for pupils with complex needs where specific training or specific ratios are required.

In addition, the government is also pursuing an ambitious programme of work to improve behaviour in schools. Our £10 million behaviour hubs programme, launched in April 2021, is projected to support up to 700 schools over 3 years. It enables

schools with exemplary positive behaviour cultures to work closely with schools that want and need to turn around their behaviour alongside a central offer of support and a taskforce of advisers.

In June 2021, the department launched a call for evidence on managing good behaviour and how schools' behaviour policies have changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This evidence continues to be assessed alongside a public consultation on the Behaviour in Schools guidance, which closed on 31 March 2022. The guidance will provide practical advice to schools about how to encourage good behaviour and respond effectively to incidents of poor behaviour in and out of the classroom, and support staff in tackling behavioural issues that have arisen from COVID-19.

In autumn 2021 we introduced a new and updated suite of fully funded National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) to offer the best possible support to teachers and leaders right across the profession, to help them become more effective teachers and leaders inside and outside the classroom. One of the new specialist NPQs is the NPQ for Leading Behaviour and Culture. Specialist and leadership NPQs provide training and support for teachers and school leaders at all levels, from those who want to develop expertise in high-quality teaching practice, such as behaviour management, to those leading multiple schools across trusts

We have also made improvements to teacher training as part of the Early Career Framework. The Early Career Framework will directly support those at the start of their teaching careers by ensuring new teachers are entitled to a structured two-year package of funded high quality professional development based on the best available evidence.

■ Universities: Freedom of Expression

Matt Western:

[\[151235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with how many Vice Chancellors he had had discussions on the matter of freedom of speech as of February 2020.

Michelle Donelan:

Since coming into post in 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has had wide ranging discussions with individual and groups of Vice-Chancellors, representatives from higher education representative groups, leading academics, and others. It is not possible to enumerate those discussions which covered freedom of speech.

■ Universities: Remote Education

Matt Western:

[\[151236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with how many Vice Chancellors he had had discussions on the provision of online teaching as of February 2020.

Michelle Donelan:

Since his appointment in 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has regularly engaged with university Vice-Chancellors, higher education (HE) representative and mission groups, leading academics, and others who are active in the sector.

These conversations have covered a wide range of HE sector issues. Although it is not possible to precisely quantify those discussions which have covered online teaching, the Secretary of State has made very clear his view that students must be able to expect high-quality teaching. This includes face-to-face teaching. I have been speaking with a number of university Vice-Chancellors to ensure they are offering students the amount of in-person teaching they should expect.

The government has removed all restrictions on in-person teaching. This means providers are able to offer the full face-to-face teaching experience that they were offering before the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtual learning is a fantastic innovation that can be used to complement and enhance a student's learning experience, not detract from it. It should not be used as a cost-cutting exercise.

The Office for Students (OfS) has recently launched a review of blended learning. The review will examine blended methods of course delivery and consider which approaches represent high-quality teaching and learning, as well as which approaches fall short of the OfS' regulatory requirements.

Universities: Staff**Sarah Olney:**[\[154262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions his Department has held with the University and College Union about grievances of university staff relating to pensions, pay and working conditions.

Michelle Donelan:

Higher education providers are autonomous and responsible for the pay and pension provision of their staff.

While the government has no direct role in the disputes, we have been clear that we want this disagreement resolved in a way that avoids further disrupting students' learning. We strongly encourage a resolution that delivers good value for students, staff, and providers.

The Pensions Regulator is currently working with the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), Universities UK and a range of other stakeholders as they work to find a long-term solution to the funding challenges faced by the USS.

The USS is a private pension scheme. It has more than 450,000 members, and sizable assets and liabilities. USS is one of the largest private pension schemes in the country, with assets worth over £80 billion in December 2020.

The Office for Students (OfS) has wide-ranging powers to ensure students' interests are protected, and they expect providers to do all they can to avoid disruption to

students. The OfS has written to universities to make their expectations clear: universities must abide by the conditions of registration and ensure they meet obligations under consumer protection law in relation to the impact of industrial action.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Air Pollution

Geraint Davies: [\[150065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what legal maintenance requirements apply to (a) wood-burning stoves, (b) open fireplaces, (c) gas appliances, and (d) chimneys on domestic premises.

Jo Churchill:

Defra does not set legal maintenance requirements for solid fuel appliances; however, we do encourage homeowners/occupiers to carry out regular maintenance of wood-burning stoves and open fireplaces. We also encourage those that use solid fuel appliances to have their chimneys swept on a regular basis, our recommendation is at least once a year.

The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 impose a legal requirement on landlords of domestic premises to maintain all gas appliances provided for use by tenants in a safe condition. This legislation falls within the regulatory remit of the Health and Safety Executive. There are no legal maintenance requirements for gas appliances in owner-occupied domestic premises, but it is strongly advised that all gas appliances are regularly maintained and serviced at least annually by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

Geraint Davies: [\[150069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what percentage contribution did (a) pollen, (b) sea spray and (c) other naturally occurring sources make to average concentrations of PM10 in the UK in 2020.

Jo Churchill:

Assessment of fine particulate matter (PM₁₀) is undertaken on an annual basis to understand the key sources and contributions to PM₁₀ in the UK.

Analysis is ongoing and results for 2020 are yet to be published. Results for 2019 are available here:

https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/assets/documents/reports/cat09/2102111100_2019_PCM_technical_report.pdf

Geraint Davies:

[150951]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what percentage contribution did (a) pollen, (b) sea spray and (c) other naturally occurring sources make to average concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) in the UK in 2020.

Jo Churchill:

Assessment of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) is undertaken on an annual basis to understand the key sources and contributions to PM_{2.5} in the UK.

Analysis is ongoing and results for 2020 are yet to be published. Results for 2019 are available here:

https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/assets/documents/reports/cat09/2102111100_2019_PCM_technical_report.pdf

■ Air Pollution: Greater London

Geraint Davies:

[155561]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will require developers of construction sites to conduct detailed air quality monitoring to assess compliance with legal and safe levels of (a) air pollution, (b) NOX, (c) PM₁₀, and (d) PM_{2.5}, in response to the findings of the London Assembly Environment Committee's recent Clean Air for All Londoners report.

Jo Churchill:

Defra currently supports a network of over 500 monitoring sites covering the whole of the UK, measuring concentrations of 13 air pollutants.

In addition to the national UK Air Quality monitoring networks, local authorities, businesses and academics carry out monitoring and modelling of air quality which may pick up more localised air pollution. We have no plans to require construction sites to monitor air quality. However, we continue to encourage all industries to consider improving their practices around air quality.

Geraint Davies:

[155562]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he will take steps to give powers to the London Assembly to regulate Non-Road Mobile Machinery, in response to the findings of the London Assembly Environment Committee's recent Clean Air for All Londoners report.

Jo Churchill:

The Greater London Authority (GLA) already runs a successful scheme for reducing emissions from construction equipment within London. We continue to consider ways to reduce pollutant emissions from the construction sector, whilst ensuring we are able to build the homes, hospitals, schools and infrastructure the country needs.

■ Air Pollution: Monitoring

Geraint Davies:

[\[150958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he took to ensure continuity in the real-time publication of monitoring data for particulate matter, PM2.5 and PM10, from the Automatic Urban and Rural Monitoring Network when changes were made to a service provider in 2021.

Jo Churchill:

The awarding of Automatic Urban and Rural Network (AURN) monitoring contracts are undertaken by the Environment Agency on behalf of Defra. The technical specifications which formed part of the invitation to tender for the AURN Central Management and Coordination Unit contracts were designed to ensure that any successful service provider had the required experience of data collection, data management and data dissemination to operate the networks.

To specifically ensure that any interruption in real-time data publication (which included PM10 and PM2.5) was kept to an absolute minimum in the event of a new service provider taking over operations, specific requirements were included in the contract's 'Critical Handover Requirements' on real time data dissemination. For example, for the AURN there was a requirement for the service provider to demonstrate that they were able to successfully collect and disseminate 90% of the live data for the network sites they were awarded during the handover period prior to contract start. The handover period started 3 months prior to the start of the contract on the 01/10/21.

The main contract service provider for the AURN did not change, however the subsection of AURN sites in London did change service provider and no significant impact on real-time data publication of PM2.5 and PM10 occurred.

■ Animals: Ukraine

Hilary Benn:

[\[150092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether people are able to adopt and bring to the UK abandoned animals from the Ukraine.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has already put in place new emergency support for those fleeing Ukraine with their pets. Using an emergency licence, people fleeing Ukraine can bring their pets to the UK with any quarantine costs met by the Government.

We understand, that as a nation of animal lovers, UK citizens may want to help offer a safe and permanent home to rescue animals that are in Ukraine.

However, Ukraine is an unlisted country due to the confirmed presence of rabies and rabies is likewise present in Romania, Poland and Belarus. We are concerned about risks to human and animal health in light of the rabies risk posed by commercial and rescue movements from Ukraine, which come through particular third countries

(Belarus, Poland or Romania), given the animals are often of unknown background and disease status, unlike family pets.

We are aware of non-compliant commercial movements from these countries which has been exacerbated by the crisis in Ukraine. We have assessed the disease risk posed to human and animals from commercial dogs, cats and ferrets who are non-complaint. We have concluded, given the already high-risk of rabies from these countries, and the additional risk of serious non-complaint commercial movements, we have taken the difficult decision to temporarily suspend commercial movements of dogs, cats and ferrets, including rescue animals, from these countries.

This temporary safeguarding measure, ending on 14 May, will keep the public and peoples pets safe. Stopping these non-complaint commercial movements from entering the UK will also prevent vital quarantine spaces having to be reallocated from pets belonging to those fleeing Ukraine.

■ **Asbestos: Landfill**

Sir Gavin Williamson: [\[151096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the amount of asbestos sent to landfill.

Sir Gavin Williamson: [\[151097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of (a) the effectiveness of existing and (b) potential for further steps to prevent asbestos being disposed of in landfill.

Jo Churchill:

The handling and transport of waste asbestos-containing material is only to be undertaken by specialist asbestos removal contractors, and must be disposed of at a site permitted to accept asbestos-containing materials.

The safest way to dispose of asbestos waste is to an appropriately permitted landfill site, regulated by the Environment Agency in England. Permits for these sites control the site design, quantities of waste and site operation in order to prevent or minimise pollution. Defra has no plans to review the current disposal route.

■ **Countryside Stewardship Scheme: Expenditure**

Daniel Zeichner: [\[150188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the total spend on Countryside Stewardship Schemes in the current financial year.

Victoria Prentis:

The Countryside Stewardship (CS) scheme offers farmers within England a variety of different agreement types, that allow farmers to receive funding based on environmentally beneficial outcomes. This can include both revenue and capital

elements. We have recently increased payment rates by an average of 30%, and last year we saw application rates increase by 40%.

Defra encourages where possible all eligible farmers and land managers to take part in the scheme that is now managed under domestic regulation and funding.

The payment window to release payments for the 2021 scheme year runs from 1 December 2021 to 30 June 2022, details of this can be found [here](#).

The total value of payments that have been released to customers for the 2021/22 financial year (1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022) has been provided below. The forecasted 2021/22 financial year values have also been provided:

FINANCIAL YEAR	CLAIM TYPE	FUNDS PAID (EU AND DOMESTIC COMBINED)	FORECASTED FUND VALUE
2021/22	Revenue	£159,207,702	£172,742,174
2021/22	Capital	£104,293,691	N/A
Total		£263,501,393	

Due to the flexible nature of capital claims, which has a rolling application date, alongside customers only claiming for their capital items once work is completed, it is impossible to predict the value of potential payments that would be released.

■ Environment Act 2021

Patricia Gibson: [\[155800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to tackle potential concerns that the consultation on the UK Environment Act lacked critical information and did not allow sufficient time for consultation.

Alex Sobel: [\[156576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the evidence pack for the nature recovery green paper will be published; and whether he plans to extend the consultation.

Rebecca Pow:

There is no additional evidence pack for the Nature Recovery Green Paper. The initial proposals set out in the Nature Recovery Green Paper are based on publicly available evidence and advice from our experts. Alongside the Nature Recovery Green Paper, we published a summary of the HRA Review Working Group's findings, as well as guidance on regulation 9 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

The Nature Recovery Green Paper consultation was published on 16 March and will run for 8 weeks, closing on 11 May.

The evidence reports and impact assessments for the Environmental Targets consultation are currently undergoing final assurance. The length of the consultation response period will be extended to reflect the length of delay in publishing the underlying evidence reports.

■ Food Supply

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[151028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to safeguard food security.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain, as demonstrated throughout the Covid-19 response. Our high degree of food security is built on supply from diverse sources, strong domestic production as well as imports through stable trade routes. We produce 60% of all the food we need, and 74% of food which we can grow or rear in the UK for all or part of the year. These figures have changed little over the last 20 years.

Strong domestic food production is an important factor in our food security. The UK enjoys considerable self-sufficiency in food, with production to supply ratios of nearly 100 percent in poultry, carrots, and swedes, and we also produce 88% of all the cereals that we need. In addition, UK consumers have access through international trade to food products that cannot be produced here, or at least not on a year-round basis. This supplements domestic production and ensures that any disruption from risks such as adverse weather or disease does not affect the UK's overall security of supply. The Government is also supporting farmers in England to become more efficient and has recently awarded grants of £48.5 million through the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund, helping boost productivity at this critical time.

Recognising the importance of food production, the Government has set out a legal obligation on the Government to produce an assessment of our food security at least once every three years. The first UK Food Security Report was published in December 2021. It recognised the contribution made by British farmers to our resilience, and the importance of strong domestic production to our food security. This report will serve as an evidence base for future policy work.

In addition, the Government has recently announced a number of steps it is taking to support farmers ahead of the growing season. Farmers are facing rising costs in inputs, including manufactured fertiliser prices, which we know has an impact on the productivity and profit of farms in this country. The Government's measures include new slurry guidance and new slurry storage grants, a delay in planned changes to urea usage, and further details of the early rollout of the Sustainable Farming Incentive and opening of more farming grants worth more than £20 million to support farming R&D and productivity. The Government will also continue to work with farmers and growers, including through a newly created fertiliser roundtable, to identify solutions and better understanding of current pressures on farmers.

■ Hazards: Rural Areas**Sir Greg Knight:** [\[156392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to commission research on the flammable items with potential to cause significant damage in the countryside, including sky lanterns, disposable barbeques and portable stoves; if he will extent that research to include the potential damage and danger to the environment of discarded helium balloons; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Greg Knight: [\[156393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his policy is on the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to regulate use of flammable items that have potential to cause significant damage to the environment, including (a) sky lanterns, (b) disposable barbeques and (c) portable stoves.

Jo Churchill:

We are commissioning research to examine the impact on the environment of barbecues and other flammable items, including sky lanterns and portable stoves, in order to support potential regulation. We expect this research to be completed in due course, when we will be in a position to consider further action.

■ Inland Waterways: Access**Caroline Lucas:** [\[151046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many projects have been brought forward through the Farming in Protected Landscapes and Green Recovery Fund to improve access and enjoyment of inland waterways.

Rebecca Pow:

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme opened for application in July 2021. Since then, around 1,000 projects have been approved for funding. Around twenty percent of these will help deliver more opportunities for people to explore, enjoy and understand the landscape and some of these could include improvements to access and enjoyment of inland waterways. We do not hold data on inland waterway access centrally. The programme is delivered by Protected Landscape bodies directly based on central guidance and priorities for individual projects are decided at a Protected Landscape level.

A total of 25 projects funded by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund across England have included activities to improve access and enjoyment of inland waterways, generally as part of a wider project. These projects total almost £16m of investment. The £80m Fund overall has funded 159 nature-based projects to restore nature, tackle climate change and connect people with the natural environment.

■ Inland Waterways: Repairs and Maintenance

Caroline Lucas:

[\[151047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish details of the funds allocated for the maintenance of navigable waterways since 2017; and whether he has made estimates of the funding requirements for their maintenance over the next five years.

Rebecca Pow:

Navigation authorities are responsible for operational matters on their waterways, including allocation of maintenance expenditure, and Government does not have a role in that. The largest navigation authority in England and Wales is the Canal and River Trust (C&RT), which publishes details of its waterway maintenance expenditure in its Annual Report and Accounts, available on its website.

Defra provides the C&RT with an annual grant of around £50 million a year under a 15-year agreement, £10million of which is conditional on achievement of certain key performance indicators. The grant allocations since 2017 are as follows:

YEAR	FUNDING
2017/18	£50.6m
2018/19	£51.2m
2019/20	£51.9m
2020/21	£52.6m
2021/22	£52.6m

The annual grant will continue for the next five years capped at the 2020/21 level of £52.6m. The grant is currently being reviewed as required by the agreement to inform a decision about any future Government funding beyond the end of the current grant period in 2027.

Defra also provides the Environment Agency (EA) with a grant-in-aid for its navigable inland waterways. The allocations since 2017 are as follows, with the increase from 2019 to enable commencement of a programme to bring EA navigation assets to safe reliable operating condition:

YEAR	FUNDING
2017/18	£5.6m
2018/19	£5.6m
2019/20	£11.5m
2020/21	£16.4m

YEAR	FUNDING
2021/22	£28.6m

The Environment Agency has received a total grant-in-aid settlement for the next three years of £73m.

The Broads Authority receives a Defra National Park grant to cover its funded activities allowing it to fulfil its statutory duties under the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988. In exceptional circumstances the Defra grant can be used to support shortfalls in navigation income, as permitted under section 17(8) of the Norfolk and Suffolk Act 1988. Use of the National Park grant for navigation can only be on an incremental basis, agreed formally with Defra in advance.

There are also other smaller navigation authorities that do not receive any government funding.

■ Inland Waterways: Safety

Ben Everitt:

[\[154485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government has undertaken an assessment of the cost of (a) maintaining and (b) improving the resilience of the Canal and River Trust's waterway network to safeguard public safety in response to climate change.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra provides the Canal and River Trust with an annual grant of £52 million, under a 15-year agreement signed when the Trust was established in 2012. The grant may be used for the Trust's charitable objects and the permitted activities set out in the formal Grant Agreement document, which is published on the Government website. This includes maintenance of the canal network infrastructure. Around £10 million of the annual grant is conditional on the Trust meeting key performance indicators covering waterway safety, improvement of towpath condition, and flood defence and mitigation. The Trust's waterways maintenance expenditure is available in their Annual Report and Accounts, which is published on the Trust's website.

Climate change impact is being considered as part of Defra's current review of the Government grant required by the Grant Agreement, to inform a decision about any future funding for the Trust from 2027.

■ Trees

Rosie Cooper:

[\[155662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the differences between (a) arboriculture and amenity trees and (b) forestry and woodland.

Peter Dowd:

[157401]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the difference between (a) arboriculture and amenity trees and (b) forestry and woodland.

Rebecca Pow:

In the process of creating the England Trees Action Plan, the Government hosted a series of workshops and round table events to engage with partners and stakeholders, specifically regarding individual amenity trees in towns and cities and urban trees. These events included representatives from the arboriculture sector and local authority tree officers.

This process provided the assessment and analysis necessary for the formulation of policies included in the England Trees Action Plan that recognise the implicit and explicit differences in how trees are managed and cared for in the context of arboriculture and forestry; The Plan states “*a skilled workforce will plant and manage trees and woodlands. Trees, woodlands, forestry and arboriculture will be important sources of jobs and revenue across England*”.¹

Action 1.12 of the England Trees Action Plan states that Government will: “*Publish guidance for local authorities to develop their own local tree and woodland strategies*”. [1] This guidance is currently being produced in partnership with the Tree Council, and further identifies the differences of management between individual amenity trees (arboriculture) and the multiplicity of impacts on them and woodland management, recognising that they are different disciplines requiring different skills and experience.

[1] [The England Trees Action Plan \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Rosie Cooper:

[155664]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the role of arboriculture in achieving the UK's environmental targets.

Rebecca Pow:

Arboriculturalists continue to support the delivery of the England Trees Action Plan, from the delivery of tree planting in urban areas to supporting local tree and woodland strategies. We have significant ambitions to increase woodland cover in England and bring trees closer to people, and welcome the role of arboriculture, alongside agriculture, horticulture and wider forestry sectors, in enabling that.

■ Trees: Professions

Rosie Cooper:

[155663]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support his Department provides to the tree officer profession in the arboricultural sector.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra and the Forestry Commission, provide regular support, engagement and dialogue with local authority tree officers and their professional associations (The

Association Of Tree Officers; The London Tree Officer's Association; and The Municipal Tree Officers Association) on matters pertinent to them and their members respectively.

This work is ongoing and has led to the development of The Urban Tree Manual and The Urban Tree Challenge Fund, the England Trees Action Plan and most recently the new duty for local authorities to consult on the felling of street trees contained within the Environment Act 2021. Defra continues to work with tree officers to refine and publish guidance for local authorities on how to implement this duty, which we intend to publish in late 2022.

■ Visas: Ukraine

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[151344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to facilitate entry into the UK for Ukrainian citizens with pets.

Jo Churchill:

As a nation of animal lovers, we understand how important it is for those fleeing Ukraine to bring their pets. We recognise that many pet owners will not have been able to complete the preparations needed, especially in relation to rabies. We need to protect the UK's public and animal health and that is why pets coming from the Ukraine may need a period of quarantine. All quarantine and relevant health costs will be covered by the UK Government.

We are acting quickly to ensure that everyone who wants to travel with their pet can, and without delay. Pet owners must contact The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) to apply for a licence before they travel to the UK. APHA will make all the necessary arrangements and confirm entry dates for when the pet arrives in the UK.

We have been working with stakeholders to increase capacity, and in parallel exploring alternative options with the rescue and rehoming sector, and with licenced boarding kennels and catteries where we have implemented the use of isolation facilities.

We have delivered emergency legislation to authorise the use of a new blood test for rabies, which reduces the timescale for checking immunity, which in respect can free up quarantine spaces. Results can be turned around in a minimum of 3 days and animals may be eligible for home isolation in England if they are found to have rabies antibodies, subject to strict criteria. This will help maintain our strict biosecurity measures and may allow people to be reunited more quickly with their pets.

We continue to work with APHA to streamline the process, and are continuing to provide information in both Ukrainian, Russian and English to those wishing to travel.

We have provided full guidance on GOV.UK for those fleeing Ukraine to bring their pets to the UK. This provides detailed information on the steps that need to be taken to enter the UK. We have included advice on ports of entry and the process once their pet reaches the UK. People fleeing to the UK from Ukraine with pets should

contact the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) for a pet licence by email at ukrainePETtravel@apha.gov.uk or call +44 3000 200 301 and select option 2.

■ **Water: Pollution**

Dame Caroline Dinéage:

[153911]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will review whether the requirement in The Bathing Water Regulations 2013 that sampling must be carried out between 15 May and 30 September should be expanded to all year round bathing water sampling.

Rebecca Pow:

My officials are currently undertaking a review of bathing water policy in England.

■ **Wood-burning Stoves: Greater London**

Geraint Davies:

[155563]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he will take steps to give powers to London Authorities to tackle domestic wood burning in the capital, in response to the findings of the London Assembly Environment Committee's recent Clean Air for All Londoners report.

Jo Churchill:

The Mayor of London is responsible for air quality in the capital and already has a number of powers including:

- Oversight of London borough air quality action plans and to issue guidance to which London boroughs must have regard when carrying out their air quality duties under the Environment Act 1995.
- To issue directions to require London boroughs to take action to address local air pollution as set out in section 85 of the Environment Act 1995.

Local authorities, including in London, already have the power to declare Smoke Control Areas, in which smoke from a chimney may not be emitted, unless an authorised fuel is burned, or an exempt appliance is used (under the Clean Air Act 1993).

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Arms Trade: Sanctions**

Sam Tarry:

[151317]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of including a clause in the UK Sanctions List on preventing sanctioned arms manufacturers from showcasing their munitions in the UK.

Vicky Ford:

No UK company or person is allowed to deal with the economic resources held or controlled by a sanctioned arms company, or make funds or economic resources available for its benefit. Furthermore, the import to the UK of arms and related material consigned or originating from Russia is prohibited.

■ **Asylum: Rwanda**

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[155858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether any funding for the Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda will be funded through the overseas aid budget.

James Cleverly:

The funding for the Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda is not from the Official Development Assistance budget.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[155872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the £100.4 million of ODA spent on donating excess vaccines to developing countries in 2021, how many vaccines were shared through this spending.

Amanda Milling:

In 2021 the UK donated 30.8 million Astra Zeneca vaccines which we reported at cost, in line with the guidance from the OECD Development Assistance Committee.

■ **Democratic Republic of Congo: Humanitarian Aid**

Stephen Timms: [\[155565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the new UN Humanitarian Response Plan for Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Vicky Ford:

The UN Humanitarian Response Plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) provides a high-level overview of humanitarian needs in DRC. It is one of many assessments that the UK uses to determine where and how to respond in the country. As one of the largest humanitarian donors in DRC, the UK has been providing annual life-saving support to over one million affected people through our funding to UN, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and Red Cross partners.

■ Europe: Security

Matt Vickers:

[\[155945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her G7 counterparts on strengthening European security.

James Cleverly:

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs maintains regular contact with her G7 counterparts. In the past month, she has had discussions on strengthening European security with foreign ministers from the US, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs. On 7 April, she attended the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting with her G7 counterparts to discuss the response to Russia's war against Ukraine.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Aviation

Emily Thornberry:

[\[156411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's declarations of ministerial travel, whether the share of the travel costs attributed to ministers using (a) private charter planes or (b) RAF flights is calculated by dividing the overall costs of each plane by the total number of ministers and officials on board.

Vicky Ford:

Foreign travel is a vital part of diplomacy. The work that ministers do overseas ultimately delivers for the British people. We have three government planes for government business. They are used by the Prime Minister and Ministers for precisely this purpose. This is standard practice and in the national interest.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Visits Abroad

Emily Thornberry:

[\[156410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to her declaration of ministerial travel published on 31 March 2022 whether the total cost to the public purse of her accommodation, meals, visas and other expenses in the United States excluding travel between 19 and 23 September 2021 was £1,458.25; and if she will publish an itemised breakdown of those costs.

Vicky Ford:

Accounting for the individual cost of the Foreign Secretary can be challenging due to the nature of financial accounting between departments and overseas posts. The FCDO declares costs to the best of our ability. Where the department does not hold information - e.g. on the cost of dinners hosted by Ambassadors, or the equivalent value of a stay at the Ambassador's - the department declares flights only.

■ India: Rohingya

Catherine West:

[\[155859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the accuracy of reports that Rohingya refugees are being returned to Myanmar by the Government of India; and whether she has made representations on those reports to her Indian counterpart.

Vicky Ford:

The UK Government has been clear that any Rohingya returns to Myanmar must be voluntary, safe, dignified and in line with UNHCR principles. The Foreign Secretary engages regularly with her Indian counterpart, Minister for External Affairs Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, to discuss important global issues, including most recently during her March 2022 visit to Delhi.

■ International Law: Sanctions

Dan Carden:

[\[155897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what criteria she will use to determine when to apply sanctions to countries in breach of international law.

Vicky Ford:

The Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 (the Sanctions Act) provides the legal framework for the UK to impose, update and lift sanctions autonomously. The UK makes decisions on whether or not to designate each individual or entity under powers provided by the Sanctions Act and the relevant sanctions regulations. We will use our sanctions regimes as part of an integrated approach to promote our values and interests, and to combat state threats, terrorism, cyber-attacks, and the use and proliferation of chemical weapons.

■ Iran: Nuclear Power

Jack Lopresti:

[\[153901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the statement by the International Atomic Energy Agency's Director General on 3 March 2022, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of his statement that the IAEA will never abandon its investigation into the previous presence of nuclear material at several undeclared sites in Iran.

James Cleverly:

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General announced on 5 March that Iran and the IAEA had agreed a process for engagement on the Agency's ongoing investigation into outstanding safeguards issues in Iran. The UK fully supports the IAEA's efforts to independently monitor, investigate and report on Iran's nuclear activity. The UK has consistently urged Iran to cooperate with the IAEA on this investigation. At the IAEA Board of Governor's meeting in March 2022, the UK issued a joint statement with France and Germany reinforcing that Iran is legally

obliged to cooperate with the IAEA by providing technically credible information, documentation and answers to questions requested by the IAEA. It is only through Iran's substantive cooperation with the IAEA that these issues can be clarified and resolved.

■ **Lewa Wildlife Conservancy: Development Aid**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[155922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department has provided financial assistance to the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in Kenya.

Vicky Ford:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, including the former Department for International Development, has not directly provided financial assistance to the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.

Supporting conservation and tackling the illegal wildlife trade is a priority for the UK government. In Kenya we focus our efforts on where we can have the greatest impact to protect biodiversity and reduce poverty. Through the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/illegal-wildlife-trade-challenge-fund-iwtcf>) and Darwin Initiative (<https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/project/location/country/kenya/>) we have provided over £6.1 million to support 23 projects in Kenya since 2016. Projects include those which train rangers, border force agents and prosecutors; support legislative reform to increase conviction rates and penalties for wildlife crimes; and help communities develop sustainable livelihoods and address human/wildlife conflict.

■ **Lewa Wildlife Conservancy: Duke of Cambridge**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[155921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what occasions the Duke of Cambridge has visited Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in Kenya.

Vicky Ford:

The Duke of Cambridge has made no official visits to Lewa Conservancy. We do not comment on non-official travel.

■ **Libya: Visits Abroad**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[155920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Nawasi Brigade had any involvement in the then Foreign Secretary's visit to Tripoli in May 2017.

James Cleverly:

The UK does not disclose the security arrangements for VIP travel.

■ Mubarak Bala**Ms Marie Rimmer:**[\[151177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the continued detention of Mubarak Bala, President of the Humanist Association of Nigeria, after his court appearance on 1 February 2022.

Vicky Ford:

The UK Government is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. This is a longstanding human rights policy priority for the UK Government, and we look forward to hosting a global summit to promote FoRB later this year.

The UK Government has followed Mr Bala's case closely, and has raised his case on multiple occasions with the Nigerian authorities, including following his recent sentencing. The UK Government believes that the right of individuals to express opinions is essential to a free and open society. We are concerned by the severity and length of sentence received by Mr Bala at trial. The British High Commissioner has spoken with the Kano State Government and the Nigerian President's Chief of Staff to express those concerns. We will continue to follow developments in Mr Bala's case closely, and will continue to stress the importance of Mr Bala being treated in full accordance with his human rights, the rule of law, and the Nigerian constitutional right to FoRB.

Ms Marie Rimmer:[\[151178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department plans to send observers to the trial of Mubarak Bala, President of the Humanist Association of Nigeria, following his most recent court appearance on 1 February 2022.

Vicky Ford:

The UK Government has followed the case of Mubarak Bala, President of the Humanist Association of Nigeria closely, and has raised the importance of Mr Bala being treated in full accordance with his human rights on multiple occasions with the Nigerian authorities.

We were not able to send observers to Mr Bala's recent trial, which has now passed, because of the extant insecurity and genuine risk of violence in Kano State, where Mr Bala's trial took place. The FCDO advises against all but essential travel to Kano State, due to insecurity. We are concerned about the severity and length of sentence Mr Bala received at trial, and the British High Commissioner has spoken with the Kano State Government and the Nigerian President's Chief of Staff to express those concerns. We will continue to monitor the case and consider the merit and viability of attending any future trial or appeal should one take place.

■ Nigeria: Abduction

John Spellar:

[\[156371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department has made representations to the Government of Nigeria regarding those abducted from train AK9 on 28 March 2022, some of whom have relatives in the UK.

Vicky Ford:

I expressed my public condemnation following the tragic Abuja-Kaduna train attack, and expressed my condolences to Foreign Minister Onyeama.

Officials from the British High Commission in Nigeria have raised the attack with representatives from the Kaduna State Government. The UK Government is committed to working with Nigeria to tackle insecurity, and we have provided support to the Nigerian police to improve their anti-kidnap capacity. I discussed rising insecurity in Nigeria with the Vice President and with the Foreign Minister when I visited Nigeria in February; and with Nigeria's National Security Advisor during the first dialogue of our Security and Defence Partnership in February in London. At the dialogue, the UK and Nigeria committed to further our cooperation on preventing kidnaps in Nigeria.

■ Pooja Kumari

Andrew Lewer:

[\[151270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the case of Pooja Kumari, an 18 year old Hindu girl in Pakistan, who was allegedly killed for refusing to convert to Islam and resisting attempted abduction and forced marriage to Wahid Bux Lashari.

James Cleverly:

The UK strongly condemns forced marriage and the forced conversion of women and girls. We regularly raise our concerns about Freedom of Religion or Belief and women and girls' rights at a senior level with the Government of Pakistan. During his visit to Pakistan on 23 and 24 June 2021, Lord Ahmad met the then Prime Minister, as well as other senior government ministers, and discussed our concerns. He met interfaith leaders to understand the situation of Pakistani minorities, particularly the issue of forced conversion and marriage. Most recently, he discussed the need to promote respect for all religions with the then Governor of Punjab on 28 November 2021. The FCDO funds programmes in Pakistan that directly address early and forced marriages and gender-based violence. The UK government has supported the Government of Pakistan in setting up eight child courts to provide child-sensitive justice to children who come in contact with the law, including victims of child abuse, trafficking and child marriage.

■ Russia: Diplomatic Service**Neil Coyle:** [\[155766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government has plans to expel personnel from the Russian Embassy in the UK.

James Cleverly:

We will continue to consider options in concert with our allies. Having Russian representatives in the UK allows us to deliver clear and tough messages directly to Putin's Government, as the FCDO summoning of the Russian Ambassador and the MoD summoning of the Russian Defence Attaché demonstrated.

■ Russia: Financial Services**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** [\[154274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support is being offered to UK nationals who have the majority of their funds in Russian bank accounts in the context of the recently passed Russian law which prohibits the transfer of funds from Russian to UK accounts.

James Cleverly:

Where Russian legislation impacts on individuals, we advise them to liaise directly with their banks or service providers and seek legal advice.

■ Russia: Sanctions**Matt Vickers:** [\[155948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment her Department has made of the impact of sanctions on the Russian economy.

James Cleverly:

We have implemented the largest and most severe package of economic sanctions that Russia has ever seen. Sanctions imposed by the UK and its international partners are having deep and damaging consequences for Putin's ability to wage war, with £275 billion - 60% of Russian foreign currency reserves - currently frozen. It is estimated that Russia's GDP will fall by between 8.5 and 15 per cent.

■ Sanctions: Civil Proceedings**Bob Seely:** [\[155913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the Government's policy is on individuals subject to sanctions pursuing legal action in the UK courts.

Vicky Ford:

The Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 (SAML A) provides sanctioned individuals with a right to review of their designation, and designated persons are able to challenge that decision in UK courts.

■ Somaliland: Fires**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[155601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help support Somaliland following the recent fire in Hargeisa.

Vicky Ford:

Our thoughts are with the people who have been affected by the fire at Hargeisa market, which caused injuries and extensive damage to businesses. The UK is leading diplomatic and development response efforts on the ground, including by chairing an international community coordination group, which is working with the Somaliland authorities to identify the necessary response.

■ Three Seas Initiative**Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[155676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans her Department has for the UK to develop and undertake a leadership role within the Three Seas Initiative.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government continues to support the aims of the Three Seas Initiative. Improving infrastructure connectivity, including on energy, in the Baltics and Central Eastern Europe has a renewed urgency following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and contributes to strengthening wider European security. The Foreign Secretary will attend the Three Seas Initiative Summit in Riga this summer, alongside a Trade Commissioner-led UK Business Delegation, demonstrating UK commitment to the region and promoting UK business.

■ Tigray: Humanitarian Aid**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[150130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with the government of Ethiopia on the benefits for humanitarian access of the reopening of other land routes into the Tigray region in addition to the Abala-Mekele route; and what assessment she has made of adherence to (a) the ceasefire and (b) commitments to the provision of humanitarian access by all parties to the conflict since 24 March 2022.

Vicky Ford:

We continue to have active discussions in Ethiopia, with the Government of Ethiopia, Humanitarian Agencies and Regional Governments, on implementing the delivery of aid following the 24 March cessation of hostilities, and on exploring all routes to

provide urgently needed humanitarian assistance for Tigray. As I [Minister Ford] expressed in my statement of 1 April, the arrival of a humanitarian convoy in Tigrayan controlled areas on that day was a welcome development, but we need to see sustained humanitarian access to the region.

Mark Logan:

[\[151315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment her Department has made of the humanitarian situation in Tigray; and what steps her Department is taking to assist the people of Tigray.

Vicky Ford:

The humanitarian situation in Ethiopia, from north to south, is grave and is worsening. More than 400,000 people are experiencing catastrophic famine-like conditions in Tigray and this year nearly 30 million people throughout the country will require life-saving aid. In northern regions conflict has affected more than 9 million people - including 5.2 million people in Tigray, where humanitarian access is negligible. As I [Minister Ford] expressed in my statement of 1 April, the arrival of a humanitarian convoy in Tigrayan-controlled areas on that day was a welcome development, but we now need to see sustained humanitarian access.

Since the start of the conflict in November 2020 the UK has allocated more than £75 million in humanitarian assistance for Northern Ethiopia. This includes £15.6 million to the World Food Programme (WFP) for its food and nutrition operations in northern Ethiopia. This helped WFP reach more than 885,000 people with food assistance and approximately 219,000 people with nutrition support. We welcome the cessation of hostilities announced by the Ethiopian Government and agreed by Tigrayan authorities on 25 March. All parties to the conflict must now facilitate urgent humanitarian relief, especially to communities in Tigray who have not had food aid for months.

■ Ukraine: Humanitarian Aid

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[155871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much of the £25 million match-funding to the DEC Appeal has been disbursed to date.

James Cleverly:

In partnership with DEC, FCDO has agreed a disbursement schedule for UK Aid Match funding that will ensure DEC are able to make timely disbursements to their implementing partners on the ground, alongside donations from the UK public. We expect to make a first payment to DEC of £10 million in UK Aid Match funding shortly.

■ Ukraine: Military Aid

Owen Thompson:

[\[155831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the Government is providing to Ukraine for dismantling and countering the effect of Russian disinformation bot facilities.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office works closely with the Government of Ukraine to counter Russian disinformation, and co-ordinates activity with the Counter Disinformation Unit, led by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and the Government Information Cell.

The FCDO's Counter Disinformation and Media Development Programme has developed a number of projects involved in identifying disinformation. These projects continue to be successful in exposing Russia-linked information operations and disinformation methodologies. Where appropriate, information is shared with international partners including the Government of Ukraine.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Abingdon Health****Rachel Hopkins:**[\[103699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department holds minutes of the meetings between the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Innovation and Abingdon Health on 1 April 2020, 29 April 2020 and 13 May 2020; and who attended those meetings on behalf of (a) his Department and (b) Abingdon Health.

Edward Argar:

The Department holds a minute of the telephone call on 1 April 2020. This was attended by the former the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Lord Bethell), a private secretary, officials from the Department and the Office for Life Sciences (OLS) and by Dr Chris Hand and Chris Yates of Abingdon Health.

The Department holds a minute of the telephone call on 29 April 2020. This was attended by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, a private secretary and Departmental and OLS officials. Dr Chris Hand and Chris Yates attended from Abingdon Health.

A telephone call took place on 13 May 2020, attended by the former Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, a private secretary and Departmental and OLS officials. Chris Yates and Dr Chris Hand attended from Abingdon Health. However, the Department does not hold a note of this telephone call.

■ Ambulance Services: Standards**Julian Sturdy:**[\[153931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average ambulance response times were in (a) York and North Yorkshire and (b) England for the latest period for which figures are available; and what steps his Department is taking to help reduce ambulance response times.

Julian Sturdy:[\[153932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help improve ambulance response times by assisting hospitals in (a) reducing ambulance patient handover and (b) ambulance queuing times.

Edward Argar:

The information requested is not held for York and North Yorkshire. However, the following table shows the mean average response time in hours minutes and seconds for each category in England and the Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) and England in March 2022.

CATEGORY	ENGLAND	YAS
Category 1	9:35	9:42
Category 2	1:01:03	46:41
Category 3	3:28:13	2:33:59
Category 4	3:07:42	2:37:25

The National Health Service is implementing its Urgent and Emergency Care Recovery Action Plan to improve patient flow through hospital to help improve performance in accident and emergency (A&E) departments, accelerating patient handovers and releasing ambulances to respond new calls. The Plan aims to ensure that medically fit patients can be discharged earlier, increase the role of NHS 111 to assist people to access the appropriate primary care service and avoid additional demands on urgent care and A&E.

■ **Asthma: Drugs**

Jim Shannon:[\[153958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the findings of LOGEX's International Comparison Medicines Uptake 2021 report to NHS England & NHS Improvement, published in December 2021, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the capacity available in the severe asthma centres on levels of uptake of severe asthma biologics.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made. NHS England and NHS Improvement's Severe Asthma Collaborative are developing the capacity of the severe asthma centres to streamline patient pathways to biologic therapy and reduce variation in prescribing and patient management. A toolkit has been produced to support clinical teams.

■ Ayanda Capital

Nick Smith:

[\[153874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department has paid to Ayanda Capital Ltd for the purchase of personal protective equipment; and whether that company has met its contractual obligations for providing adequate personal protective equipment under the contractual terms set by his Department.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 21 April 2022]: The Department has paid £252,500,000 to Ayanda Capital for the purchase of personal protective equipment. We are unable to provide the contractual information requested as it is commercially sensitive.

■ Brain Cancer: Research

Seema Malhotra:

[\[153975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to encourage research into (a) causes of and (b) treatments for brain cancer.

Maria Caulfield:

As part of the establishment of the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission (TJBCM) the Department announced £40 million over five years for brain tumour research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). In 2018, the NIHR released a public announcement to the research community making clear the desire to receive brain tumour research funding applications. However, we rely on researchers to submit high-quality research proposals, which includes the causes of treatment for brain tumours.

Working with the TJBCM, we have held workshops to support and encourage the research community in submitting more fundable research applications to the NIHR. We will also provide funding for the research training elements of the Tessa Jowell Fellowships to train specialist brain tumour oncologists and increase the research community in this area.

The recent designation of Tessa Jowell Centres of Excellence aims to unite professional, patient, charity and Government groups to share information and establish programmes which will lead ultimately to a cure for brain tumours. Additionally, the Tessa Jowell Academy is a new free learning and networking platform, connecting 28 National Health Service brain tumour centres to share excellence in research, treatment and care. Hosted on an online interactive platform, members have access to resources including courses and workshops, a peer-to-peer learning service, a bespoke clinical trial finder and networking opportunities. Academy content is created by clinicians and representatives from partner organisations with support of the TJBCM based on the needs expressed by the professional brain tumour community. The Department is liaising with the Medical Research Council on initiatives to stimulate discovery science to increase the research pipeline for brain tumours.

Seema Malhotra:

[\[153976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to prioritise research into brain cancer.

Maria Caulfield:

In May 2018 the Government announced £40 million over five years for brain tumour research as part of the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission, through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The NIHR released an announcement to the research community, making clear the desire to receive brain tumour research funding applications. This has led to an increase in proposals. Those proposals which have been funded include a £1.7 million trial of functional and ultrasound guided surgery for glioblastoma and £1.4 million for intraoperative hyperspectral imaging for surgical guidance.

The NIHR welcomes high quality proposals for brain tumour research continues to encourage funding applications in this area.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[154446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will commit to (a) reviewing and (b) increasing the allocation of funding for brain tumour research.

Maria Caulfield:

As with other Government funders of health research, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) does not allocate funding for specific disease areas. The level of research expenditure in a particular area is determined by factors including scientific potential and the number of successful funding applications.

In May 2018, the Government announced £40 million over five years for brain tumour research as part of the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission, through the NIHR. The NIHR has subsequently funded all applications which have been fundable in open competition. However, this remains a challenging scientific area with a relatively small research community. We are reviewing ways to increase research capacity to deliver more fundable applications.

■ **Breast Cancer: Coronavirus**

Jim Shannon:

[\[156454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the backlog of women who are waiting to see a breast cancer specialist as a result of delays caused by the covid-19 outbreak.

Maria Caulfield:

The 'Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care', published in February 2022, states that NHS England will ensure that 75% of patients who have been urgently referred by their general practitioner for suspected cancer will be diagnosed or have cancer ruled out within 28 days by March 2024. It also commits NHS England to reducing the number of people waiting more than 62 days to start

treatment after being urgently referred due to suspected cancer to pre-pandemic levels by March 2023.

To support delivery of the plan, including cancer care, we have allocated more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25, in addition to the £2 billion Elective Recovery Fund and £700 million Targeted Investment Fund already made available to systems in 2021 to increase elective activity.

■ **Breast Cancer: Ellesmere Port and Neston**

Justin Madders:

[\[154078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the current waiting time is for a breast cancer referral in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency.

Maria Caulfield:

The information requested is not collected at constituency level.

■ **Cancer: Nurses**

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[155607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the costs of training a cancer clinical nurse specialist.

Edward Argar:

Cancer Nurse Specialist (CNS) is a post registration nursing specialism. There are a number of different routes to becoming a CNS. Typically, a CNS would have qualified as an adult nurse before undertaking post registration training, which often comprises a number of BSc and/or MSc modules or programmes.

A Department of Health and Social Care and Department for Education funded study by the Personal Social Services Research Unit at the University of Kent shows the total investment training cost for an undergraduate nurse as £66,544. No specific estimate of post registration CNS training has been made. Training would normally be funded by employers and the cost varies according to the nature of training provided.

■ **Cannabis: Medical Treatments**

Justin Madders:

[\[154069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of access to medicinal cannabis for people who are eligible.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government has amended the law to allow specialist doctors in the United Kingdom to prescribe cannabis-based products, where clinically appropriate and in the best interests of patients. Licensed cannabis-based medicines are routinely available on the National Health Service. However, clinical guidelines from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence demonstrate a clear need for more evidence to support routine prescribing and funding decisions for unlicensed

cannabis-based products for medicinal use. Until that evidence base is built, prescribers will remain reticent to prescribe and no decision can be made by the NHS on routine funding. We continue to call on manufacturers to conduct this research and we are working with regulatory, research and NHS partners to establish clinical trials to test the safety and efficacy of these products.

■ **Cataracts: Surgery**

Anneliese Dodds: [\[154360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what is the current average wait time for a cataract operation in (a) Oxfordshire and (b) England.

Edward Argar:

In 2021/2022, the average waiting time for a cataract operation was 133 days in Oxfordshire and 199 days in England.

■ **Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Long Covid: Medical Treatments**

Stephen Morgan: [\[154338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made a comparative assessment of the (a) symptoms of and (b) treatments for myalgic encephalomyelitis and long covid.

Maria Caulfield:

No comparative assessment has been made. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence currently recommends separate pathways for the assessment, treatment, and management of the long term effects of COVID-19 and myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Charlotte Nichols: [\[155934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department holds data on the number of NHS staff fined for breaking covid-19 related restrictions in the workplace.

Edward Argar:

This information is not held centrally.

■ **Coronavirus: Mortality Rates**

Rachael Maskell: [\[155809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Government's plans for living with covid-19, what plans he has to reduce the mortality rate of those dying with covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

The best defence against COVID-19 infection and the risk of mortality is vaccination. As of 10 April 2022, 85.5% of the population in England aged 12 years old and over

had received two doses of vaccine and 72.3% of those aged over 18 years old had received a third primary dose or booster vaccination.

On 21 February 2022, the Government accepted advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) on offering a further dose to some individuals in a spring COVID-19 vaccination programme. The primary aim of the programme is to reduce the risk of severe disease and therefore mortality among those deemed most at-risk. A further dose is being offered to adults aged 75 years old and over, residents in care homes for older adults and individuals aged 12 years old and over who are immunosuppressed.

For those who are ineligible for the vaccine or who have been vaccinated but do not develop sufficient immunity, antiviral and other treatments are available. The Government has secured 4.98 million patient courses of oral antiviral treatments to reduce the impact of COVID-19 and the Omicron variant in the United Kingdom. The most recent data from the Office for National Statistics indicates that mortality rates due to COVID-19 in England decreased to 55.3 deaths per 100,000 people in February 2022 from 79.3 in January 2022.

■ **Coronavirus: Protective Clothing**

Angela Rayner:

[\[121767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many contracts were directly awarded without competitive tender outside the high priority lane for supply of personal protection equipment during the covid-19 outbreak; and what the total amount paid was.

Edward Argar:

Of the 279 Government contracts awarded outside of the high priority lane, the vast majority used emergency procedures under Regulation 32(2)(c) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. This allows the direct award of a contract without competitive tendering in cases of “extreme urgency brought about by events unforeseeable by the contracting authority”.

A small number of these contracts were awarded directly where these procedures did not apply, such as those to other Government departments or where a framework agreement allows for a direct award. The value of the Government contracts awarded outside of the High Priority Lane was £4.1 billion.

Angela Rayner:

[\[151132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has authorised the use of gowns purchased from Clandeboye Agencies Limited during the covid-19 pandemic.

Angela Rayner:

[\[151133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what total contractual price was (a) agreed and (b) paid to Clandeboye Agencies Limited for fluid repellent gowns for use by the NHS during the covid-19 pandemic.

Edward Argar:

The Department has authorised the use of gowns purchased from Clandeboye Agencies Limited during the pandemic. The total contractual price agreed and paid was £107,520,000.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Ruth Cadbury:**[\[151150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people who are extremely critically vulnerable are able to receive free covid-19 PCR tests.

Maggie Throup:

Those at higher risk of serious illness and who are eligible for treatment continue to have access to free lateral flow device (LFD) testing. The UK Health Security Agency has issued a pack of LFD tests to all potentially eligible patients for use if they become symptomatic. These patients can re-order free tests via GOV.UK or 119.

The priority polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test channel is no longer used to access treatments. Patients in the COVID Medicines Delivery Unit cohort are asked to use LFD testing to access treatment as quickly as possible following symptom onset, when it is most likely to be effective. Individuals with a priority PCR kit at home should retain it as they may be asked to use a PCR test if they receive a COVID-19 treatment. The National Health Service team arranging the patient's treatment will advise how to obtain a PCR test if required and when it should be used.

Valerie Vaz:[\[155705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of reintroducing free covid-19 lateral flow tests for asymptomatic clinically vulnerable people.

Maggie Throup:

The success of the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme and the availability of antiviral treatments has reduced the risk of severe illness or hospitalisation for the majority of the population. For those unable to mount a full immune response, testing pathways to evidence based effective COVID-19 treatments will be available. We will continue to monitor prevalence and other factors, keeping testing policies under review.

■ Coronavirus: Sick Leave**Feryal Clark:**[\[154471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the Government's Living with COVID strategy on levels of NHS covid-19 sickness related absences.

Edward Argar:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ Dental Services: Contracts

Judith Cummins:

[\[155776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what activity target he plans to set for NHS dental practices in the first quarter of 2022-23; and when he plans to communicate that target to NHS dental contract holders.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England and NHS Improvement published details of the contractual arrangements for the first quarter of 2022/23 on 5 April 2022. Between April and June 2022, NHS England and NHS Improvement have asked practices to deliver at least 95% of contracted units of dental activity and 100% of units of orthodontic activity to improve access for patients safely. Many contractors are already delivering over 100% and the sector aims to safely return to pre-pandemic levels of activity as quickly as possible.

■ Dental Services: Coronavirus

Judith Cummins:

[\[155774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the capacity of NHS dentistry to tackle the covid-19 backlog.

Judith Cummins:

[\[155775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his timetable is for increasing availability to NHS dentistry (a) nationally and (b) by region.

Maria Caulfield:

Between April and June 2022, NHS England and NHS Improvement have asked practices to deliver at least 95% of contracted units of dental activity and 100% of units of orthodontic activity to improve access for patients safely. Many contractors are already delivering over 100% and the sector is working to safely return to pre-pandemic levels of activity as quickly as possible.

We have developed a number of short to medium term measures to National Health Service dentistry with a range of stakeholders, aimed at improving access and supporting NHS dentists and their teams. We are currently negotiating these measures with the British Dental Association and the development of further proposed changes will follow these discussions.

■ Dental Services: Equality

Justin Madders:

[\[155795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 March 2022 to Question 119642 on Dental Health Inequalities, what his timetable is for publishing a report covering April 2021 to March 2022; and what plans the Government has to tackle any inequalities found.

Maria Caulfield:

The report published in March 2021 was a standalone report. There are currently no plans to publish a report on dental inequalities from April 2021 to March 2022. Action to tackle oral health inequalities will form part of plans to improve health and reduce existing inequalities.

■ Dental Services: South East**Caroline Lucas:**[\[146593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 10 February 2022 to Question 116904 on Dental Services: South East, how many dental practices in (a) the Brighton and Hove area, (b) the South East and (c) England have taken up the offer to deliver additional NHS dental hours as a direct result of the funding announced on the NHS England website on 25 January 2022 on securing additional dental appointments for people with oral pain, disease, and infection; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

The information requested is not collected at constituency level. National Health Service dentists submit FP17 forms for dental activity data for up to two months following completion of a course of treatment. The information requested on the additional activity in the South East and England is currently being collated and we expect it will be available from June 2022.

■ Dentistry and Medicine: Student Numbers**Ben Everitt:**[\[154486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to increase the cap on medical and dentistry courses for students in 2022.

Edward Argar:

There are currently no plans to increase the cap on medical or dentistry school places in England in 2022.

■ Dentistry: Training**Rachael Maskell:**[\[155811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of the model of York and Hull Medical School being used as a model for a future dental school across Yorkshire and Humber; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the number of (a) dentists and (b) allied dental professions in training to meet future demand.

Edward Argar:

We continue to monitor the number and location of training places for dentistry and the allied dental professions, to ensure that the National Health Service has the appropriate staff in these professions to meet future demand. We currently have no

plans for a new dental school in Yorkshire and the Humber and no specific assessment of the Universities of Hull and York Medical School has been made.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Meller Group**

Angela Rayner:

[\[151136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 March 2022 to Question 101747 on Department of Health and Social Care: Meller Group, whether the reference to LB in the meeting minute is to a Departmental official; and whether the reference to Michael office refers to the office of the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 19 April 2022]: In the minute to the meeting of 6 April 2020, LB refers to the former Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Lord Bethell). The Department's records do not include details which enable us to confirm the reference to 'Michael's office'.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Procurement**

Angela Rayner:

[\[151131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 24 March 2022 to Question UIN 121770 on Procurement, for what reason aggregated totals of the financial assessments for all companies recorded on his Department's spreadsheet entitled Product VIP Atamis have been deemed commercially sensitive.

Angela Rayner:

[\[151134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 March 2022 to Question UIN 120782, for what reason it is commercially sensitive to describe the category of supplier listed in his Department's spreadsheet Product_VIP_Atamis and the meaning of the designation VIP in that spreadsheet.

Edward Argar:

The information requested is commercially sensitive as the Department is currently involved in mediation with a number of companies where there are confidentiality undertakings. This protects the commercial interests of the Department and suppliers during this process to ensure we can obtain value for money.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Radox Laboratories**

Angela Rayner:

[\[119609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Return to an Address of the Honourable the House of Commons dated 17 November 2021 for specified minutes, notes, and correspondence relating to Government contracts awarded to Radox Laboratories Ltd, HC1072, laid before the House on 3 February 2022, Ref 24, page 46, whether his Department holds any other records relating to the attempted

removal of extraction systems by Randox Laboratories Limited from Queen's and Ulster Universities and the AFBI Lab; and what steps he took in response.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 10 February 2022]: The Department does not hold further records relating to this matter. There is no record of any further steps taken by the former Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (the Rt. hon. Matt Hancock MP).

■ **Doctors' List of Patients: Ukraine**

Michael Fabricant:

[\[150980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance and assistance his Department provides to (a) clinical commissioning groups and (b) general practitioners on enabling Ukrainian refugees who are temporarily resident in the UK to be able to register easily and quickly for GP services.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 19 April 2022]: The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities produces the 'Migrant health guide', a free, online resource designed to support primary care practitioners. It includes information on migrants' entitlement to the National Health Service, guidance for assessing new patients, tailored health information specific to over 100 countries of origin and guidance on a range of communicable and non-communicable diseases and health issues. In addition, all arrivals will receive a welcome pack in Ukrainian, Russian or English which outlines their entitlement to free health care and includes details of how to register with a general practitioner.

■ **Donors: HIV Infection**

Florence Eshalomi:

[\[155953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government has plans to review legislation on gamete donation for people living with HIV in the context of the recent reduction in the risk of transmission through gamete donation.

Florence Eshalomi:

[\[155954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent correspondence his Department has received on the restrictions on gamete donations for people living with HIV.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government has no current plans to review the legislation related to the quality and safety of reproductive tissues and cells.

The Department recently contributed to a response to correspondence on the current guidance for gamete donation and people living with HIV. In the reply we stated that, in view of the current scientific understanding of HIV transmission risk, the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs does not support or advise a change to the current guidance.

■ Emergency Calls

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[155679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of callers to 999 in (a) England and (b) Shropshire are transported to hospital.

Edward Argar:

In March 2022 there were 31,000 calls per day to 999 in England, of which 11,700 or 37.7% were conveyed to hospital. Data for Shropshire is not held centrally.

■ Employment and Support Allowance: Fines

Christian Matheson: [\[154039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many contribution-based ESA claimants have been fined as a result of an erroneous belief that they were entitled to claim free dental treatment while on benefits.

Maria Caulfield:

In 2019/2020, the NHS Business Services Authority issued 12,411 Penalty Charge Notices to patients who had provided receipt of Employment and Support Allowance as an exemption for their dental treatment. Prior to the issuance of a fine, patients are permitted to demonstrate their eligibility for free National Health Service dental treatment.

Exemption checking for NHS dentistry was paused during the pandemic to limit the spread of COVID-19 through the handling and signing of papers between patients and dental staff. Patient signatures were reintroduced on 1 September 2021.

■ Excalibur Healthcare Services

Nick Smith: [\[153875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department has paid to Excalibur Healthcare for the purchase of personal protective equipment; and whether that company has met its contractual obligations for providing adequate personal protective equipment under the contractual terms set by his Department.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 April 2022]: The Department paid £25,135,000 to Excalibur Healthcare for the purchase of personal protective equipment. However, we are unable to provide the information requested on contractual obligations as this commercially sensitive.

■ General Practitioners

Adam Afriyie: [\[153862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people can access face-to-face GP services.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England and NHS Improvement's guidance states that general practices should provide face to face appointments, alongside remote consultations. Patient input should be sought on the type of consultation with preferences for face to face care respected, unless there are good clinical reasons to the contrary. Excluding COVID-19 vaccinations, in February 2022 61.3% of appointments were conducted in person.

We have made £520 million available to improve access and expand general practice capacity during the pandemic. This is in addition to £1.5 billion announced in 2020 to create an additional 50 million general practice appointments by 2024 by increasing and diversifying the workforce.

Carla Lockhart:[\[154510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many new GPs have been registered in each of the last 5 years.

Maria Caulfield:

The information is not held in the format requested.

■ General Practitioners: Digital Technology**Feryal Clark:**[\[154465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the capacity of general practice across England and Wales to deliver online booking to patients.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to review the online booking of appointments in general practice. Since 2015, general practitioner (GP) practices have been required to offer online booking and from April 2019, a significant proportion of appointments must be available online. Due to the pandemic and the adoption of online consultation systems and triage models, NHS England and NHS Improvement amended the requirements for practices operating a triage model. The 2022/23 GP contract letter states that certain appointment types should now be available online, to provide general practices with greater flexibility.

■ General Practitioners: Recruitment**Daisy Cooper:**[\[154418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) to allow diverting ring-fenced ARRS funding towards core GP funding so that those practices can recruit more core staff before creating new roles.

Maria Caulfield:

The Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) is designed to be used for reimbursing those salaries and on-costs of roles included in the Scheme. The range of roles have been selected due to the ability to support the core work of general

practice and new service specifications in the Primary Care Network (PCN) Direct Enhanced Service. As private contractors, general practitioners make their own workforce plans and recruitment decisions

NHS England evaluates the Scheme's effectiveness, taking into account the views of stakeholders and making adjustments as necessary. This includes the incorporation of London weighting in response to such feedback. The funding available for PCNs to recruit additional staff will increase by £280 million to approximately £1 billion in 2022/23. PCNs will continue to have flexibility to recruit into any of the 15 roles within the Scheme.

■ **General Practitioners: Rural Areas**

Bim Afolami:

[\[155894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that rural communities' access to a local GP surgery is maintained.

Maria Caulfield:

Capitation payments to practices include a formula weighting for rurality. The Targeted Enhanced Recruitment Scheme offers a £20,000 salary supplement to attract general practitioner trainees to work in areas of the country where training places have been unfilled for a number of years, such as rural locations. Additionally, NHS England and NHS Improvement have allowed commissioners to waive the Primary Care Network (PCN) minimum population where a PCN serves a community with a low population density across a large rural and remote area.

■ **General Practitioners: Workplace Pensions**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[155686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 March 2022 to Question 138173, on General Practitioners: Pensions, whether the (a) report undertaken by NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSEI) into the performance of Primary Care Support England (PCSE), delivered by Capita, in respect of Capita's contract to deliver the administration of NHS pension records and (b) findings from task and finish groups established by NHSEI to consider the performance of PCSE's administration of the NHS Pension Scheme have been discussed at the monthly governance board in place to monitor and assure the delivery of PCSE's service; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

The NHS Business Services Authority is the scheme manager for NHS Pensions, with NHS England and NHS Improvement acting as the host board for general practitioners (GPs) and holding responsibility for the local pension administration for GPs, provided through the Primary Care Support England (PCSE) contract.

NHS England and NHS Improvement and the NHS Business Services Authority routinely meet with PCSE monthly to discuss and consider the performance of the pension administration service, operational priorities and changes which will impact

on pension administration. The task and finish group oversees developments and improvements to the service and provides updates to NHS England and NHS Improvement's Pensions Governance Board.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[155687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what key performance indicator targets have been set by NHS England and NHS Improvement for the administration of the NHS Pension Scheme by Primary Care Support England, delivered by Capita; what estimate his Department has made of the length of time a GP contacting PCSE with a query related to their pension administration waits for a reply; how many GP NHS Pension Scheme records, as administered by PCSE, are currently not up-to-date; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

The following table shows the performance and quality targets set by NHS England and NHS Improvement for the delivery of the pensions service.

TARGET	DESCRIPTION
97%	General practitioner (GP) locum and solo pension contributions are validated and submitted to NHS Shared Business Services Wakefield within 25 working days after receipt of BACS/cheques.
96%	All type one and type two pension certificates received are processed within 61 calendar days of receipt.
99%	Requests for estimates application for retirement benefits are notified to the NHS Pensions Agency within three working days of receipt by Primary Care Support England (PCSE).
100%	The NHS pensions compliance assurance statement submitted to the customer before the annual cut-off date.
98%	All GP pension contribution payments data is submitted on time at least five working days before the payment due date.
96%	All type one and two pension certificates processed in Pensions Online by Total Reward Statement cut-off date (measured three times a year).

TARGET	DESCRIPTION
96%	All pension estimates are processed within 45 working days.

The following table shows pension related quality measures:

TARGET	DESCRIPTION
95.78%	All GP pension contribution payments data is submitted on time at least five working days before the payment due date.
95.74%	All type one and two pension certificates processed in Pensions Online by Total Reward Statement cut-off date (measured three times a year).

The PCSE pension service relates to work conducted for NHS England and NHS Improvement in a primary care setting. Last year, PCSE received 33,700 End of Year Certificates for 2019/20 and processed 91%, with the remaining 9% requiring further action due to missing or inaccurate information.

The processing of the 2020/21 certificates is underway in line with the normal annual process. Of the 2020/21 certificates, 20% were submitted using the new Pensions Online system, which ensures that submissions are more accurate and allows records to be updated more efficiently. While 'offline' options currently remain, these are less reliable with approximately 50% of certificates returned to the member for correction.

PCSE aim to respond to most types of GP pension queries within 10 working days, though some queries are currently taking longer to resolve given the increased volumes currently being experienced. No estimate has been made on the average response time.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[155688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of GPs wait over (a) six months, (b) 12 months and (c) 18 months to receive their NHS Pension scheme pension after submitting their AW8 form to Primary Care Support England, delivered by Capita.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[155689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of GPs wait over (a) six months, (b) 12 months and (c) 18 months to receive their NHS Pension scheme pension since their date of retirement due to errors in their NHS Pension

record administrated by Primary Care Support England, delivered by Capita; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

NHS Pensions rules prevent an AW8 form from being processed earlier than 105 days before the retirement date. However, it is not unusual for AW8s to be submitted to Primary Care Support England (PCSE) at an earlier date. General practitioners (GPs) and non-GP partners are responsible for ensuring all pension administration for the duration of their NHS Pension membership is updated before AW8 forms are submitted.

Every GP now has access to PCSE Online. This provides transparency and allows all information to be checked before AW8 forms are submitted. PCSE is developing a retirement guide with the British Medical Association and NHS Pensions to assist GPs with this process.

Within six months of PCSE being permitted to process an application upon receipt of an AW8 form, 78% of retirements are processed. The remaining 22% processed after six months are either awaiting more information from the GP or approval from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). If a GP wishes to retire from the National Performers List, notification can be given through PCSE Online. The Performers List Regulations requests three months' notice of the intention to retire. GP partners and principals require approval from the CCG.

Upon receipt of the AW8 form and once 105 calendar days before the retirement date has been reached, the entirety of the pension scheme member's administration is checked for completeness and accuracy. Approximately 11% of applications require further information from the member to ensure their record is correct before it can be progressed and all applications require approval either by the CCG or GP practice.

■ **Health Education England: Finance**

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[155606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the budget is for Health Education England for 2022-23.

Edward Argar:

Health Education England has received an opening programme budget of more than £5 billion for 2022/23.

■ **Health Professions: Cancer**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[155729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the shortage of specialist cancer staff in the NHS workforce.

Edward Argar:

We are investing an additional £50 million in 2022/23 to further expand the cancer and diagnostics workforce. Between 2016 and 2021, the annual growth rate of the

overall cancer workforce has remained between 3 to 4%. The forthcoming 10 Year Cancer Plan will also ensure we have the right workforce in place.

■ Health Professions: Migrant Workers

Derek Thomas:

[\[154252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with representatives of the General Medical Council on access to PLAB 1 and PLAB 2 tests for medical professionals who want to help tackle backlogs in the NHS.

Edward Argar:

The General Medical Council (GMC) is the independent regulator of doctors and is responsible for operational matters, including those relating to the Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board (PLAB) tests.

Most international medical graduates are required to pass both the PLAB 1 and PLAB 2 tests to demonstrate they have the right skills and knowledge to practise in the United Kingdom. In 2022, the GMC is offering 15,018 PLAB 1 places and 14,338 PLAB 2 places and has opened a third clinical assessment centre in Manchester to accommodate PLAB 2 candidates. The GMC will consider increasing PLAB test availability if necessary.

■ Health Professions: Resignations

Carla Lockhart:

[\[154512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) doctors, (b) nurses, and (c) health visitors have left the NHS since 23 March 2020.

Edward Argar:

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

As data is only collected for the last day of each month, the following table shows the headcount number of HCHS doctors, nurses and health visitors who have left active service from 31 March 2020 to 31 December 2021.

STAFF GROUP	LEAVERS
HCHS doctors	24,127
Nurses	45,903
Health visitors	1,274

Notes:

1. This analysis excludes Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust as they did not use the Electronic Staff Record prior to March 2021.

- The data includes staff leaving to work for other health or social care providers as well as staff leaving active service, for example, to go on maternity leave or a career break.

■ Health Services: Home Visits

Steve McCabe:

[\[153720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to home visits from healthcare professionals, what guidance his Department has issued for people who want to challenge their status as able to leave their house with minimal assistance or support.

Maria Caulfield:

Under the GP Contract, practices must establish and operate a complaints procedure to deal with complaints in relation to any matter reasonably connected with the provision of services under the Contract.

Where a patient wishes to challenge the decision of the practice, the patient should follow the local complaints procedure, which includes an escalation process in the event of an unsatisfactory outcome. Practices must include information for patients on how to make a complaint or comment on the provision of services in the practice's leaflet or website.

■ Health Services: Reciprocal Arrangements

Emily Thornberry:

[\[156408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what purpose his Department has commissioned legal advice from Pinsent Masons LLP on matters relating to (a) DHSC funding of overseas healthcare and (b) the charging of healthcare provided in the UK.

Edward Argar:

The Department commissioned advice and training from Pinsent Masons LLP on the powers available to the Department, health boards and clinical commissioning groups to fund healthcare abroad and how these interrelate.

■ Health Services: Shropshire

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[151034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Hospitals Transformation Programme on the standard of planned care services in Shropshire.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[151035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of support among local clinicians in Shropshire for the hospitals transformation programme.

Edward Argar:

The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust's current hospitals do not provide sufficient capacity or adequate separation of facilities for emergency care and planned care. The Hospital Transformation Programme will deliver a dedicated planned care centre at the Princess Royal Hospital, with emergency and complex care being carried out at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, alongside Telford's accident and emergency Local. This will enable the Trust to significantly reduce cancellations and delays of planned activity, as well as reducing healthcare acquired infections.

The Future Fit programme was clinically led and clinicians have been involved in the process, from option development, options appraisal, consultation, stakeholder engagement and the current development of the draft Strategic Outline Case.

Doctors, nurses, therapists, managers and other staff were integral in helping develop the proposals prior to consultation. Leading up to the consultation, over 60% of consultants working at the two hospitals, as well as clinicians from across the clinical commissioning group area, were involved in the planning and development of the proposed model.

■ Hearing Impairment: Medical Treatments**Steve McCabe:**[\[153714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that ear microsuction and irrigation services are available on the NHS for pensioners who cannot afford private treatment.

Maria Caulfield:

General practitioner practices are increasingly recommending self-care methods as the primary means to support the safe removal of ear wax. However, if a practice considers removal clinically necessary, the procedure should either be undertaken at the practice or the patient should be referred to an appropriate local NHS service.

Decisions about the funding and provision of health services, including ear wax removal, are the responsibility of local clinical commissioning groups. Commissioners plan services to meet the needs of local communities, including continuing to ensure there is appropriate access to ear wax removal services.

Cat Smith:[\[154119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of levels of NHS provision of ear (a) irrigation and (b) microsuction.

Maria Caulfield:

No formal assessment has been made as information on the provision of these services is not held centrally. General practitioner (GP) practices are increasingly recommending self-care methods as the primary means to support the safe removal of ear wax. However, if a GP practice considers removal via irrigation or micro-

suction clinically necessary, the procedure should either be undertaken at the practice, or the patient should be referred to an appropriate local NHS service.

Decisions on the funding and provision of health services, including ear wax removal, are the responsibility of local clinical commissioning groups. Commissioners plan services to meet the needs of local communities, including continuing to ensure there is appropriate access to ear wax removal services.

■ Hip Replacements: Waiting Lists

Anneliese Dodds: [\[154359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what is the current average wait time for a hip replacement operation in (a) Oxfordshire and (b) England.

Edward Argar:

The most recent available data shows that in 2021/2022, the average waiting time for a hip replacement operation is 198 days in Oxfordshire and 237 days in England.

■ Hormone Replacement Therapy: Payments

Fleur Anderson: [\[154437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his timeframe is for implementing the hormone replacement treatment single annual payment scheme.

Maria Caulfield:

We are working with the NHS Business Services Authority to implement a new hormone replacement therapy (HRT) prescription prepayment certificate as soon as possible. From April 2023, the annual cost for all HRT products will be the cost of two prescription charges, which is currently £18.70.

■ Hospital Beds: York

Rachael Maskell: [\[148280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help support the provision of NHS beds in York in the context of a substantial proportion of patients being admitted to hospital in that region with covid-19 as a primary diagnosis.

Edward Argar:

The National Health Service has a range of contingency measures to build acute capacity in order to meet demand, including in York. This includes surge capacity for general and acute and critical care beds as required.

■ Integrated Care Systems

Justin Madders: [\[41930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 1 September 2021 to Question 24224 on Integrated Care Systems, if he will publish all formal correspondence and the final civil service recommendations of the boundary review.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 8 September 2021]: Following the final decision of the boundary review, a full explanation of the process and rationale leading to the decision was published at GOV.UK. The decision summary of the review is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-care-systems-boundaries-review-decision-summary/integrated-care-systems-boundaries-review-decision-summary>

We are unable to provide the correspondence requested as it relates to the formulation and development of Government policy.

■ Kidney Diseases**Justin Madders:****[154082]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many renal counsellors there are in the NHS.

Edward Argar:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Locums: Pay**Esther McVey:****[153940]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide an estimate of the cost of NHS GPs being paid locum rates in the latest week for which figures are available.

Maria Caulfield:

The data is not held in the format requested.

■ Long Covid**Gavin Robinson:****[153997]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients have been (a) assessed at long covid clinics and (b) discharged since the creation of those clinics; and what treatments have been offered to those patients at those clinics.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 21 April 2022]: Between 5 July 2021 to 13 March 2022, 37,154 people have received a specialist assessment following referral to a post COVID-19 syndrome service. Clinics will assess and provide advice, where appropriate, for symptom management and onward referral. Where they would benefit, patients are also offered a course of rehabilitation. However, post COVID-19 syndrome is a new condition and our understanding continues to grow, including the appropriate treatments which should be offered. Data on onward referral pathways and discharge is not currently collected.

■ Lord O'Shaughnessy**Angela Rayner:**[\[126665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what records his Department holds of correspondence between Lord O'Shaughnessy and companies providing covid-19 testing or testing supplies, between April and August 2020, conducted on his private gmail account; and whether he was provided with a departmental email address in his capacity as an adviser on NHS Test and Trace during this period.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 24 February 2022]: The Department holds copies of correspondence between Lord O'Shaughnessy's Gmail account and Government officials, companies and organisations working on COVID-19 testing and testing supplies issues between April and August 2020. During this period Lord O'Shaughnessy was provided with a Departmental email address.

■ Maternity Services: Migrants**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[154266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists' position statement on Equitable access to maternity care for refugee, asylum seeking and undocumented migrant women, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to high quality interpretation services in maternity care in order to reduce disparities in maternity outcomes for migrant women.

Maria Caulfield:

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities' 'Language interpreting and translation: migrant health guide' provides advice for healthcare practitioners on the health needs of migrant patients, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/language-interpretation-migrant-health-guide>

The guidance states it is the responsibility of National Health Service providers to ensure that interpreting and translation services are made available to patients free at the point of delivery.

On 6 September 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement published 'Equity and equality: Guidance for local maternity systems', which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/C0734-equity-and-equality-guidance-for-local-maternity-systems.pdf>

It asks local maternity systems to consider the impact of language on women's needs and ensure personalised care and support plans are available in a range of languages. The guidance directs staff to resources to support communication between healthcare staff and ethnic minority pregnant women, including the 'Help us help you' maternity campaign, a communications toolkit and the interpretation and translation services framework.

■ Medical Treatments: Safety

Stephen Morgan:

[\[154340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to implement a system for the reporting of harms from non-pharmaceutical treatments offered by clinicians within the NHS.

Maria Caulfield:

The National Health Service has operated the National Reporting and Learning System (NRLS) since 2004. Reports of patient safety incidents in the NHS, including those where it is believed that harm has resulted from a non-pharmaceutical treatment, are collated by the NRLS. This information is then used by NHS England to identify new and emerging risks to patient safety and reduce risks to patients. The number of patient safety incident reports submitted through the NRLS, along with national patterns and trends, is published in the National Patient Safety Incident Reports.

■ Members: Correspondence

John Penrose:

[\[153858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to letters of 11 February and 14 March 2022 from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on behalf of his constituent, Joan Davis, about travel since the outbreak of covid-19.

Edward Argar:

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

Rosie Cooper:

[\[157305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he intends to respond to a letter dated 02/03/2022 from the Hon. Member for West Lancashire reference ZA59051 regarding covid-19 policy in care homes.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 22 April 2022.

■ Ministry of Justice: Written Questions

Dawn Butler:

[\[143617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Question 117746 on Unispace Global: Protective Clothing tabled by the hon. Member for Brent Central on 3 March 2022.

Edward Argar:

I refer the hon Member to the answer to Question [117746](#).

■ Neurology: Children

Chris Grayling: [\[153767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any of the Government's neurodegenerative research fund is being allocated to paediatric research.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government has committed to invest £375 million in neurodegenerative disease research over the next five years. The Government will provide this funding through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). The NIHR and UKRI rely on researchers submitting high-quality applications to access funding, therefore details of specific allocations for paediatric research are not currently available. All applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality.

■ NHS: Complaints

Rachael Maskell: [\[154166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many complaints the NHS has received in each of the last five years.

Maria Caulfield:

The following table shows the number of formal complaints to the National Health Service in each of the last five years.

2020/21	170,013
2019/20	113,241
2018/19	208,924
2017/18	208,626
2016/17	208,415

This information represents a combined total of complaints to Hospital and Community Health Services and primary care. In 2019/20, there was no primary care complaints collection in order to reduce the burden on primary care providers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ NHS: Crimes against the Person

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[153881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many physical assaults on NHS staff were reported in Suffolk in (a) 2020 and (b) 2021.

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[153882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many physical assaults on NHS staff were reported in England in (a) 2020 and (b) 2021.

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[153883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of physical assaults reported on NHS staff at the East Suffolk and North Essex Foundation Trust in 2020-21.

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[153884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of physical assaults reported on NHS staff at the James Paget Hospital in 2020-21.

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[153885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of physical assaults reported on NHS staff at Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust on 2020-21.

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[153886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of physical assaults reported on NHS staff at West Suffolk Hospital in 2020-21.

Edward Argar:

The information requested is not collected centrally.

■ NHS: Innovation

Chi Onwurah: [\[146622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 25 January 2022 to Question 105519, what assessment his Department made of the steps required to practically implement the Life Sciences Vision prior to its publication.

Maria Caulfield:

The Life Sciences Vision, published in July 2021, was written with feasibility as one of its guiding concepts and in collaboration with industry, charity organisations, the devolved administrations and National Health Service partners. It aims to increase the health, wealth, and resilience of the sector in the United Kingdom. The Vision was written prior to the 2021 Spending Review setting out the high-level ambitions for the sector in the next 10 years to align the Government's, NHS and sector priorities, although without specific programmes for delivery.

The Vision was published with an understanding that a detailed implementation roadmap would follow the finalisation of the 2021 Spending Review. This would set out delivery and governance plans and to allow the sector to decide where it wishes to co-invest with the Government. As the internal allocations for the Spending Review

have recently concluded, we will publish the plan for its implementation in summer 2022.

■ **NHS: Staff**

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[155608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Spending Review 2021, what the specific yearly allocation of additional funding for the NHS workforce is.

Edward Argar:

Health Education England has received an opening programme budget of more than £5 billion for 2022/23. Budgets for 2023/24 and 2024/25 will be determined prior to the start of the relevant financial year.

■ **NHS: Workplace Pensions**

Dr Dan Poulter: [R] [\[153887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the annual pension contribution cap has had on retention and recruitment of staff in the NHS.

Edward Argar:

In 2020, the Government increased thresholds by £90,000 to remove all staff with threshold income below £200,000 from scope of the tapered annual allowance. An estimated 96% of general practitioners and 98% of consultants are out of scope of the taper based on National Health Service earnings.

An individual may choose to reduce their working hours or take early retirement for a range of reasons. The Department monitors retirement patterns and hours worked by senior doctors. NHS Digital's workforce statistics show the participation rate, or average contracted hours per person, for consultants has been stable for several years. Data from the NHS Business Services Authority shows that while the number of consultants taking voluntary early retirement as a proportion of all consultant retirements has increased since 2012, it has not changed significantly in more recent years.

■ **Nurses: Parkinson's Disease**

Caroline Lucas: [\[155683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of the 50,000 additional NHS nurses committed by the Government to be recruited by 2024 will be Parkinson's nurse specialists.

Caroline Lucas: [\[155684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of new nurses who have joined the NHS since September 2019 are Parkinson's nurse specialists.

Edward Argar:

This information is not held in the format requested. There have been no specific targets for recruiting Parkinson's nurse specialists. Information on the number of specialist nurses working in the National Health Service is not held centrally, including nurses treating patients with Parkinson's.

■ Nurses: Recruitment**Sarah Olney:**[\[140526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason midwives and health visitors were not included in the Government's target to increase the number of nurses; and on what date his Department took the decision not to include them in that target.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 18 March 2022]: The NHS Interim People Plan, published June 2019, stated that "shortages in nursing are the single biggest and most urgent we need to address". Although the specific target focuses on nurses, many of the actions to support delivery will also recruit to other professions, including midwives and allied health professionals. This includes the non-repayable training grant of £5,000 and the programme of retention measures. Local authority commissioners of health visiting services may select a range of different providers, including National Health Service trusts and private sector organisations. There is no single source of data for health visitors.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are investing £95 million to support the recruitment of 1,200 more midwives and 100 obstetricians and a support package to enable NHS trusts to establish and expand midwifery international recruitment.

■ Oxford Nanopore Technologies**Angela Rayner:**[\[151137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 March 2022 to Question 108528 on Oxford Nanopore Technologies, if he will place copies of the minutes in the Library with redactions if necessary.

Edward Argar:

We are unable to provide the information requested due to legal professional privilege.

■ Parkinson's Disease: Research**Holly Mumby-Croft:**[\[154529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support research into new treatments for people living with Parkinson's disease.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government has committed to invest at least £375 million in neurodegenerative disease research over the next five years to fund projects into a range of diseases, including Parkinson's disease. This funding will be made available through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). The NIHR and UKRI welcome funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including new treatments for people living with Parkinson's disease. The usual practice of the NIHR and UKRI is not to ring-fence funds for expenditure on particular topics. All applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality. In 2019/20, the NIHR and UKRI provided a combined £15.3 million for research into Parkinson's disease.

■ Perinatal Mortality**Stuart Anderson:**[\[154398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to minimise the number of stillbirths in (a) the West Midlands and (b) England.

Maria Caulfield:

In the West Midlands, there has been progress towards full implementation of the Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle version 2 (SBLCBv2) to reduce perinatal mortality. This aims to support the national ambition to halve the rates of stillbirths, neonatal and maternal deaths and intrapartum brain injuries by 2025. This ambition was extended to include reducing the rate of preterm births from 8% to 6% by 2025. Integrated care boards in the Midlands are being supported by the Midlands Perinatal Team to achieve full implementation by March 2023. In addition, a Midlands preterm birth strategy is in development with collaboration from clinical leads to reduce preterm births across the region.

In England, the Government's ambition is to halve the rate of stillbirths at 2010 levels by 2025, with a 20% reduction by 2020. The Office of National Statistics' data published on 17 February 2022 shows that between 2010 and 2020, the stillbirth rate reduced from 5.1 per 1000 births to 3.8 per 1000 births, or a reduction of 25.2%. In the West Midlands Government Office Region, stillbirth rates reduced by 17.0%. We continue to work with all regions, including the West Midlands, to meet the national ambition.

■ Perinatal Mortality: York Hospital**Rachael Maskell:**[\[155812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what actions he plans to take following the Serious Incident Investigation into the death of Baby Ronnie.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[155813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will bring forward regulations under the Health and Care Act to help address the conclusions of the Serious Incident Investigation into the death of Baby Ronnie.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 25 April 2022]: The Department has not received a serious incident report, Prevention of Future Deaths report or the Coroner's report in this case. When these are received, we will examine the recommendations and consider what action can be taken. If the recommendations include a request for new regulations under the Health and Care Act 2012, this will be considered.

All services registered by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to provide termination of pregnancy services are subject to inspections and providers have a statutory duty to report incidents to the CQC. Where concerns or evidence of risk are identified, the CQC will ensure the safety of woman accessing those services and will use its enforcement powers where necessary. In addition, Prevention of Future Deaths reports draw the attention of the Government to matters of concern to determine if action is required and to learn lessons. Officials have regular meetings with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the CQC and abortion service providers to ensure the appropriate safeguards are in place to protect women accessing abortion services.

■ PPE Medpro

Nick Smith:

[\[153873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department has paid to PPE MedPro for the purchase of personal protective equipment; and whether that company has met its contractual obligations for providing adequate personal protective equipment under the contractual terms set by his Department.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 21 April 2022]: The Department paid £202,850,000 to PPE MedPro for the purchase of personal protective equipment. However, we are unable to provide the information requested on contractual obligations as this commercially sensitive.

■ Primary Health Care

Feryal Clark:

[\[154467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to undertake a public campaign to communicate to patients how they can access primary care services.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are developing a communications strategy to inform the public on changes made to the delivery of general practice services. This includes proposals for a national campaign in 2022/23 to increase awareness of

access routes to general practice services. NHS England and NHS Improvement are also developing a campaign to promote the services of community pharmacy in 2022/23.

■ Protective Clothing

Mike Amesbury: [\[116039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made for the implication for his Departmental polices of the estimated loss of the £8.1 billion of PPE purchased in 2020-21; and what steps his Department is taking to recoup those losses.

Mike Amesbury: [\[116040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies of the £0.67 billion spent on PPE which cannot be used because it is defective; and which companies provided that defective PPE.

Mike Amesbury: [\[116041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the amount of unusable PPE (a) held and (b) purchased by his Department in 2020-21.

Mike Amesbury: [\[116042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the £12.1 billion of PPE purchased in 2020-21.

Edward Argar:

The Department's expenditure on personal protective equipment (PPE) during the pandemic was £13.1 billion. Due to the high global demand, prices for PPE duly increased to unprecedented levels. The £8.7 billion reported through the Department's Annual Report and Accounts for 2020/21 represents the estimated reduction in value of PPE purchased during the height of the pandemic. The Department is managing the stockpile to maximise its value by identify alternative uses and resale potential for inventory we do not intend or expect to use.

The £8.7 billion PPE inventory is comprised of the following:

- £0.673 billion relating to items which have been assessed as not being suitable for any use, the only element of the impairment considered a loss;
- £2.581 billion for items not suitable for use within the health and social care sector which may be suitable for other uses and are therefore held for future sale, repurpose or donation;
- £4.701 billion reflecting the impairment recognised as a result of fluctuations in the market price of PPE between the point of purchase and the balance sheet date; and
- £0.75 billion relating to inventory which has an expiry date prior to the expected usage date and is therefore held for resale or donation.

Where products ordered did not arrive or failed to meet the required standard, we are currently reviewing the terms of the relevant contract to determine whether a breach of contract has occurred. We are also considering options to repurpose or recycle items. All products are quality assured and only distributed if they meet the relevant standards in the technical specification for PPE.

We are unable to provide the information requested on individual companies which have provided defective PPE as this information is commercially sensitive. The Department is in commercial discussions with a number of suppliers and disclosure of this information is likely to impact these proceedings. The estimate for unusable PPE purchased and held by the Department represents approximately 3% of all items purchased since the beginning of the pandemic.

■ **Protective Clothing: Contracts**

Seema Malhotra: [\[117790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Minister of State for Health's Statement, DHSC Update, 3 February 2022, Official Report, if he will publish a list of suppliers who have supplied PPE deemed unsuitable who have not yet refunded payments made under those contracts to his Department.

Seema Malhotra: [\[117791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish (a) a list of the companies contracted to deliver PPE, (b) the lengths of each of those contracts and (c) the value of those contracts.

Edward Argar:

We are unable to provide the information requested on suppliers where the personal protective equipment (PPE) was deemed unsuitable, as this information is commercially sensitive. Where a product fails to meet the required standard during the quality assurance process, we will aim to recoup costs.

A list of suppliers contracted to deliver PPE, with the start and end dates of these contracts and contract values is attached. However, we are unable to provide the information requested for 16 contracts, as this information is commercially sensitive.

Attachments:

1. List of DHSC Contracts [FORMATTED TABLE List of DHSC Contracts.xlsx]

■ **Protective Clothing: Storage**

Nick Smith: [\[125079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the condition of personal protective equipment in storage as of 18 February 2022.

Edward Argar:

The quality assurance of personal protective equipment (PPE) is ongoing. As of 28 February 2022, the latest available information shows that 34.5 billion items have

been received and 18 billion items have been distributed to the frontline. The following table shows categorisation of PPE items by quantity and proportion as of 28 February.

CATEGORY	QUANTITY	PERCENTAGE
Stock cleared for release	11.0 billion	66.9%
Assessment in progress or not started	1.4 billion	8.7%
Exit stock (all items not currently suitable for provision to health and social care, for any reason)	4.0 billion	24.4%
Of which:		
New buy product on hold for stock management purposes	1.2 billion	7.0%
Temporary hold – investigating regulatory issues.	357 million	2.2%
Potential use in other settings	1.2 billion	7.2%
Wastage (not fit for any use)	1.1 billion	6.9%
Total quantity	16.4 billion	100%

■ Protective Clothing: Waste Disposal

Nick Smith:

[\[153872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the potential (a) units and (b) purchased cost of personal protective equipment which the Department plans to incinerate in (i) 2022 and (ii) 2023.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 April 2022]: A specific estimate has not yet been made. The Department has appointed two providers to assess the most cost efficient and environmentally sustainable options for the disposal of personal protective equipment. Where possible we aim to recycle items before considering incineration.

■ Royal Shrewsbury Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[155677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times in the emergency department at Royal Shrewsbury Hospital.

Edward Argar:

We have provided £9.3 million to transform the emergency department at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital and improve patient care.

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[155678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the reasons for the length of the waiting time in the emergency department at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital; and what assessment he has made of the impact of the Hospitals Transformation Programme on tackling challenges in the recruitment of staff in that department.

Edward Argar:

COVID-19 pressures on urgent and emergency care services continue, including at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital. This includes impacts on hospital bed capacity and reducing patient flow, through the need for enhanced infection prevention and control measures. No specific assessment has been made of the impact of the Hospital Transformation Programme (HTP) on the recruitment of staff. However, the HTP's new clinical model will enable Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust to attract prospective staff and retain the current workforce.

■ Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[153836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of when the business case from the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust will be (a) completed and (b) submitted for the Hospitals Transformation Programme.

Edward Argar:

The completed Strategic Outline Case was due to be submitted to NHS England and NHS Improvement for regional review on 21 April 2022. Subject to the regional review, it will be submitted for national review in May.

■ Sodium Valproate: Public Consultation

Feryal Clark: [\[154477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to his Department's consultation on original pack dispensing and supply of medicines containing sodium valproate which closed in December 2021.

Maria Caulfield:

The responses to the consultation are currently being considered and reviewed. We intend to publish the consultation response in due course.

■ **Ventilators****Nick Smith:**[\[153876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many ventilators purchased by his Department since 2020 have been found unsuitable for use.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 April 2022]: Since 2020, the Department purchased approximately 47,000 ventilators of all types in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Of these, approximately 1,500 or 3.2% of purchases have been found to be unfit for use in the National Health Service following clinical and medical engineering testing and evaluation. Approximately 5,000 Philips Respironics Bipap ventilators are currently awaiting repair by the manufacturer following a general product safety recall.

■ **Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access****Jim Shannon:**[\[153959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Government's 2019 Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access, what progress the Government is making on attaining its objective of reaching the upper quartile of uptake for the five highest health gain categories; who is accountable for the work on that objective; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

The five highest health gain (5HHG) categories are included in NHS Digital's innovation scorecard estimates report. This shows that the use of the 5HHG categories was within the expected usage of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's recommended medicines, with the exception of varenicline, which was lower than expected.

The Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access is an agreement between the Department, on behalf of the Government, NHS England, the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry and manufacturers or suppliers of branded health service medicines which have joined the Scheme. All parties committed to the objective of reaching the upper quartile of uptake for the 5HHG categories in relation to comparator countries during the first half of the Voluntary Scheme.

HOME OFFICE**■ Animals in Science Regulation Unit****Mr Barry Sheerman:****[150086]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help ensure that (a) the Home Office Animals in Science Regulation Unit's Change Programme will not adversely affect animal protections and (b) regulations are effectively enforced which relate to the use of animals in research and testing in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

The Animals in Science Regulation Unit's Change Programme aims to better deliver animal protections through the strengthening of its regulatory oversight.

The Regulator has published its process for rigorous full system audits at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/animal-research-technical-advice#process-and-standards-for-establishment-full-system-audits.

At audits the Regulator requires evidence for assessment of compliance against all legal licence conditions, including those for animal welfare, which are available at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/animal-research-technical-advice#process-and-standards-for-establishment-full-system-audits.

■ Antisocial Behaviour**Cat Smith:****[906564]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of police responses to reports of antisocial behaviour.

Rachel Maclean:

We have ensured that police have flexible tools and powers to tackle ASB through the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. They decide how best to deploy these powers depending on the specific circumstances. The Home Office provides statutory guidance which supports police to make effective use of these powers.

Last week I was delighted to chair a roundtable with PCCs to share best practice in responding to ASB.

I was also thrilled to read about the operation led by Lancaster Police to crack down on ASB in the city centre.

■ Asylum: Rwanda**Mr Alistair Carmichael:****[155600]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the costs to the public purse of removing asylum seekers to Rwanda and funding the processing costs for each person relocated.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 25 April 2022]: The UK is funding the processing costs for each individual who is relocated to Rwanda. Every person's needs are different, but we anticipate the amount would be comparable to processing costs incurred in the UK.

As this is a long-term partnership over five year, payments will depend on the outcomes delivered including the number of people relocated. Funding is only provided while a person remains in Rwanda.

Preet Kaur Gill:[\[155873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the £120 million economic development program in Rwanda will be paid for using the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget; and whether that funding will be in addition to the 0.5 per cent of GNI ODA target.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 25 April 2022]: The funding for the Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda is separate from the Official Development Assistance budget.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[155890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the processing time for asylum seekers and migrants who are sent to Rwanda for processing.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 25 April 2022]: We anticipate that processing time would take a matter of weeks unless there is a legal barrier to relocation to Rwanda.

Layla Moran:[\[155903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the carbon footprint resulting from transporting asylum seekers to Rwanda; and what estimate she has made of that carbon footprint.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 25 April 2022]: Estimates for the carbon footprint arising from the agreement with Rwanda are yet to be determined. The UK remains committed to honouring its obligations on climate change, including those contained in the Glasgow Climate Pact. This is unaffected by bilateral agreements signed by the UK, such as the one recently agreed with the Government of Rwanda. The UK continues to work closely with the Government of Rwanda on climate issues, including ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in June.

■ Birth Certificates

Apsana Begum: [\[151290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to allow parents to be listed as the gender neutral category parent or birth-parent on their children's birth certificates.

Kevin Foster:

Civil registration in the UK is a devolved matter and there are separate systems in place for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In England and Wales, a birth entry records the name of the child's mother and, where certain conditions can be met as set out in law, either the name of the father or a second female parent.

There are currently no plans in England and Wales to change how parents are recorded in birth entries or on birth certificates.

■ Body Searches: Children

Sarah Jones: [\[154308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to introduce new guidance on the use of strip-searches on children.

Kit Malthouse:

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Codes of Practice govern how the police should undertake a strip search. The College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on Stop and Search provides further guidance for the police on the use of strip search.

We expect officers to follow the law and the best practice guidance set by the College of Policing in its APP. Any concerns about the use of strip searches should be raised with the relevant force or the Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC), who investigate serious matters involving the police. We will consider all recommendations made for the Home Office as a result of these investigations very carefully.

■ Crime: Rural Areas

Rob Butler: [\[906561\]](#)

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

Kit Malthouse:

We are committed to driving down rural crime, which is why the Government is providing funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit.

We have also tabled amendments to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to introduce tougher sentencing and improved police powers for hare coursing.

■ CS Todd

Apsana Begum: [\[151294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the outcome was of the equalities impact assessment on disabled people in awarding the contract for Fire Safety Order Guidance to CS Todd.

Kit Malthouse:

The contract to draft a suite of fire safety guidance was awarded to CS Todd Associates in accordance with the relevant public procurement regulations and following a fully transparent commercial procurement process.

We are ensuring that the development of fire safety policy remains in compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

■ Cybercrime: Business

Emily Thornberry: [\[150106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to her departmental data Crime against businesses: findings from the year ending March 2021 Commercial Victimization Survey published on 30 March 2022, for what reason that publication does not include information on the (a) agriculture, forestry and fishing and (b) accommodation and food sectors.

Emily Thornberry: [\[150107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to her departmental data Crime against businesses: findings from the year ending March 2021 Commercial Victimization Survey published on 30 March 2022, for what reason that publication does not include disaggregated data on (a) theft of money, (b) the online theft of information, (c) website vandalism and (d) online intellectual property theft.

Emily Thornberry: [\[150108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to her departmental data Crime against businesses: findings from the year ending March 2021 Commercial Victimization Survey published on 30 March 2022, whether the category of fraudulent email attempts includes incidents of phishing.

Emily Thornberry: [\[150109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to her departmental data Crime against businesses: findings from the year ending March 2021 Commercial Victimization Survey published on 30 March 2022, whether the category of computer viruses includes incidents of (a) unlicensed software downloads and (b) denial of service attacks or extortion.

Emily Thornberry: [\[150110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to her departmental data Crime against businesses: findings from the year ending March 2021 Commercial

Victimisation Survey published on 30 March 2022, whether the umbrella category of computer misuse is equivalent to online crimes, as described in previous publications.

Kit Malthouse:

The 2020 Commercial Victimisation Survey (CVS) was planned to cover all commercial sectors but was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As the effects of the pandemic continued into 2021, a decision was taken to focus the 2021 CVS on the Wholesale and retail sector only whose premises had largely remained open.

Being a premises-based survey, the CVS is not considered a good measure of fraud and computer misuse offences as these crimes are typically dealt with by Head Offices. Experience from previous surveys demonstrated that respondents were unable to answer questions on some categories of online crime. Therefore, in the 2021 CVS the sub-categories below were included within the category of computer misuse:

1. Hacking or unauthorised access
2. Computer viruses or malware
3. Staff receiving fraudulent emails

Respondents were asked about incidents of intellectual property thefts, but the numbers of incidents reported were too low to produce any reliable national estimates . Specific questions on theft of money, the online theft of information, and website vandalism were not collected.

■ **Cybersecurity: International Cooperation**

Dr Jamie Wallis:

[\[151276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with international counterparts, such as her Danish counterpart, on cybersecurity.

Damian Hinds:

I continue to speak regularly to my international counterparts on a wide range of security issues, including the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The UK works closely with our international partners on Cyber Security through bilateral and multilateral fora including via the G7 meeting of Interior Ministers I hosted in London in September 2021.

We have recently launched the National Cyber Strategy supported by £2.6 billion of new investment and a Government Cyber Security Strategy. This investment will strengthen the response from law enforcement, who partner with the National Cyber Security Centre and the National Cyber Force in order to keep the UK safe.

■ **Detention Centres: Ukraine**

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[154404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Ukrainian nationals are being held in Immigration Removal Centres as of 1 April 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 25 April 2022]: The Home Office publishes statistics on people entering and in detention in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'.

The number of people entering detention in each quarter is presented by nationality in table Det_D01 of the '[Detention detailed tables](#)'. The number of people in detention at the end of each quarter published by nationality is in table Det_D02 of the '[Detention detailed tables](#)'.

There were two Ukrainian nationals in immigration detention at the end of December 2021, before the conflict in Ukraine began. People can be held in detention for contravening immigration law or for criminality reasons.

The latest data goes up to the end of December 2021. Data for January to March 2022 will be published on the 26 May 2022.

Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook.

■ Domestic Abuse**Mark Logan:**[\[906566\]](#)

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

Rachel Maclean:

Tackling violence against woman and girls, including domestic abuse, is a Government priority. That is why we introduced our landmark Domestic Abuse Act in 2021.

In March 2022, we went even further and published our Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan, backed by over £230 million and commits to exploring options for a register to manage the most harmful domestic abusers more robustly. This includes funding for children. In 2021-22, we provided over £3 million, through the Children Affected by Domestic Abuse (CADA) Fund to organisations providing specialist support within the community to children. This funding will be increased to £4.1 million in 2022-23 as set out in the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan.

This will provide further protections to victims, strengthen measures to bring perpetrators to justice and improve the response from agencies.

■ Domestic Abuse: Victims**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[150123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of collecting disaggregated data on incidents of domestic violence by (a) ethnicity of the complainant, (b) immigration status of the complainant and (c) police recorded outcome.

Kit Malthouse:

This Government is committed to supporting all victims of domestic abuse. Our landmark Domestic Abuse Act will strengthen our protection to victims and ensure perpetrators feel the full force of the law. It includes the first legal definition of domestic abuse, improved support for victims in the courts, new offences and strengthened legislation around cruel acts of controlling or coercive behaviour.

The definition of domestic abuse included in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 is universally applicable and the Act's provisions apply to all victims of domestic abuse, regardless of age, ethnic background, immigration status, and should offer greater protections for especially vulnerable individuals.

The Home Office collects data on outcomes assigned to domestic abuse-related offences recorded by the police. These data are published annually by the Office for National Statistics in their articles on domestic abuse. Data for 2020/21 can be found here: [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/domestic-abuse-in-england-and-wales-overview).

The Home Office has begun collecting data on the ethnicity of victims of all crime from 1 April this year and these data will be published in due course. Information on the immigration status of the complainant of domestic abuse-related offences are not collected centrally.

Collecting data allows us to better monitor the prevalence of domestic abuse amongst different groups and further integrate a diverse range of victim experiences into conversations and policy decisions around domestic abuse.

■ Economic Crime**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[150124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the scale of illicit finance in the UK that may be linked to corruption and originates from African states.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[150125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the efficacy of UK efforts to stem the flow of money linked to (a) state capture and (b) other forms of corruption in African countries entering the UK's private education system.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[150126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 21 March to Question 143639 on National Crime Agency: Standards, how many cases involving money linked to corruption flowing from African states into the UK were prosecuted following National Crime Agency investigations in (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Damian Hinds:

The NCA has had no prosecutions in respect of money linked to corruption flowing from African states during 2018, 2019 and 2020. The Government regularly assesses the threat posed by corruption and money laundering, including through the NCA-led National Strategic Assessment and the joint Home Office and Treasury National Risk Assessment of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing.

The government also undertakes specific geographic research and analysis as required, including through the FCDO-funded Anti-Corruption Evidence Programme.

In 2020 the National Crime Agency, through the Joint Money Laundering Intelligence Taskforce, publicly issued an Amber Alert on the bribery and corruption risks in the independent schools sector. Its focus was country agnostic although it included African case studies.

■ Fraud

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[155717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the day-to-day impact of fraud on the general public.

Damian Hinds:

REPORTS OF FRAUD OFFENCES ARE MADE TO ACTION FRAUD AND ARE RECORDED AS CRIMINAL OFFENCES BY THE NATIONAL FRAUD INTELLIGENCE BUREAU (NFIB). THE HOME OFFICE COLLECTS DATA ON THESE REPORTS. THIS DATA IS PUBLISHED BY THE OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS ON A QUARTERLY BASIS. THE LATEST BREAKDOWN OF FRAUD OFFENCES IS AVAILABLE IN TABLE A5 BELOW:

[HTTPS://WWW.ONS.GOV.UK/PEOPLEPOPULATIONANDCOMMUNITY/CRIMEANDJUSTICE/DATASETS/CRIMEINENGLANDANDWALESAPPENDIXTABLES](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/crimeinenglandandwalesappendixtables). LATER THIS YEAR, WE WILL PUBLISH A NEW STRATEGY TO ADDRESS THE THREAT OF FRAUD. THIS WILL SET OUT HOW WE WILL WORK WITH INDUSTRY TO REMOVE THE VULNERABILITIES THAT FRAUDSTERS EXPLOIT, WITH INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES TO SHUT DOWN FRAUDULENT INFRASTRUCTURE, WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT TO IDENTIFY AND BRING THE MOST HARMFUL OFFENDERS TO JUSTICE, AND WITH ALL PARTNERS TO ENSURE THAT THE PUBLIC HAVE THE ADVICE AND SUPPORT THEY NEED.

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

■ Homelessness: EU Nationals

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[150127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate her Department has made of the impact of the no recourse to public funds policy on levels of (a) homelessness and (b) rough sleeping for EU nationals in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office works closely with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to reduce the incidence of rough sleeping among non-UK nationals. The Home Office Rough Sleeping Support Service (RSSS) gives real-time immigration information to local authorities and registered charities, to help them assess rough sleepers' status and entitlements. Where individuals with unresolved immigration status cannot access the support they may be entitled to, the RSSS supports them to resolve their status and gain access to that support.

Migrants with leave under the family and human rights routes, and those who have been granted leave on the Hong Kong British National (Overseas) visa route as a British National (Overseas) status holder or a family member of a British National (Overseas) status holder, can apply, for free, to have their NRPF condition lifted by making a 'change of condition' application if they are destitute or at risk of destitution, if the welfare of their child is at risk due to their low income, or where there are other exceptional financial circumstances.

For those on other routes, we remain clear that councils and partners should exhaust all options within the law to support those who are unable to access statutory homelessness assistance as a result of their immigration status and to ensure everyone has a route off the street, including those with a NRPF condition.

Those who have no recourse to public funds due to not having a lawful immigration status, should seek to regularise their stay or leave the UK. The Voluntary Returns Service offers practical support for most foreign nationals who have decided they want to return home.

■ Immigration**Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[145837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the (a) rationale and (b) number of applications in the latest period for which data is available for each definition for migration applications classified as non-straightforward.

Kevin Foster:

The complexity of an application varies from case to case due to a range of factors which may include the various checks that must be carried out in the course of assessment.

The Home Office routinely conducts checks with other government departments and external agencies. This may mean the time it takes to process an application may be longer than normal, but in some cases, it is essential we do so.

If an application is deemed complex and expected to take longer than the standard processing timescale, UKVI will write to the customer within the standard processing time and explain what will happen next.

The Home Office is committed to publishing data in an orderly way as part of the regular quarterly Immigration Statistics, in line with the Code of Practice for Official

Statistics. Transparency Data provides a breakdown of applications classified straightforward and non-straightforward and is available at Tab VC_02 of 'Visas and Citizenship data: Q4 2021': <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visas-and-citizenship-data-q4-2021>

Latest statistics published on 24 February 2022 shows the breakdown of cases that are classified as straightforward from Quarter 2 2019 until Quarter 4 of 2021 is 5,640,606 and non-straightforward during the same time frame is 629,403. The next set of data is due to be published on 26 May 2022.

■ Immigration: Ukraine

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[141939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has plans to waive the immigration applications fees for Ukrainian nationals who have leave to remain in the UK as of 17 March 2022.

Kevin Foster:

The Government has announced a number of schemes aimed at helping those fleeing from the war in Ukraine. These include the Ukraine Family Scheme, Homes for Ukraine Scheme and the Ukraine Extension Scheme which will go live from 3 May.

Ukrainian nationals who had permission to stay in the UK on or before 18 March will be eligible to apply for the extension scheme. Those applying under the Ukrainian Scheme do not have to pay visa fees.

Those granted permission under Ukrainian schemes will have access to public funds as well as permission to work and study.

■ Police and Crime Commissioners: West Midlands

Julian Knight: [\[151158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the merits of transferring the responsibilities of the Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands to the Mayor of the West Midlands.

Kit Malthouse:

The transfer of Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) functions to a combined authority mayor can offer wider levers to prevent crime.

Mayors with broader responsibilities, including PCC functions, can enhance collaboration, joint working, and align public service delivery strategies to boost local outcomes.

With an expanded role comes a higher public profile, visibility, and greater ability to bring about local change. As set out in the Levelling Up White Paper, where possible, the Government will look to have combined authority mayors exercise PCC functions where boundaries align and will take steps to remove barriers to more combined authority mayors taking on these functions.

■ Police: Recruitment**Ruth Edwards:** [\[906560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made on delivering 20,000 new police officers.

Kit Malthouse:

As at 31 December 2021, police forces in England and Wales have already recruited over 11,000 additional officers as part of the Police Uplift Programme and we are on track to deliver 20,000 additional officers by March 2023.

I am pleased to say 251 of these officers have so far been recruited to Nottinghamshire Police.

■ Police: Training**Mr Nicholas Brown:** [\[151000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will allocate extra funding to constabularies to deliver in-depth, face to face and role specific disclosure and rebuttable presumption material training for all officers and staff involved in the submission of files to the CPS.

Kit Malthouse:

Training standards and the national policing curriculum are set by the College of Policing. However, forces provide local training and development at several different levels ranging from initial entry, leadership and ongoing development.

Following the revised Attorney General's Guidelines on Disclosure coming into force at the end of 2020, the College have updated their core curriculum and a suite of learning products, including videos, was developed by the College and National Police Chiefs' Council to explain the changes to the guidance.

■ Refugees: Ukraine**Claire Hanna:** [\[132415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the position of Northern Ireland to accept and accommodate refugees from Ukraine in the context of the Republic of Ireland having lifted all visa requirements and the unique border position between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Kevin Foster:

The UK Government meets regularly with the Devolved Administrations, including the Northern Ireland Executive, to discuss its humanitarian response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The UK Government remains committed to maintaining the Common Travel Area (CTA) arrangements, and this is an objective shared by all CTA members. There is a high level of cooperation on border security between both the UK and Irish Governments particularly in light of the war in Ukraine, to ensure we are taking all the

necessary measures to protect and secure the CTA, this includes people travelling from Ireland to the UK.

Deidre Brock: [\[137346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if the Government will take steps to (a) waive all visa requirements and (b) introduce a resettlement scheme for unaccompanied Ukrainian refugee children.

Deidre Brock: [\[137347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support UK charities seeking to provide safe escape routes for Ukrainian orphans and unaccompanied refugee children.

Deidre Brock: [\[137348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to safeguard and promote the welfare of refugee children arriving from Ukraine.

Kevin Foster:

We recognise the deeply troubling circumstances faced by all Ukrainians who are caught up in this conflict, including unaccompanied minors, and the role many countries will need to play to safeguard those children. With respect to UK charities we are aware of a significant interest in assisting Ukrainian children.

Safeguarding and protection of these vulnerable children is paramount. It will generally be in the best interests of a child to reunite with their family members in the first instance. This is also the position of the Ukrainian Government. We have held a number of discussions with leading international organisations who are working hard to ensure appropriate processes are put in place to process and safeguard unaccompanied minors who are fleeing Ukraine.

The Ukraine Family Scheme (UFS) provides an immediate pathway for those Ukrainians, including unaccompanied minors, with family already settled in the UK to come to our country. The relevant safeguarding checks will be performed as part of the application process. The UFS is designed to allow as many people as possible to come to Britain and gives them immediate access to the support they need.

The routes and visa changes which we have announced so far follow extensive engagement with the Ukrainian Government to ensure they respond directly to their needs and asks. We will continue to work closely with them going forward.

We are committed to working with local government to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place, particularly for any unaccompanied children who may arrive and for whom there is no option of being reunited with extended family. The UK already has well established policies in this area for looked after migrant children.

Rachael Maskell: [\[148275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on allocating funding to the NHS for services for Ukrainian refugees.

Kevin Foster:

Home Office ministers meet regularly with their counterparts in other Departments to discuss the Government's humanitarian response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, including Ukrainians' access to public services once they arrive in the UK.

Kevin Brennan:[\[906555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate she has made of the number of Ukrainian refugees residing in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office now routinely publishes data on Ukrainians arriving in the United Kingdom under our two new schemes.

Between 11 and 18 April, the number of those arriving under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme more than doubled from 3,200 to 6,600.

15,000 more Ukrainians have arrived under the Family Scheme; meaning that as of 18 April, 21,600 visa holders had arrived in the UK.

We continue to work at pace to ensure more people can arrive more quickly.

Peter Aldous:[\[906563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support Ukrainian refugees.

Kevin Foster:

The UK has a long history of supporting refugees in need of protection.

In response to the ongoing conflict, the Home Office has launched the Ukraine Family Scheme and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

Both of these schemes are free, and people applying under the schemes will be able to live and work in the UK for up to three years. They will have full and unrestricted access to benefits, healthcare, employment, and other support.

■ Terrorism: Yemen**Harriett Baldwin:**[\[151095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is reviewing the designation of the Houthi movement as a terrorist organisation; and what assessment she has made of the impact of the designation of that movement as a terrorist organisation on Yemeni citizens.

Damian Hinds:

The Government condemns the recent attacks by the Houthis.

The Government does not routinely comment on intelligence matters, including whether an organisation is under consideration for proscription. The Government keeps the list of proscribed organisations under review.

■ UK Visas and Immigration: Telephone Services

Mr Nicholas Brown: [\[151002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many staff are assigned to the UKVI MP Account Manager Team hotline.

Mr Nicholas Brown: [\[151003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time is for an answer on the UKVI MP Account Manager Team hotline.

Kevin Foster:

Since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis there has been a significant increase in calls to the MP Enquiry Line leading to lengthy wait times for which we apologise.

Normal staffing levels for the MPs Enquiry Line is a maximum of 6 agents available at peak times and this was increased to 16 on Monday 4th April.

We are now seeing a reduction in waiting times and we anticipate call wait times volumes will drop significantly from next week.

To ease pressure on the lines during this period we have requested MPs Offices only use the line for Ukraine queries or non-Ukraine compassionate/urgent cases.

■ Visas: Belarus and Russia

Owen Thompson: [\[137385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she will introduce further visa policy concessions for (a) Russian and (b) Belarussian nationals at risk of persecution for speaking out against the war in Ukraine.

Kevin Foster:

The Government's humanitarian visa schemes introduced following the Russian invasion of Ukraine are open to Ukrainians and their family members only. Full detailed eligibility criteria are published on gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-ukraine-family-scheme-visa>

<https://apply-to-offer-homes-for-ukraine.service.gov.uk/>

The Government has no plans to extend its Ukraine visa policy concessions to wider groups.

■ Visas: Biometrics

Jess Phillips: [\[149292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to increase the number of biometric appointments available in visa application centres in Berlin in the week commencing 28 March 2022.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office works closely with its commercial partners to ensure sufficient appointments are made available in each location to meet demand.

At the beginning of the Ukraine crisis, we ensured Ukrainian customers were prioritised for biometric appointments in neighbouring countries.

Since the new online Ukraine Family Scheme route went live, and customers in possession of a valid Ukrainian/endorsed government passport no longer needed to attend a Visa Application Centre (VAC) to enrol their biometrics, we have observed fewer Ukrainian customers are attending VACs for biometric appointments.

■ Visas: Russia

Caroline Lucas:

[\[133983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what consideration she is giving to changing visa requirements for travel to the UK to enable Russian nationals who are critical of President Putin and who have family ties to UK nationals to come to the UK for their safety; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

The Government has no plans to change visa requirements for Russian nationals who are critical of President Putin. Russians who wish to come to the UK can apply using existing visa application routes, including the family route for those applying to live with a: spouse or partner; fiancé, fiancée or proposed civil partner; child; parent; or relative providing them with long term care.

Russians can also apply for visas under the points based system in the usual way.

Stephen Farry:

[\[135711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the situation of Russian nationals in the UK whose UK visas are soon due to expire, but who are unable to return to Russia, in the context of the invasion of Ukraine.

Kevin Foster:

Someone subject to immigration control, who is legally present in the UK, can make an in-time application for permission to stay on any route for which they meet the requirements.

■ Visas: Ukraine

Steve McCabe:

[\[153715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will extend or adjust the visas of existing Ukrainian students in the UK whose student visas are due to expire this year.

Kevin Foster:

The Government will be launching a new Ukraine Extension Scheme on 3 May.

Under this route, Ukrainian nationals and their partner and children who had permission to stay in the UK on 18 March 2022 (or which has recently expired) will be

able to stay in the UK under the Ukraine Extension Scheme. Eligibility for permission to stay will include those who were in the UK as Students.

Successful applicants will be granted permission to stay in the UK for 3 years with full access to work, study and public funds.

The Ukraine Extension Scheme will be free of charge with no requirement to pay any application fee or broader charges such as the Immigration Health Surcharge.

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[906558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made on increasing the number of visas granted to people fleeing the war in Ukraine.

Kevin Foster:

We are prioritising visa applications from Ukrainians and have surged capacity to other visa application centres (VACs) in Poland, Hungary, Romania, Czech Republic and Moldova.

Ukrainians with passports no longer need to go to a VAC to give their biometrics before they come to the UK.

This will mean that our VACs across Europe can focus their efforts on helping Ukrainians without passports, increasing the capacity at those centres to 13,000 appointments per week.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Arts: Exports

Gareth Thomas:

[\[153701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate she has made of the value of creative industries exports in 2021; and if she will make a statement.

Mike Freer:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's Sectors Economic Estimates for 2020 for Trade (latest figures available) show that creative industries services exports in 2020 totalled £41.4 billion, an increase of 12 per cent compared to 2019 and accounting for 14 per cent of UK services exports.

■ Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[155767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department has conducted an environmental impact assessment on the potential effect of UK membership of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) on the UK's domestic energy industry.

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[155768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of investor-state dispute settlement provisions in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) on the Government's net zero policy.

Penny Mordaunt:

On 22nd June 2021 the Government published a Scoping Assessment which outlined the potential environmental impacts of the UK joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). It indicates that UK membership is unlikely to have a significant effect on the domestic energy industry.

Acceding to CPTPP will not prevent the UK regulating in the public interest, including in relation to the UK's net zero ambitions. CPTPP explicitly reaffirms states' right to regulate under international law. It also protects this right through numerous safeguards, including procedural provisions to minimise the impacts of frivolous and unsuccessful investor-state dispute settlement claims faced by states.

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[155769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many meetings with (a) Ministers and (b) officials in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (i) she and (ii) officials in her Department have had in relation to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership in the last 12 months.

Penny Mordaunt:

Regular meetings take place between officials from the Department for International Trade (DIT) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to discuss the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership at all levels. DIT is in frequent contact with other government departments about issues pertinent to its programme of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). This ensures close coordination on issues of shared interest and consistency in positions across Whitehall.

■ Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership: Dispute Resolution

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[155770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department has sought any legal advice about the ISDS provisions in CPTPP.

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[155771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how much money her Department has spent on legal advice in relation to ISDS provisions in Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Penny Mordaunt:

All legal work on Investor-state dispute settlement within the Department for International Trade has been undertaken internally. Nothing has been spent by the

Department on external legal advice regarding investor-dispute settlement provisions within its work on the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

■ **Department for International Trade: Belfast**

Peter Kyle: [\[155847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what progress she has made on establishing a trade and investment hub in Belfast.

Mike Freer:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) announced the establishment of a Trade and Investment hub in Belfast in 2021. It has been operational since March 2022, and is committed to bringing more investment, jobs and export opportunities to Northern Ireland.

■ **Department for International Trade: Telephone Services**

Emily Thornberry: [\[151016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many calls were received by the Export Support Services Contact Centre inside its core operating hours in each month from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022.

Mike Freer:

Between 1 October 2021 and 31 March, the Export Support Service Helpline received 4,845 calls. (October 606, November 636, December 456, January 612, February 589, March 1,946). 98% of these were received in the Helpline's core operating hours.

Emily Thornberry: [\[151017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many calls were received by the Export Support Services Contract Centre in (a) February 2022 and (b) March 2022 relating to imports and exports affected by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and subsequent restrictions and sanctions imposed on trade with Russia and Belarus.

Mike Freer:

Between 22 February and 31 March 2022 there were 1,660 calls relating to imports and exports affected by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and subsequent sanctions imposed on Russia and Belarus.

Emily Thornberry: [\[151018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what proportion of calls received by the Export Support Services Contact Centre inside its core operating hours were answered within 30 seconds from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022.

Mike Freer:

The proportion of calls, received by the Export Support Service helpline during operating hours, which were answered within 30 seconds from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 was 93%.

Emily Thornberry:[\[151019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what proportion of calls answered by the Export Support Services Contact Centre resulted in an agent (a) resolving the caller's query using her Department's scripts and knowledge bank or (b) raising a Complex Query form and referring the caller to her Department's Digital Enquiry Team in each month from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022.

Mike Freer:

In October, 5% of customers were referred to the digital enquiry team, 24% in November, 39% in December, 32% in January, 51% in February and 61% in March. This increase reflects a change in the operating model and, for February and March, is because the majority of Russia and Ukraine enquiries were referred on.

Emily Thornberry:[\[151020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many callers to the Export Support Services Contact Centre took part in customer satisfaction surveys in each month from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022; and what proportion of those callers said that they were satisfied with (a) the overall service they received and (b) how their call was handled.

Mike Freer:

During Quarter 4 (October to December) 2021, 28% of users responded to the Helpline's Customer Satisfaction survey. Of these, 88% said they were satisfied with the professionalism of the call handler, and 79% said they were satisfied with the overall service. During Quarter 1 (January to March) 2022, 30% of users responded to the survey. Of these, 90% said they were satisfied with the professionalism of the call handler, and 82% said they were satisfied with the overall service.

Emily Thornberry:[\[151021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many callers to the Export Support Services Contact Centre made complaints in each month from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022; and what proportion of those complaints were resolved within five working days.

Mike Freer:

From 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 the contact centre received 4 complaints all received in March 2022. These were resolved within 5 working days.

Emily Thornberry:[\[151023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if payments under the contract agreed by his Department for the provision of the Export Support Services Contact

Centre have been made on an available hours basis or a productive hours basis from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022.

Mike Freer:

Payments made under the contract for the Provision of Export Support Services Contact Centre have been made on an available hour basis for the period 01 October 2021 to 31 March 2022.

■ **Exports: Arts**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[153700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what support her Department provides to specifically support and encourage exports from the creative industries; and if she will make a statement.

Mike Freer:

Last Autumn, the Department for International Trade (DIT) published the refreshed Export Strategy with an action-led 12-point plan to help exporters, including those in the creative industries to thrive in the global market. This includes initiatives such as the Export Support Service (ESS), the UK Export Academy, UK Export Finance, the pilot UK Tradeshow programme, and International Trade Advisers.

In addition, the Department works closely with business to deliver trade missions and UK enhanced presence at major creative sector events such as South by Southwest in Austin, the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, the Saudi Entertainment and Amusement Expo, the IAAPA Expos in Europe and USA, and LeisurUP by MAPIC.

■ **Overseas Trade**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[153761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent assessment she has made of trends in UK (a) export and (b) import levels compared with other economies.

Mike Freer:

UK trade flows are increasing, with the latest figures showing that in the 12 months ending February 2022 UK exports were up almost £50bn (8.2%) compared to the previous 12 months, whilst imports were up 15.6%.

Since the beginning of 2020 UK trade flows have largely been lower, driven by factors associated with the COVID pandemic, global recession, supply chain disruption, and adjustment to a new trading environment.

The impact of the global recession hit the UK harder than many other countries, in part because of our specialisation in services, which have been more negatively affected by COVID than goods production. Understanding the full impact of the different shocks, uncertainty and multiple factors in play will take time.

■ Spirits: Exports**Martin Docherty-Hughes:** [\[151145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of growth potential for UK spirits exports to international markets.

Mike Freer:

Our Free Trade Agreements are unlocking new opportunities for our drink sector. Alcohol and other high-end goods are serving existing and rapidly expanding middle class markets in East Asia, South East Asia, Asia Pacific and the Gulf. Embracing these fast-growing markets will ensure our drink producers always have somewhere to sell their produce and be better prepared for the future.

Our Free Trade Agreement with Australia will remove tariffs on all products, including UK whisky. This could provide a boost to whisky exports to Australia, already worth £115 million last year.

A trade agreement with India could also boost whisky exports. Annual duties on UK whisky exports to India were estimated be around £164 million based on 2019 trade data.

The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) is a growing market for UK food and drinks and joining CPTPP could provide greater opportunities to sell our highly competitive products. UK wine exports to CPTPP members more than doubled between 2016 and 2021 whilst exports in UK gin increased by almost 50%.

Martin Docherty-Hughes: [\[151146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) reducing or (b) removing non-tariff barriers faced by UK spirits exporters.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

British exports of spirits amounted to £5.7 billion in 2021. We are removing trade barriers so that the industry can grow further, enabling our world-class spirits to be enjoyed across the globe – from securing geographic indicator protection for Scotch Whisky in countries like Indonesia, to streamlining the process for importers in countries like Nigeria – and we are negotiating trade deals that will reduce barriers for British spirits exporters, like our deal with Australia that includes tariff free exports on all products including whisky and gin from the United Kingdom.

Martin Docherty-Hughes: [\[151147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate her Department has made of the annual value of UK (a) whisky, (b) gin, (c) vodka and (d) rum exports.

Mike Freer:

British food and drink are among the best in the world and renowned for their quality and provenance including spirits which are a key export product for the UK. In 2021, the UK's largest food and drink export was whisky which amounted to £4.6bn. In

2021, UK exports of gin and geneva to the world amounted to £541.6m, vodka £40.4m and rum £55.0m. Trade data related to “spirits – beverages” is publicly available on www.uktradeinfo.com under commodity code heading 22 of the Trade Tariff.

■ Trade Agreements: Gulf States

Ruth Cadbury: [\[154005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what meetings she or her officials have had with NGOs about a future free trade agreement with the Gulf Co-operation Council.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Department regularly engages a range of interested individuals and organisations on our trade negotiations, including through our Strategic Trade Advisory Group and Thematic Working Groups. We received a range of written responses through our recent public consultation on a future trade deal with the Gulf Cooperation Council too.

■ Trades Union Congress

Ruth Cadbury: [\[154007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, by which date will the Trade Union Congress have a seat on the Trade Advisory Committee.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The General Secretary of the Trade Union Congress is a member of the Department’s Trade Union Advisory Group (TUAG), and the Deputy General Secretary is a member of the Department’s Strategic Trade Advisory Group (STAG).

JUSTICE

■ Coroners: Perinatal Mortality

Claire Hanna: [\[150276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the independent maternity review chaired by Donna Ockenden, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending the jurisdiction of Coroners in England and Wales to give them permission to hold full inquests into stillbirths.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government is committed to reviewing each of the recommendations in the Ockenden Report and will respond appropriately in due course.

The Ministry of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Care have jointly consulted on proposals to provide coroners with new powers to investigate stillbirths. The consultation can be found at [Consultation on Coronial Investigations of Stillbirths](#)

[justice.gov.uk](https://www.justice.gov.uk)). The Government's response to the consultation has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are working to publish it as soon as possible.

■ Coroners: West Midlands

Steve McCabe: [\[150981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate he has made of waiting times for investigations to be made by the Birmingham and Solihull Coroner Service.

Steve McCabe: [\[150982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential impact waiting times for investigations to be made by the Birmingham and Solihull Coroner Service on people with religious obligations to conduct burials within a particular timeframe.

Tom Pursglove:

The [Coroner Statistics](#) for the Birmingham and Solihull coroner area show that, in 2020, the average time from a death being reported to the conclusion of the inquest was 10 weeks. This was a decrease from 14 weeks in 2019 and 12 weeks in 2018, and below the 2020 average of 27 weeks in England and Wales. Statistics for 2021 will be published next month.

We recognise that delays in the inquest process may cause additional anguish and distress for the relatives and friends of the deceased. It is a matter for coroners, as independent judicial office holders, to determine how their investigations are carried out. However, we expect that they will continue to work sensitively with bereaved families to address any faith-based concerns.

The Chief Coroner has issued practical [Guidance](#) for coroners on situations where a bereaved family has requested urgent consideration of the death of a loved one, which may also include a request for early release of the body; or where the coroner or coroner's officers become aware that a particular death may have aspects which justify especially urgent consideration. This may include consideration on the basis of religious obligations. The guidance says that coroners should pay appropriate respect to those wishes, within the framework of their legal duties and in the context of their other responsibilities.

■ Crown Court and Magistrates' Courts: Trials

Steve Reed: [\[155759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) Crown court and (b) Magistrates court trials in each of the last three years have been ineffective due to (i) the prosecution not being ready, (ii) prosecution witness being absent, (iii) prosecution failing to disclose unused material, (iv) prosecution advocate being engaged in another trial and (v) prosecution advocate failing to attend.

Steve Reed:

[155760]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many trials in each of the last three years have been ineffective due to (a) defence not ready, (b) defendant not produced by Prison Escort Custody Service, (c) defence increase time estimate, (d) defence advocate engaged in another trial, (e) defence advocate failed to attend, (f) another case over-ran and (g) equipment /accommodation failure.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on trial effectiveness at the criminal courts (including ineffective trials by reason and court type), up to December 2021, in the '*Trial effectiveness at the criminal courts tool*' available at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2021>.

■ Domestic Abuse: Victim Support Schemes

Afzal Khan:

[154368]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to help protect victims of domestic abuse when non-molestation orders have been breached and offenders have up to 28 days before being charged.

Victoria Atkins:

Non-molestation orders are civil orders made by the family court to protect victims and their children from the harm of domestic abuse. Breach of an order is a criminal offence. The police take breaches of such protective orders extremely seriously and have the necessary powers to arrest, investigate and commence criminal proceedings. Under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the police can hold a suspect in detention for up to 96 hours depending on the seriousness of the case, or up to 14 days under the Terrorism Act, before being charged or can grant pre-charge bail if there are no grounds to keep a suspect in detention while the investigation continues. The police have further powers to remand the suspect in custody once charges are made, for example if there is a risk of further offences being committed by the suspect if released on bail before a court hearing.

In addition, the Government is bringing in reforms to the pre-charge bail regime through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, which will allow for better protection for victims in all criminal cases, including violent and sexual offences. The reforms include the removal of the perceived presumption against use of pre-charge bail; new risk factors to be considered when making bail decisions; amending the timescales and authorisation levels for pre-charge bail, and a new duty to seek views from victims on bail conditions which relate to their safeguarding.

■ **Gambling: Suicide**

Ronnie Cowan:

[\[151182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing coroners to record gambling addiction as a relevant factor to a death by suicide.

Ronnie Cowan:

[\[151183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, for what reason there is currently no statutory duty to record gambling as a relevant factor in the determination of a suicide.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government recognises that quality information on the circumstances leading to self-harm and suicide, including issues relating to gambling addiction, can support better interventions. Coroners may be made aware of information about the motivation or contributory factors in a suicide. However, it is likely that any such information collected by coroners would not necessarily be complete or consistent, and therefore not always useful for delivering these interventions.

Expecting coroners routinely to assess the motivation for individual suicides would take the coronial role fundamentally beyond its legal parameters, which are to determine who died, and how, when and where they died. Coroners are not permitted, by law, to appear to determine any question of civil or criminal liability against another person.

However, in addition to the inquest conclusion, coroners have a statutory duty to make a Prevention of Future Deaths (PFD) report to a person where an investigation gives rise to a concern that future deaths will occur, and the coroner considers that action should be taken to reduce that risk. PFD reports are about learning and improvements to public health, welfare and safety and could, for example, raise concerns relating to gambling addiction where the circumstances of the individual case give rise to a concern. To promote learning, any PFD report and the responses to it must be sent to the Chief Coroner, who may publish them on the judiciary website.

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

Justin Madders:

[\[150195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Common Platform on the number of roles at Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service.

James Cartlidge:

Common Platform has been designed to provide the ability to view and share information across all stakeholder groups, and provides a single location for the sharing of case information and notifying parties when new case material is available for them to view. It incorporates functionality to assist HMCTS staff in meeting the expectation that most decisions can be recorded at the time of hearing. This live 'in-

court' recording of the outcomes of the court proceedings and the sharing of those outcomes with stakeholders such as the police are intended to protect the public and enable those authorities to respond immediately where for example a breach of an order occurs, or further offences are committed.

HMCTS conducted data gathering exercises in 2019 and 2020, where staff allocated their time by activity. This was used to create a baseline for modelling purposes. The impact of the changes introduced by the Crime Programme (including the Common Platform) on the amount of time required to perform activities was then estimated by staff with experience of performing the relevant roles in order to understand the likely impact of the changes. These estimates were used to model the likely impact on numbers of roles at HMCTS, modelled against the Common Platform implementation plan. This modelling is frequently updated to reflect any changes to the implementation plan. We are working with HMCTS staff who work in court and using our model office and model courts to validate the estimates made and ensure the actual impact on roles is understood.

■ **Magistrates Courts: Pre-sentence Reports**

Ellie Reeves: [\[151248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of cases before magistrates' courts are sentenced without a pre-sentence report.

Ellie Reeves: [\[151249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of cases before the Crown Court are sentenced without a pre-sentence report.

Ellie Reeves: [\[151250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of pre-sentence reports are completed on the day at court.

Kit Malthouse:

It would be misleading to give the proportion of cases sentenced without a pre-sentence report before the Crown and magistrates' court due to the high numbers of cases for which a pre-sentence report would be unnecessary, particularly in the magistrates' courts, for disposals of fines and discharges. This would also involve a process of matching court record data with probation data and the cost of doing so would be disproportionate.

While the decision of whether to order a PSR is up to the discretion of the judiciary, we recognise the value and importance of pre-sentence reports and are working to improve this number, and importantly also their quality, targeting and timeliness.

One example of this is through the PSR pilot that is currently running in 15 magistrates' courts across England and Wales. As part of the pilot, we are encouraging the earlier identification of in-scope cases that would benefit from a PSR, and providing additional training and support to build the capacity of PSR writers to write higher quality reports. The pilot also requires that short format written

reports are produced for three priority cohorts generally understood to have more complex needs, namely female offenders, young adult offenders and offenders at risk of custody. These more comprehensive reports may necessarily require a short adjournment.

■ **Magistrates: Labour Turnover and Recruitment**

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[150267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to assist the recruitment and retention of magistrates.

James Cartlidge:

The recruitment of more magistrates is the Government's top priority for the magistracy. The MoJ has invested over £1 million in a programme of work to increase and improve magistrates' recruitment. In January we launched a digitised and more inclusive recruitment process which seeks to improve data collation, alongside an inclusive marketing strategy which aims to target a wider, more diverse audience, attract more applicants and recruit more from under-represented groups. In the first nine weeks since the marketing launch, we received over 30,000 registrations of interest to the magistracy.

Additionally, we have increased the judicial mandatory retirement age to 75 via the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act 2022, which we expect to retain around an additional 2,000 magistrates annually when compared with the previous mandatory retirement age of 70.

■ **National Probation Service for England and Wales: Surveys**

Ellie Reeves:

[\[151247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish the results of the most recent survey of probation staff as carried out by the Annual Civil Service People Survey.

Kit Malthouse:

The Civil Service People Survey 2021 benchmark and organisation results, including those for the Probation Service, will be published by the Cabinet Office and government communications on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) site in due course.

■ **Offender Assessment System**

Ellie Reeves:

[\[151243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has made an assessment of the usefulness of assessments made under the Offender Assessment System in probation.

Kit Malthouse:

OASys is the core risk assessment tool utilised by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service to assess the risks and needs of any offender. The system was built based on existing evidence and was piloted prior to its implementation in 2001.

There have been a number of research reports since its implementation, and there is a current validation exercise of the predictive element of it, all of which have helped to ensure it remains a valid and reliable tool for assessing offenders' risk.

The first research report, which covered a period between 2006 and 2009, outlined that OASys had contributed to the reduction of reoffending and can be found here: [A compendium of research and analysis on the Offender Assessment System \(OASys\) 2006-2009 \(cep-probation.org\)](#).

A second report presents the OASys studies completed between 2009 and 2013, including a systematic review of the usefulness of the tool and analyses of various aspects of reliability and validity: [A compendium of research and analysis on the Offender Assessment System \(OASys\), 2009–2013 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

The OASys Sexual reoffending Predictor was introduced after the compendiums were written, and the evaluation of that tool is also available:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/955345/comparing-2-predictors-sexual-recidivism.pdf.

■ **Prison Officers: Cost of Living**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[155855]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what additional targeted support his Department is providing to prison officers struggling with living costs.

Victoria Atkins:

Prison Officer pay is reviewed annually by the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) who consider evidence from a range of parties and make recommendations for Government.

The Government submitted its evidence to the PSPRB on 23rd February 2022.

We expect the PSPRB to report with recommendations for Government in the coming months and the Government will announce the 2022/23 pay award later in the year.

■ **Prison Sentences**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[150128]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment his Department has made of steps to re-sentence prisoners currently serving a sentence of Imprisonment for public protection.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government keeps the operation of sentences of imprisonment for public protection (IPP) under constant review. This includes continuing to ensure that IPP prisoners, as well as all prisoners serving indeterminate sentences, have every opportunity to progress towards safe release. This approach is working, with high numbers of unreleased IPP prisoners achieving a release decision each year. The

number of IPP prisoners who have never been released stood at 1,602 on 31 December 2021, down from over 6,000 at its peak.

This Government has brought forward an amendment relating to IPP licence terminations as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Bill, which is currently before Parliament. IPP offenders are eligible for Parole Board consideration of whether their IPP licence should be terminated, once 10 years has elapsed since their first release. Note that time spent in prison following recall under the IPP licence does not affect the calculation of the 10 year qualifying period.

The Bill will require the Secretary of State to refer all eligible IPP offenders to the Parole Board for consideration of licence termination. This will ensure that eligible IPP offenders have every opportunity to have their licence terminated.

The Government welcomes the Justice Select Committee inquiry into the IPP sentence and will carefully consider the recommendations in the final report.

■ Prisoners

Ellie Reeves: **[151237]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish a breakdown by age group of all prisoners in England and Wales.

Victoria Atkins:

The requested information is published quarterly at: [Offender management statistics quarterly - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

Ellie Reeves: **[151238]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the proportion of the prison population that will be aged 18-21 in each of the next five years.

Victoria Atkins:

Projections for the young adult population only include those aged 18-20, and are available up to July 2025 here: [Juvenile, young adult and adult populations by sex](#). Projections for the young adult population only include those aged 18-20, and are available up to July 2025 here: [Juvenile, young adult and adult populations by sex](#).

Ellie Reeves: **[151239]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners in the adult estate are under 21 years of age.

Victoria Atkins:

Data on the age and location of prisoners throughout the adult estate is provided in the 'prison population tool' which is released as part of the Offender Management Statistics quarterly series. The most recent document can be accessed via the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1050261/Prison_Population_data_tool_20211231.xlsx.

Children and young people between 10-17 are held across the youth secure estate. The Youth Custody Service provides transition planning for those who will be in custody at the point of their 18th birthday and identify suitable placements for them.

■ Prisoners' Release: Temporary Accommodation

Apsana Begum: [\[151289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he plans to extend the scheme supporting prison leavers at risk of homelessness into temporary basic accommodation to all 12 National Probation Service regions.

Kit Malthouse:

Our Prisons Strategy White Paper sets out our vision that no-one subject to probation supervision is released from prison homeless. By 2024-5, we will invest £200m per year to transform our approach to rehabilitation. This includes expanding our Community Accommodation Service-Tier 3 transitional accommodation service across England and Wales. The service will support those under supervision from probation who are released from prison at risk of homelessness with up to 12-weeks accommodation.

We have issued the Community Accommodation Service-Tier 3 prior information notice which is available at: <https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Notice/000136-2022>.

■ Prisoners: Self-harm and Suicide

Kerry McCarthy: [\[155605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on levels of (a) self-harm and (b) suicide among prisoners held under Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences.

Kit Malthouse:

The Secretary of State for Justice has not discussed levels of self-harm and suicide among prisoners held under Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

However, preventing self-harm and self-inflicted deaths of prisoners is a key priority for this Government as set out in the Prisons Strategy White Paper.

We are providing prisons with tools to improve the way data is used to identify prisoners at increased risk of suicide and self-harm and we are developing training for staff to improve their understanding and knowledge of what drives self-harm in prisons. For those prisoners at increased risk, we also provide additional support through our targeted case management approach to ensure they receive appropriate care and support, and have also invested in implementing a Key Worker scheme across the estate, providing dedicated staff support to prisoners. We continue to raise staff awareness of the particular risks of self-harm and suicide amongst the IPP population.

■ Prisons: Dictionaries

Ellie Reeves:

[\[151241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners (a) requested and (b) received a requested dictionary in the last 12 months; and what the rules are for the provision of dictionaries for prisoners.

Victoria Atkins:

The information requested is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Dictionaries will be made available for prisoners that request them. The Incentives Policy Framework (IPF) identifies those items that Governors must allow each prisoner when requested, irrespective of incentive level. Writing and reading materials, including dictionaries, form part of this list.

As well as this, all prisoners do have reasonable access to prison libraries, which focus on supporting learning and resettlement, and improving literacy. Prison libraries have the overarching aim of promoting reading as a source of pleasure and to provide prisoners with opportunities for wider cultural engagement. The stock available should reflect the needs of the prisoner community, based on a wide range of management information supplied by the establishment and library service provider.

■ Prisons: Visits

Ellie Reeves:

[\[151244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of prisons have resumed family days following the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Atkins:

I refer the honourable member to the answer I gave on Monday 4 April to PQ [147093](#).

"We do not collect data centrally on which prisons hold family days. Anyone wishing to visit a prisoner should consult the following link to determine what facilities are available for doing so: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/prisons-in-england-and-wales>. HMPPS continues to fund contracted family service providers to support prisons in delivering family days subject to local restrictions within the prison.

Our strategy for managing Covid-19 in prisons continues to be guided by our National Framework, which sets out the basis for decisions on the necessary level of Covid controls over time. All prisons in England and Wales have resumed social visits when safe to do so."

■ Probation: Health Services

Ellie Reeves:

[\[151242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has plans to introduce additional clinical supervision for probation officers.

Kit Malthouse:

I refer the honourable member to the answer I gave on Monday 4 April to PQ [147089](#).

■ **Self-harm: Internet**

Carla Lockhart: [\[151340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a new offence for (a) encouraging or (b) assisting serious self-harm in the new online safety regime.

James Cartlidge:

The Law Commission, in its report "Modernising Communication Offences", recommended the creation of a specific offence of encouraging or assisting a person to self-harm. The Government is currently considering that recommendation and the details of such a new offence.

■ **Spiking: Alcoholic Drinks**

Steve McCabe: [\[150984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have been prosecuted for drink spiking-related offences in the West Midlands in the last three years.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of defendants prosecuted for a wide range of offences up to the end of December 2020, in our 'Principal offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code data tool', here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1063892/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2020-revised.xlsx.

- In the 'police force area' filter, select: 'West Midlands'
- For a range of offences that might be considered linked to drink spiking, in the 'offence code' filter, select: 08805, 00505, 00510, 00802

These offence codes relate to the following detailed offences:

- 08805 - Administer substance with intent to stupefy or overpower to engage in sexual activity
- 00505 - Using chloroform, etc., to commit or assist in committing an indictable offence
- 00510 - Endangering life or causing harm by administering poison
- 00802 - Administering poison with intent to injure or annoy

The number of defendants prosecuted will populate row 32.

It is important to note that these offences will include a broader range of offences than just drink spiking, and that drink spiking offences may be included as a subset of another offence not listed above.

■ Victim Support Schemes

Ellie Reeves:

[\[151245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Victim Liaison Officers are employed by the HM Prison and Probation Service.

Victoria Atkins:

Following the restructuring programme implemented from 1st June 2016, the Probation Service Victim Liaison Officer (VLO) job title was disbanded and aligned to the Probation Services Officer (PSO) function.

This change was to improve the service delivered by the Probation Service to victims across England and Wales. We have now introduced greater flexibility into the role by subsuming the VLO teams into the PSO function. The restructuring programme introduced standardised operating model, clearer team structures and aligned all job descriptions.

Ellie Reeves:

[\[151246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many cases are held under the victim contact scheme.

Kit Malthouse:

The Probation Victim Contact Scheme (VCS) is statutory for victims of specified sexual and violent offences, where the offender has been sentenced to 12 months or more imprisonment, or made subject to a hospital order. Eligible victims will be offered the service after sentence. Those victims who take up the service are kept informed about key stages of the sentence by a dedicated Victim Liaison Officer and have the right to make requests about licence conditions on release, such as a no contact condition and an exclusion zone.

On Thursday 1 April 2022, a total of 42,635 victims were recorded as actively engaged with the VCS. This figure has been drawn from an administrative IT system which, as with any large-scale recording system, is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Building Regulations: Toilets

Rosie Cooper:

[\[156415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what progress his Department has made since December 2021 on gathering of evidence on toilet provision and facilities to update the statutory guidance as part of wider research on Part M of the Building Regulations.

Stuart Andrew:

Toilet provision for men and women' call for evidence closed on 26 February 2021. A very high number of responses to the call for evidence were received, all of which have now been read and analysed. An update will be made in due course.

■ **Children: Day Care****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[151224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the effect of the cost of childcare on rent arrears and household debt on families with children in Birmingham.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living and has taken action to support families worth over £22 billion in 2022-23 to help.

Whilst three quarters of private renters find no difficulties in keeping up with their rent, we understand that affordability may be an issue for some. Individuals who are unable to afford their rental payments may be eligible for a range of support through the Universal Credit system. In April 2020 we boosted investment in local housing allowance by nearly £1 billion and have maintained local housing allowance rates at their increased level in cash terms in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

For those most in need, Discretionary Housing Payments are available to those entitled to Housing Benefit or the Housing element of Universal Credit who face a shortfall in meeting their housing costs. From April, the Government is also providing an additional £500 million to help households with the cost of essentials through the Household Support Fund. This brings the total funding for this support to £1 billion.

Since 2017 the Government has doubled free childcare for eligible working parents of 3-4 year olds, from 15 to 30 hours per week, worth over £6,000 per child per year. We have introduced 15 hours of free childcare a week for 2 year olds from disadvantaged families.

We have also introduced tax-free childcare for children aged 0-11, providing working parents up to £2,000 of childcare support a year (or up to £4,000 per year for disabled children aged 0-16).

Eligible Universal Credit claimants can also claim back up to 85% of their registered childcare costs each month regardless of the number of hours they work, compared to 70% in Tax Credits. For families with two children, this could be worth up to £13,000 a year. The Universal Credit childcare element can be used to top up a claimant's eligible free childcare hours if more hours are worked and childcare required. This offer means that for some claimants' childcare costs should not present any barriers to entering work.

■ Council Tax Reduction Schemes: Solihull

Julian Knight:

[\[151155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much funding has been allocated to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council in the recent Local Council Tax Support Administration Subsidy grant.

Kemi Badenoch:

On 31 March, the Government published provisional allocations for the Local Council Tax Support Administration Subsidy Grant 2022-23. These allocations are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/localised-council-tax-support-administration-subsidy-grant-2022-to-2023>. The provisional allocation for Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council is £248,864. Final payments will be confirmed and made to billing authorities shortly.

■ Discretionary Housing Payments: Birmingham

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[151222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the impact of reductions to discretionary housing payment on the numbers of people in Birmingham at risk of falling into rent arrears in 2022-23.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department has not made a specific assessment of the impact of reductions to discretionary housing payments on the number of people in Birmingham at risk of falling into rent arrears but we monitor general financial resilience of tenants through English Housing Survey data, DWP welfare data and homelessness data.

Whilst three quarters of private renters find no difficulties in keeping up with their rent, we understand that affordability may be an issue for some and that they may require additional support.

Discretionary Housing Payments are available to those entitled to Housing Benefit or the Housing element of Universal Credit who face a shortfall in meeting their housing costs. Since 2011, the government has provided almost £1.5 billion in Discretionary Housing Payments to local authorities.

In addition to the central government contribution, of £100 million for 2022/23, English and Welsh local authorities can top up Discretionary Housing Payment funding up to a maximum of two and a half times this figure using their own funds.

We anticipate local authorities will continue to use their discretion to make informed judgements about relative priorities and needs in their area to ensure that the most vulnerable are supported and the funding is targeted effectively.

In April 2020 the Government boosted investment in the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) by nearly £1 billion, providing 1.5 million claimants with around £600 more housing support in 2020/21 than they would otherwise have received. We maintained LHA rates at their increased levels in 2021/22 and rates will remain at those levels for 2022/23, so that everyone who benefitted from the increase will continue to do so.

From April, the Government is also providing an additional £500 million to help households with the cost of essentials through the Household Support Fund. This brings the total funding for this support to £1 billion.

■ Energy: Conservation

Dr Luke Evans: [\[151284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that opportunities to install energy efficiency measures through Government schemes are compatible with regulations regarding (a) listed buildings and (b) buildings situated in conservation areas.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government is fully committed to encouraging homeowners to incorporate energy efficiency measures in their properties in order to tackle climate change. As part of this, we recognise the need to ensure that more historic buildings have the right energy efficiency measures to support our zero carbon objectives. In our recently published British Energy Security Strategy, we have committed to reviewing the practical planning barriers that households can face when installing energy efficiency measures such as improved glazing, including in conservation areas and listed buildings. This review will be completed by the end of 2022 and ensure protection of local amenity and heritage, whilst making it easier to improve energy efficiency.

■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme

Paul Blomfield: [\[155695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether Ukrainians who have fled Ukraine and been granted refugee status in another EU country are still eligible for the UK's Homes for Ukraine scheme if they were resident in Ukraine prior to 1 January 2022.

Eddie Hughes:

Guidance on eligibility is set out at: www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-scheme-frequently-asked-questions.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[156404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department will publish details of the entire process for the Homes for Ukraine scheme for the (a) applicant and (b) sponsor from the point of application.

Eddie Hughes:

Guidance for sponsors is available at: www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-sponsor-guidance. Visa application guidance is managed by the Home Office and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-visa-under-the-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme>.

■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme: Huddersfield

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[155590]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many people under the Homes for Ukraine scheme have settled in the Huddersfield constituency since 24 February 2022.

Eddie Hughes:

The data on visa approvals is published at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-for-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-numbers-of-visa-applications.

■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme: Kingston upon Hull

Dame Diana Johnson:

[156401]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many people in (a) the City of Hull and (b) Kingston upon Hull North have registered as sponsors under the Homes for Ukraine scheme as of 20 April 2022.

Eddie Hughes:

Data for visas issued under the Homes for Ukraine scheme is at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-for-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-numbers-of-visa-applications .

■ Housing: Construction

Rachael Maskell:

[150210]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the impact of areas with high levels of development of high cost housing on the cost of housing in those areas.

Stuart Andrew:

The Department has not made a specific assessment of the impact on areas with high levels of development of high-cost housing on the cost of housing in those areas.

More generally, lower development will tend to lead to higher prices [footnote:

<https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/knowledgebank/how-does-the-housing-market-affect-the-economy>].

As the Levelling Up White paper set out, getting people onto the housing ladder means making housing more affordable now and in the future. To help create a more sustainable and affordable housing market, the Government has committed to deliver 1 million new homes by the end of this Parliament and continue working towards its ambition of delivering 300,000 new homes per year.

Our National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that local authorities should assess the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community and reflect this in planning policies.

Rachael Maskell:[\[150211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of annual profits of housing developers; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing section 106 thresholds.

Stuart Andrew:

The department has compiled the data based on published reports in the table below, this shows the profits developers made over the last three years.

RANK	2020 TOP 10	2018 PROFIT	2019 PROFIT	2020 PROFIT*
1	Barratt	862.6	901.1	493.4
2	Persimmon	1082.7	1029.4	783.5
3	Taylor Wimpey	804.9	832.7	274.5
4	Bellway	652.9	674.9	249.1
5	Vistry	174.2	181.5	125.8
6	Berkeley	817	768.4	469.7
7	Redrow	382	411	148
8	Bloor	178.1	190	160.7
9	Countryside	211.4	234.4	54.2
10	L&Q	56	79.3	87.7

** *Profit in 2020 would have been affected by Covid

Local planning authorities use the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 planning obligations (together called 'developer contributions') to capture a proportion of the increases in land value that occur as a result of planning permission being granted. There are a range of estimates for the amount of land value uplift currently captured, from 25 to 50 per cent, and in 2018-19, £7 billion was agreed through developer contributions.

However, the existing developer contributions regime is discretionary, subject to negotiation and renegotiations based on developers' viability assessment.

Over 80% of local authorities consider that Section 106 planning obligations create a delay in the granting of planning permission, and over 60% believe that this slows development completion.

The Government has proposed to introduce a new 'Infrastructure Levy', to replace the existing system of developer contributions, which aims to capture a greater share of the uplift in land value that comes with development. Through the Levy, local

authorities will have greater flexibility to determine how contributions are spent to shape and support both existing and new communities.

Apsana Begum:

[\[151291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the finding of the New Homes Review 2022, that 64 per cent of new homes were completed on time.

Apsana Begum:

[\[151292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to require developers to offer compensation to buyers when the completion of their new home is delayed by developers.

Stuart Andrew:

We expect all housing developers to deliver good quality housing, to deliver it on time, and to treat house buyers fairly. It is disappointing when new homes are not completed on time. For most new build homes purchased off-plan, the exchange date may be a long time before completion as the home. New build home contracts typically have a long-stop date, which is an estimated completion date and the rights and responsibilities of the homebuyer and developer should be set out in the contract, including the circumstances a deposit and other money is returned.

The Government is committed to improving redress for new build homebuyers when things go wrong. In July 2021, the UK Government introduced the Building Safety Bill into Parliament, which includes provision for the New Homes Ombudsman scheme to provide dispute resolution to, and determine complaints by, buyers of new build homes against developers. This will include the pre-completion period of new build homes. Once arrangements for the scheme have been made, developers will be required to become and remain members of the scheme.

Where the ombudsman determines a dispute in favour of the complainant, they may order redress such as paying compensation, and where this is not complied with, the scheme may expel the member.

To ensure that developers know what is expected of them and homebuyers know what to expect, the Bill includes provision for a developers' code of practice about the standards of conduct and standards of quality of work expected of the schemes members'.

■ Housing: Disability

Munira Wilson:

[\[155924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) challenges disabled (i) renters and (ii) buyers face on the private housing market and (b) adequacy of support available to disabled people in finding suitable properties with accessible features.

Stuart Andrew:

Government is committed to helping disabled and older people to live independently and safely. People of all ages and all tenures can apply to their local authority for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) which is a capital grant administered by local authorities in England that can contribute towards meeting the cost of adapting an eligible person's home. Since 2010 Government has invested over £4 billion into the DFG (2010-11 to 2021-22), delivering an estimated 490,000 home adaptations. We have developed a range of consumer guides to help make buying, selling and renting more straightforward to navigate.

Government consulted on options to raise the accessibility of all new homes, recognising the importance of suitable homes for disabled people. We are currently considering responses and will publish a government response and set out next steps in due course.

■ Leasehold: Ground Rent**Dr Rupa Huq:****[155856]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the applications of provisions in the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Act 2022 to ground rent on existing residential leases.

Eddie Hughes:

We are taking forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market. The Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Act 2022 will put an end to ground rents for new residential leasehold properties as part of the most significant changes to property law in a generation. The Act's provisions will lead to fairer, more transparent homeownership for thousands of future leaseholders. This is why we asked the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to investigate potential mis-selling of homes and unfair terms in the leasehold sector. The Government has welcomed the action to tackle potential mis-selling and unfair terms in the leasehold sector and wants to see homeowners who have been affected obtain the justice and redress they deserve. The CMA has secured commitments from Aviva, Persimmon, Countryside Properties and Taylor Wimpey to amend their practices, including commitments to remove lease terms that led to doubling ground rents, houses sold as leasehold and to support leaseholders to buy the freehold at the original price quoted. On 18 March 2022, the CMA announced that it has secured commitments on doubling ground rents from 15 landlords who bought freeholds from Countryside Properties. Further information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/cma-cases/leasehold>. This is a hugely important step and demonstrates our determination to support affected leaseholders. We urge other developers to follow suit.

■ Local Government: Energy

Stephen Morgan:

[\[151265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 29 March 2022 to Question 143776, on Gazprom: Local Government, whether he plans to change regulations in respect of procurement and contract tender for energy supply deals for local authorities, such as Gazprom.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Cabinet Office's Procurement Policy Notice 01/2022 confirmed DLUHC are considering an amendment through secondary legislation to address the issue that section 17 of the Local Government Act 1988 presents. Following requests from a number of local authorities to the Secretary of State, we recognise the desire for the Government to support local authorities who wish to cease their contracts with Russian suppliers. We therefore confirm we are progressing the development of a statutory instrument and are engaging interested councils accordingly.

■ Local Plans

Sir Gavin Williamson:

[\[151098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his Department's policy is on whether a surplus contribution to meeting employment need made by a council through its local plan affects expectations for that council's contributions to housing need through the Duty to Cooperate.

Stuart Andrew:

The standard method for assessing local housing need is used by councils to inform the preparation of their local plans. Councils decide their housing requirement once they have considered their ability to meet the needs in their area. This includes taking local circumstances and constraints into account.

The duty to co-operate is a statutory requirement on councils (local planning authorities and county councils) and other public bodies. They must work together constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis in relation to planning for strategic cross boundary matters during plan preparation. This can include the redistribution of housing need and employment need between authorities where one authority cannot meet its own need.

There is no direct relationship or expectation that a contribution to meeting employment need, or other development needs, affects an authority's contribution to housing need or vice versa.

■ Local Plans: York

Rachael Maskell:

[\[150215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will publish a timetable for the inspector's inquiry into York's local plan.

Stuart Andrew:

The Local Plan remains at examination and the independent Inspectors play an important role in examining plans impartially to ensure that they are legally compliant and sound.

A detailed timetable of forthcoming hearings has been published on the City of York Council website. Phase 2 hearings are due to commence on 10 May and due to finish on 27 May. Dates for Phases 3 and 4 hearings have been agreed in principle with the Council and are due to commence on 11 July and 6 September respectively. The dates remain subject to change.

It remains important to ensure that progress on the York local plan is maintained and the Inspectors given the opportunity to issue their final report. The Government has set a deadline for all local planning authorities to have up-to-date local plans by the end of 2023. This will help deliver the certainty that local communities and businesses deserve.

■ Mental Health Services: West Midlands**Preet Kaur Gill:****[151221]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the number of acute bed spaces available for young people in crisis in Birmingham and the West Midlands.

Eddie Hughes:

As part of the Homelessness Case Level Collection data (H-CLIC), local authorities are required to collect details of the number of young people needing support to manage independently, this data is published here

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

This Government is committed to reducing the need for temporary accommodation by preventing homelessness before it occurs. That is why we are spending £2 billion over the next three years to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

The Government is committed to tackling all forms of homelessness and the Homelessness Reduction Act places duties on local housing authorities to take reasonable steps to try to prevent and relieve a person's homelessness.

This means that many more young people who may not previously have been eligible for support, are now being helped to prevent homelessness before it even occurs.

In December 2021, we announced £316 million in funding for the Homelessness Prevention Grant in 2022/23. Local authorities can use the funding flexibly to meet their homelessness and rough sleeping strategies – for example, to offer financial support for people to find a new home, to work with landlords to prevent evictions or to provide temporary accommodation, among other preventative measures.

■ National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service: Construction

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[150077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the construction of the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre is conducted sustainably.

Kemi Badenoch:

Our intention is to achieve an 'excellent' rating against the Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) as was stated at the public inquiry in 2020.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[150078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions the Sponsor Body has had with (a) experts and (b) industry leaders in (i) haulage and (ii) construction to ensure that the River Thames is effectively utilised during the construction of the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

Kemi Badenoch:

The UK Holocaust Memorial project team has held preliminary discussions with representatives from the R&R programme to discuss potential efficiencies in using the River Thames for both construction projects. The different timetables of each project may limit opportunities for cost-effective co-operation.

■ Non-domestic Rates: Valuation

Alex Cunningham: [\[156431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he intends to publish a relief scheme for the 2023 revaluation of business rates; and if he will make a statement.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is required by legislation to introduce a transitional arrangements scheme at each revaluation to help business to adjust to their new bills. The next revaluation will have effect from 1 April 2023 and regulations to implement the transitional arrangements will be in place by 31 December 2022.

■ Poverty

Rachael Maskell: [\[150209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to tackle the challenges presented by areas of very high housing costs for people in housing poverty.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government understands that people are concerned about pressure on household budgets and is taking action to help. The Chancellor announced in

February a package of support to help households with rising energy bills, worth £9.1 billion in 2022-23.

Individuals who are unable to afford their rental payments may be eligible for a range of support through the Universal Credit system. In April 2020, the Government boosted investment in the Local Housing Allowance by nearly £1 billion, providing 1.5 million claimants with around £600 more housing support in 2020/21 than they would otherwise have received. We maintained LHA rates at their increased levels in 2021/22 and rates will remain at those levels for 2022/23, so that everyone who benefitted from the increase will continue to do so.

Whilst three quarters of private renters find no difficulties in keeping up with their rent, we understand that affordability may be an issue for some and that they may require additional support. Discretionary Housing Payments are available to those entitled to Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit who face a shortfall in meeting their housing costs. Since 2011, the Government has provided almost £1.5 billion in Discretionary Housing Payments to local authorities. From April, the Government is also providing an additional £500 million to help households with the cost of essentials through the Household Support Fund. This brings the total funding for this support to £1 billion.

For people living in social rented homes there are caps on maximum rent increases, under the social housing rent settlement that came into force in April 2020. This aims to strike a fair balance between the interests of existing social housing tenants, the interests of taxpayers, the need to build more homes and the importance of ensuring that providers have sufficient income with which to manage and maintain their properties.

For social renting tenants receiving Housing Benefit the maximum amount of Housing Benefit payable reflects the actual rent charged, subject to the removal of the spare room subsidy and the total benefit cap.

■ Refugees: Kingston upon Hull

Dame Diana Johnson:

[156402]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of people who will arrive in the city of Hull under the Ukraine Family Scheme.

Eddie Hughes:

The Ukraine Family scheme is managed by the Home Office. Data for the number of visas issued under the Homes for Ukraine scheme is at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-for-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-numbers-of-visa-applications.

■ Refugees: Ukraine

Bim Afolami: [\[155895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Ukrainian refugees have access to community support networks and employment opportunities.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[156403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much money the Government is providing to local authorities specifically to deal with the management of potential homelessness that may arise from the Homes for Ukraine scheme and the Family Ukraine scheme.

Eddie Hughes:

Guidance for local authority support can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils#role-of-councils.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Publicity

Chi Onwurah: [\[155727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much his Department has spent on advertising for the Levelling Up White Paper; and from which budget funding for that purpose is taken from.

Eddie Hughes:

The Levelling Up campaign has just ended. We will be publishing its expenditure as part of routine transparency commitments in due course.

■ River Thames: Freight

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[150079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of transporting construction materials and debris via the River Thames during the (a) construction of the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre and (b) restoration of the parliamentary estate.

Kemi Badenoch:

The UK Holocaust Memorial project team has held preliminary discussions with representatives from the R&R programme to discuss potential efficiencies in using the River Thames for both construction projects. The different timetables of each project may limit opportunities for cost-effective co-operation.

■ Second Homes

Rachael Maskell: [\[150213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, in the context of high proportions of second homes in some communities, whether he has plans to bring forward proposals to discourage investment in second homes.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government recognises the adverse effect that large numbers of second homes can have on some areas. We have already introduced a number of measures to help mitigate those effects, including introducing higher rates of Stamp Duty Land Tax for those purchasing additional properties and removing the requirement for local authorities to offer a council tax discount on second homes and enabling them to charge the full rate of council tax for these properties.

Development plans can, if supported by local evidence, be used to prioritise local residents by managing the number of new holiday homes in local areas, for example, by including policies which require new open-market housing to be occupied as a primary residence.

■ Sleeping Rough: West Midlands**Julian Knight:**[\[151157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to reduce rough sleeping in (a) Solihull constituency and (b) the West Midlands.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to ending rough sleeping and has made excellent progress on its manifesto commitment. The most recent snapshot published in February 2022 showed the number of people sleeping rough is at an 8-year low and has almost halved since 2017. By December 2021, we had also helped over 40,000 people into longer-term accommodation.

The West Midlands, as well as Solihull specifically, have successfully bid for Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding in 21/22. The West Midlands region was awarded £8.168 million of which Solihull was awarded £271,870. Bids for RSI funding in 2022-25 are currently being considered. West Midlands and Solihull have also been successful in bidding to deliver homes through the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP). RSAP's key objective is to provide 6,000 move-on homes and accompanying support services to those who are rough sleeping, or who have a history of sleeping rough. The West Midlands Combined Authority is also one of three sub-regional Housing First pilot areas.

■ Social Rented Housing**Rachael Maskell:**[\[150207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he plans to take to enable people to find accommodation in the event that the local housing allowance is insufficient to meet housing costs in the private rental sector.

Eddie Hughes:

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) determines the maximum financial support available for renters in the private rented sector. It applies to claims for Housing Benefit and the housing element of Universal Credit. In April 2020 the Government

boosted investment in the LHA by nearly £1 billion, providing 1.5 million claimants with around £600 more housing support in 2020/21 than they would otherwise have received. We maintained LHA rates at their increased levels in 2021/22 and rates will remain at those levels for 2022/23, so that everyone who benefitted from the increase will continue to do so. However, LHA rates are not intended to meet all rents in all areas.

Whilst three quarters of private renters find no difficulties in keeping up with their rent, we understand that affordability may be an issue for some and that they may require additional support. Discretionary Housing Payments are available to those entitled to Housing Benefit or the Housing element of Universal Credit who face a shortfall in meeting their housing costs. Since 2011, the Government has provided almost £1.5 billion in Discretionary Housing Payments to local authorities. From April, the Government is also providing an additional £500 million to help households with the cost of essentials through the Household Support Fund. This brings the total funding for this support to £1 billion.

In the long run we need to build more homes to tackle affordability. Our £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme will deliver up to 180,000 affordable homes, should economic conditions allow.

■ Social Rented Housing: Overcrowding

Rachael Maskell:

[\[150208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he plans to take over the next 12 months to reduce overcrowding in social housing.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to reducing overcrowding, by increasing the supply of affordable housing and enabling councils and other social landlords to make better use of their existing stock. As such, our £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme will provide up to 180,000 new homes across the country, should economic conditions allow.

Local councils are responsible for allocating housing through local schemes, and as such, are best placed to manage the demand for social housing. They are governed by a framework of rules set by central government which ensures that they must give 'reasonable preference' to specific groups including people who are in overcrowded housing. Building on this, statutory guidance recommends local authorities consider giving 'additional preference' (high priority) to families in severe overcrowding which poses a serious health hazard.

PRIME MINISTER■ **Employment: Coronavirus**

Stephen Timms: [\[155564\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, with reference to his oral evidence to the Liaison Committee of 30 March 2022 and his acknowledgment that previous assertions that employment is higher than before the covid-19 outbreak had been incorrect, what plans he has to correct the record in relation to assertions in the House of Commons on (a) 24 November 2021, Official Report, column 344, (b) 5 January 2022, Official Report, columns 11, 14 and 15, (c) 12 January 2022, Official Report, column 568, (d) 19 January 2022, Official Report, column 323, (e) 2 February 2022, Official Report, columns 268 to 269 and (f) 23 February 2022, Official Report, column 314.

Boris Johnson:

During my appearance before the Liaison Committee I committed to respond in writing on a number of issues that were raised with me. I will arrange for a copy of the letter to be placed in the House of Commons Library.

TRANSPORT■ **A1079: Road Traffic Control**

Sir Greg Knight: [\[156391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what further plans he has to improve the traffic flows and vehicle capacity of the A1079 between Hull and York.

Trudy Harrison:

I refer my Right Honourable Friend to the answer I gave on 28th February which still reflects the current position on proposed improvements on the A1079 at Wilberfoss and the A164 Jock's Lodge Junction Improvement Scheme which would improve the A164/A1079 junction. Any further plans for improvements to this road would be a matter for East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

■ **Aircraft: Electric Vehicles**

Beth Winter: [\[154457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what licensing regulations apply to the (a) trial and (b) use of electric vertical take-off and landing vehicles.

Beth Winter: [\[154458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to develop the regulation of (a) trials and (b) use of electric vertical take-off and landing vehicles.

Robert Courts:

The Department for Transport recently explored how current legislation relates to new aircraft such as electric vehicle take-off and landing vehicles (eVTOLs) and found that eVTOLs fit within existing broad legislation.

The Department has recently conducted a consultation on the Future of Flight as part of the Future of Transport regulatory review and supports the Civil Aviation Authority to work with innovators to certify eVTOL aircraft and their uses.

The licensing regulations that apply to the trial and use of eVTOLs are retained EU regulations as amended by an increasing amount of UK law, the Civil Aviation Act 1982, the Aircraft Navigation Order 2016 and the Chicago Convention 1944.

The Department for Transport and the CAA, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, are continually working on ensuring the right regulatory environment for any new industry requirements that arise.

■ Aviation: Exhaust Emissions**Steve McCabe:**[\[153710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the number of ghost flights departing the UK each month.

Robert Courts:

Since the start of the pandemic, government policy has reduced the risk that airlines operate unnecessary 'ghost flights' just to retain historic rights to slots. Carriers must in normal times operate at least 80% of their slots during the current season to retain them for the next equivalent season, the so called '80:20' rule.

The rules requiring airlines to use slots in order to retain them were fully suspended for the Summer 2020, Winter 2020/21 and Summer 2021 seasons.

For the Winter 2021/22 Season, the usage requirement was set at 50% and airlines were able to hand back slot series that they were not intending to use before the season started, to allow other airlines to use them.

For the Summer 2022 Season, the usage requirement has been set at 70% and 'Justified Non-Use' provisions have been expanded to provide further protection and flexibility where there are ongoing COVID-19 related restrictions.

The Government has engaged and consulted with the aviation industry and considered all the available evidence, including the potential impacts of different measures. We are considering whether further alleviation measures will be needed for the Winter 22/23 Season.

During the pandemic some flights may have operated with a low number of passengers for reasons unrelated to government policy on slots, such as carrying vital cargo such as medical supplies and helping people return home when COVID-19 related restrictions were introduced.

■ Blue Badge Scheme: Fees and Charges

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[155587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the impact of the £10 charge for blue badge parking applications on low-income households.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[155588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential difficulties experienced during the application process for a blue badge parking permit when entitlement is linked to an award of disability living allowance, war pensioner's mobility supplement or personal independence payment.

Wendy Morton:

As part of a continuous programme of improvement, the Department for Transport aims to identify ways to make it easier for all applicants to apply/re-apply for a badge. This includes those who automatically qualify for a badge if they are in receipt of the Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance, an award of Personal Independence Payment under specific mobility criteria or a War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement.

The Blue Badge fee allows local authorities to recover some of the costs involved in administering the Blue Badge scheme. However, it is for each local authority to decide whether to charge for a Blue Badge and whether to charge the full £10 fee or not. Previous assessments indicate that, on average, by not having to pay on-road parking charges badge holders make savings worth hundreds of pounds per year.

■ Department for Transport: Information Officers

Deidre Brock: [\[155788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many communications staff are employed by his Department (a) full time, (b) part time and (c) on flexible working arrangements as of 19 April 2022.

Andrew Stephenson:

As of 19 April 2022, communications staff within the department and agencies are below. Please note the definitions as follows:

Full time - Anyone working 37 hours over 5 days a week.

Part-time - anyone working fewer than 37 hours per week as standard.

Flexible working - anyone working 37 hours in fewer than 5 days eg compressed hours, 10 days in 9 etc.

DfTc:

Total staff = 87

Full time = 80

Part time = 2

Flexible working = 5

The figures include the central communications directorate, including 5 corporate team members, one of whom is a contractor, and 21 communications professionals embedded in policy teams across the department. The two part time members of staff are a job share.

DVLA:

Total staff = 46

Full time = 36

Part time = 10

DVSA:

Total staff = 45

Full time = 32

Part time = 11

Flexible working = 3

The figures include 5 full time contractors and 1 communications person working in Operations who is a part-time FTA.

MCA:

Total staff = 13

Full time = 10

Part time = 3

VCA:

Total staff = 3

Full time = 3

■ Highway Code: Publicity

Nia Griffith:

[\[153826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department has taken to publicise the recent changes to the Highway Code.

Trudy Harrison:

The changes to The Highway Code to help improve road safety are being communicated in two phases:

- A factual awareness raising campaign ran in February and March, alerting road users to the changes as they came into effect.
- A broader behaviour change campaign will launch later this year, to align with seasonal increases in active travel, to help embed the changes and encourage understanding and uptake of the new guidance.

Both phases of the campaign include a significant media spend, utilising channels such as radio, digital audio, video on demand and social media advertising.

Communications activity also includes media engagement with supporting stakeholder comment and an extranet to share both static and video assets with stakeholders to amplify our messages.

More information on the campaign can be found at:
www.think.gov.uk/campaign/highway-code-changes/

■ Humber Bridge: Tolls

Sir Greg Knight: [\[156390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information his Department holds on the reason for booths on the Humber Bridge not accepting cash payments; and if he will make a statement.

Trudy Harrison:

This is entirely a matter for The Humber Bridge Board, and the Department for Transport has no involvement in decisions of this sort.

■ Railways

Louise Haigh: [\[155827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many passenger journeys were made by rail in March 2022.

Wendy Morton:

The Department itself does not hold this information.

■ Railways: Fares

Louise Haigh: [\[155823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Over one million half price rail tickets in first ever Great British Rail Sale, published on 19 April 2022, if he will provide details of the routes to which the temporary reduction in off-peak fares will apply.

Louise Haigh: [\[155824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Over one million half price rail tickets in first ever Great British Rail Sale, published on 19 April 2022, with the exception of routes eligible for a 50 per cent reduction, how many routes the reduction in tickets will apply; what the percentage reduction is on each of those routes; and on which routes have tickets been reduced.

Louise Haigh: [\[155825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the press release of 19 April 2022, entitled Over one million half price rail tickets in first ever Great British Rail Sale, for what reason the sale did not extend to the school half-term holidays.

Wendy Morton:

We have launched the Great British Rail Sale, the first ever nationwide rail sale, which has seen train operators from across the industry come together to offer significant discounts on over a million train tickets across Britain. The Great British Rail Sale will help save families money and them connect with friends and families.

The vast majority of train operators in England are involved, so tickets will be available across the country. In developing the Great British Rail Sale, the industry has identified routes and times where there is spare capacity to support additional passenger demand and avoid busy services.

■ Railways: Tickets**Louise Haigh:**[\[155828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many rail tickets were sold in March 2022.

Wendy Morton:

The Department itself does not hold this information.

■ Roads: Capital Investment**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[155602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, by what proportion and amount the RIS2 budget for capital enhancements has been changed in the context of the (a) Spending Review 2021, (b) pausing of smart motorways and (c) other decision-making delays on schemes, such as for the need to consider environmental impacts.

Trudy Harrison:

There are no budget changes related to Smart Motorways as the spend deferred from the pausing of new schemes will largely be balanced out by spending on new commitments such as additional emergency areas.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance**Louise Haigh:**[\[156540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the table entitled Local highway authority amounts per year in the transparency data on Highways maintenance and ITB funding formula allocations, 2022 to 2025, updated by his Department on 28 February 2022, how much each local authority covered by the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements will receive per year.

Louise Haigh:[\[156541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to transparency data on Highways maintenance and ITB funding formula allocations, 2022 to 2025, updated by his Department on 28 February 2022, how much funding is allocated to each local authority for potholes in each year from 2019-20 to 2024-25.

Louise Haigh:**[156542]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the table entitled Total funding amounts per year in the transparency data on Highways maintenance and ITB funding formula allocations, 2022 to 2025, updated by his Department on 28 February 2022, how much equivalent funding was received by authorities now covered by City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements in each year from 2019-20 to date.

Trudy Harrison:

The £5.7 billion City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) programme provides long-term capital funding to improve the local transport networks of eight city regions across England over the next five years from 2022/23. These five-year settlements, confirmed with Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs), consolidate new and existing funds in these areas, including the Highways Maintenance Block, Integrated Transport Block, and the Potholes Fund.

The eligible MCAs have flexibility to manage their settlements to meet local transport priorities, including discretion on the funding of highways maintenance programmes within their areas and constituent local authorities. Prior to 2022/23 there were no local authorities covered by CRSTS, but funding for constituent local authorities still went directly to the MCA.

For 2019/20, the Pothole Action Fund was combined with the Flood Resilience Fund. The two funds provided a total of £50 million and the individual allocations for eligible local authorities in England, outside of London, are listed in the table below.

Details of the individual allocations for the remaining five years for local authorities are published on GOV.UK at the following links:

2020-21: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/roads-funding-information-pack/roads-funding-information-pack>

2021-22: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highways-maintenance-funding-allocations/highways-maintenance-funding-formula-allocations-2021-to-2022>

2022-23 – 2024/25: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highways-maintenance-funding-allocations>

AUTHORITY	POTHOLE ACTION FUND & FLOOD RESILIENCE FUND
Bedford Borough Council	162,473
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	98,498
Blackpool Council	81,477
Bournemouth Borough Council	92,325
Bracknell Forest Borough Council	84,931
Brighton and Hove City Council	108,485

AUTHORITY	POTHOLE ACTION FUND & FLOOD RESILIENCE FUND
Buckinghamshire County Council	593,292
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority	987,459
Central Bedfordshire Council	259,529
Cheshire East Council	533,171
Cheshire West and Chester Council	436,018
Cornwall Council	1,293,715
Cumbria County Council	1,416,792
Derby City Council	133,305
Derbyshire County Council	1,014,920
Devon County Council	2,272,855
Dorset County Council	757,831
Durham County Council	661,777
East Riding of Yorkshire Council	623,454
East Sussex County Council	604,761
Essex County Council	1,405,787
Gateshead Council	156,879
Gloucestershire County Council	993,213
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	1,630,206
Hampshire County Council	1,543,481
Herefordshire Council	603,370
Hertfordshire County Council	889,480
Kent County Council	1,596,053
Kingston-upon-Hull City Council	128,716
Lancashire County Council	1,242,575
Leicester City Council	148,727

AUTHORITY	POTHOLE ACTION FUND & FLOOD RESILIENCE FUND
Leicestershire County Council	794,423
Lincolnshire County Council	1,642,351
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority	991,589
Luton Borough Council	80,205
Medway Council	151,142
Milton Keynes Council	216,586
Newcastle City Council	170,564
Norfolk County Council	1,750,263
North East Lincolnshire Council	117,571
North Lincolnshire Council	251,576
North Somerset Council	204,795
North Tyneside Council	143,919
North Yorkshire County Council	1,637,180
Northamptonshire County Council	812,440
Northumberland County Council	899,542
Nottingham City Council	141,319
Nottinghamshire County Council	858,967
Oxfordshire County Council	864,837
Plymouth City Council	140,815
Borough of Poole Council	95,493
Portsmouth City Council	81,777
Reading Borough Council	72,114
Rutland County Council	102,003
Sheffield City Region Combined Authority	722,755
Shropshire Council	908,396
Slough Borough Council	54,952

AUTHORITY	POTHOLE ACTION FUND & FLOOD RESILIENCE FUND
Somerset County Council	1,211,948
South Tyneside Council	99,525
Southampton City Council	104,509
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	81,571
Staffordshire County Council	1,123,967
Stoke-on-Trent City Council	156,481
Suffolk County Council	1,236,079
Sunderland City Council	202,799
Surrey County Council	983,784
Swindon Borough Council	155,426
Tees Valley Combined Authority	534,488
Telford and Wrekin Council	185,289
Thurrock Council	104,519
Torbay Council	94,730
Warrington Borough Council	177,052
Warwickshire County Council	717,722
West Berkshire Council	240,000
West Midlands Combined Authority	941,981
West of England Combined Authority	661,564
West Sussex County Council	771,759
West Yorkshire Combined Authority	1,727,090
Wiltshire Council	857,899
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead	121,018
Wokingham Borough Council	138,325
Worcestershire County Council	764,933
City Of York Council	142,417

■ Roads: Urban Areas**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[155603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how the National Highway's study on the strategic road network in urban areas is taking into account the Government's target for half of urban journeys to be walked and cycled by 2030.

Trudy Harrison:

National Highways will ensure its strategic road network caters for all road user needs - including cyclists and pedestrians, particularly in urban areas.

■ Transport for the North: Finance**Louise Haigh:** [\[156538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to produce an indicative projection of funding across the Spending Review period for Transport for the North.

Andrew Stephenson:

Transport for the North (TfN) is a devolved, statutory body and, as such, the Department is required to fund it at a level commensurate with its statutory functions. This provides TfN with a degree of certainty over future funding that other, non-statutory Subnational Transport Bodies do not have.

As outlined in TfN's funding letter of February 2022, and in line with other Subnational Transport Bodies, TfN's future funding will depend on how effectively it performs over the current financial year and the extent to which it is providing additional value and benefit to the North of England.

TREASURY**■ Banks: Closures****Steve McCabe:** [\[150075\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to mitigate the effects of bank branch closures in Birmingham.

John Glen:

The Government recognises the importance of appropriate access to banking. However, decisions on opening and closing branches are a commercial issue for banks and building societies.

The largest banks and building societies have been signed up to the Access to Banking Standard since 2017, which commits them to ensure that customers are well informed about branch closures, the bank's reasons for closure and options for continued access to banking services.

Guidance from the Financial Conduct Authority also sets out its expectation of firms when they are deciding to reduce their physical branches or the number of free-to-use ATMs. Firms are expected to carefully consider the impact of planned branch closures on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs and consider possible alternative access arrangements. This ensures that the implementation of closure decisions is undertaken in a way that treats customers fairly.

Alternative options for access can be via telephone banking, through digital means such as mobile or online banking, and the Post Office. The Post Office Banking Framework allows 99% of personal banking and 95% of business banking customers to deposit cheques, check their balance and withdraw and deposit cash at 11,500 Post Office branches in the UK.

■ Business Travel: Electric Vehicles

Valerie Vaz:

[\[155704\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made on the potential merits of increasing the reimbursement of business travel in fully electric company cars.

Helen Whately:

The government introduced the Advisory Electric Rate (AER) in 2018. It applies to employees who use a fully electric vehicle as a company car.

The Advisory Electric Rate (AER) was changed in December 2021 from 4 pence per mile (ppm) to 5ppm. This was calculated using published consumption rates, adjusted to reflect real driving conditions, and the average cost of electricity.

However, employers are not required to use the AER. Instead, they can use different rates to reflect their employee's circumstances. Provided they show that the bespoke rates do not result in a profit for the employee, there will be no tax to pay. Otherwise, when employers reimburse employees at a higher rate than the published AER (5ppm), the excess is subject to Income Tax and NICs.

The government keeps this policy under review.

■ Car Allowances

Alun Cairns:

[\[153941\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing the rate per mileage allowance for persons using their own vehicle for business use.

Helen Whately:

The government sets the Approved Mileage Allowance Payments (AMAPs) rates to minimise administrative burdens. AMAPs aim to reflect running costs including fuel, servicing and depreciation. Depreciation is estimated to constitute the most significant proportion of the AMAPs.

Employers are not required to use the AMAPs. Instead, they can agree to reimburse the actual cost incurred, where individuals can provide evidence of the expenditure, without an Income Tax or National Insurance charge arising.

Alternatively, they can choose to pay a different mileage rate that better reflects their employees' circumstances. However, if the payment exceeds the amount due under AMAPs, and this results in a profit for the individual, they will be liable to pay Income Tax and National Insurance contributions on the difference.

The government keeps this policy under review.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[154175\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with HMRC on ensuring that travel reimbursement costs reflect the cost of travel in the context of rises in fuel costs.

Helen Whately:

Approved Mileage Allowance Payments (AMAPs) are used by employers to reimburse an employee's expenses for business mileage in their private vehicle.

The government sets AMAP rates to minimise administrative burdens. AMAPs aim to reflect running costs including fuel, servicing, and depreciation. Depreciation is estimated to constitute the most significant proportion of the AMAPs.

Employers are not required to use the AMAP rate. Instead, they can agree to reimburse the actual cost incurred, where individuals can provide evidence of the expenditure, without an Income Tax or National Insurance charge arising.

The government also sets Advisory Fuel Rates (AFRs) and the Advisory Electric Rate (AER) which are used when an employer reimburses an employee for business travel in a company car, or when an employee reimburses an employer for the cost of fuel used for private travel. These rates are also advisory.

The government keeps all taxes and allowances under review.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[154176\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will amend the HMRC £4000 upper threshold cap on travel costs in response to recent increases to the cost of travel.

Helen Whately:

Approved Mileage Allowance Payments (AMAPs) are used by employers to reimburse an employee's expenses for business mileage in their private vehicle.

The current rates allow employees to claim up to 45p/mile for the first 10,000 miles and 25p/mile for each subsequent mile, tax free. An additional 5 pence per mile may also be claimed for every passenger transported.

The government sets AMAPs to minimise administrative burdens. AMAPs aim to reflect running costs including fuel, servicing and depreciation. Depreciation is estimated to constitute the most significant proportion of the AMAPs.

Employers are not required to use the AMAPs. Instead, they can agree to reimburse the actual cost incurred, where individuals can provide evidence of the expenditure, without an Income Tax or National Insurance charge arising.

Alternatively, they can choose to pay a different mileage rate that better reflects their employees' circumstances. However, if the payment exceeds the amount due under AMAPs, and this results in a profit for the individual, they will be liable to pay Income Tax and National Insurance contributions on the difference.

The government keeps this policy under review.

■ Cash Dispensing: Fees and Charges

Steve McCabe:

[\[150076\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to mitigate the effects of the declining number of free-to-use ATMs in Birmingham.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that cash is an important part of daily life for millions of people across the UK, and remains committed to legislating to protect access to cash.

From 1 July to 23 September last year, the Government held the 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 received responses to the consultation from a broad range of respondents, including individuals, businesses, and charities. The Government has carefully considered responses to the consultation and will set out next steps in due course.

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.

More broadly, following the Government's commitment to legislate, firms are working together through the Cash Action Group to develop new initiatives to provide shared services. The Government welcomes the direction set by industry's commitments at the end of last year and looks forward to seeing what results they deliver in protecting cash facilities for local communities across the UK.

■ Child Benefit

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[155754\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish data on the proportion and number of child benefit payment recipient families by gender of claimant for each year from 2009 to 2018 inclusive.

Mr Simon Clarke:

HMRC publishes counts of Child Benefit claimants by gender in the *Child Benefit Statistics: annual release* publication. For ease, this has been recreated below with additional columns summarising these counts as a proportion of their respective totals for each year from 2009 to 2018 inclusive.

GENDER OF CLAIMANTS IN RECEIPT OF CHILD BENEFIT PAYMENTS, 2009 TO 2018

	Total		Number of claimants			Number of claimants as a % of total	
	Female	Male	Unavailable	Female	Male	Unavailable	
August 2009	7,769,880	7,065,405	668,790	35,690	91%	9%	0%
August 2010	7,841,675	7,078,790	700,695	62,190	90%	9%	1%
August 2011	7,884,760	7,077,800	724,505	82,450	90%	9%	1%
August 2012	7,920,495	7,063,860	753,685	102,950	89%	10%	1%
August 2013	7,550,265	6,692,210	749,345	108,710	89%	10%	1%
August 2014	7,461,675	6,569,085	772,265	120,325	88%	10%	2%
August 2015	7,416,800	6,484,145	799,205	133,450	87%	11%	2%
August 2016	7,396,355	6,416,240	833,655	146,455	87%	11%	2%
August 2017	7,376,965	6,350,900	866,485	159,580	86%	12%	2%
August 2018	7,325,845	6,412,685	872,470	40,685	88%	12%	1%

Source: Child Benefit Statistics: annual release, August 2021

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[155755\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish data on the proportion and number of Child Benefit families that have opted out of receiving child benefit payment by gender of the registered claimant for each year between 2009 and 2018 inclusive.

Mr Simon Clarke:

Information on the number of Child Benefit claimants that have opted out of receiving payment is only available from 2013 when claimants were given the option of opting out of payment following the introduction of the High Income Child Benefit Charge (HICBC) in 2013. Below is a table summarising the counts of Child Benefit claimants that opted out of receiving payment and their respective proportion of the total for each year from 2013 to 2018 inclusive.

GENDER OF CHILD BENEFIT CLAIMANTS THAT HAVE OPTED OUT OF RECEIVING PAYMENT, 2013 TO 2018

	Total		Number of claimants			Number of claimants as a % of total	
	Female	Male	Unavailable	Female	Male	Unavailable	
August 2013	396,980	344,135	34,400	18,445	87%	9%	5%
August 2014	475,740	410,580	43,120	22,040	86%	9%	5%
August 2015	491,695	420,970	47,530	23,195	86%	10%	5%
August 2016	503,585	427,785	51,735	24,070	85%	10%	5%
August 2017	515,920	434,955	56,070	24,895	84%	11%	5%
August 2018	545,340	456,085	63,140	26,115	84%	12%	5%

Source: Child Benefit Statistics: annual release, August 2021

■ Children: Day Care

Afzal Khan: [\[154366\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has plans to increase the Tax Free Child Care cap in response to the rising cost of childcare.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Government has no plans to increase the cap in Tax Free Childcare.

Tax Free Childcare (TFC) is a generous scheme which provides financial support for working parents with their childcare costs. For every £8 parents pay into their childcare account, the Government adds £2 up to a maximum of £2,000 in top up per year for each child aged up to 11, and up to £4,000 per disabled child until they're 17.

In addition, all three- and four-year-olds can access 15 hours of free childcare per week, regardless of circumstance. Eligible working parents of three- and four-year-olds can also access an additional 15 hours of free childcare per week, also known as 30 hours free childcare. Moreover, Universal Credit (UC) claimants are able to claim up to 85% of their childcare costs.

■ Corporation Tax

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[155943\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has held discussions with (a) officials in his Department, (b) Cabinet colleagues and (c) relevant stakeholders on the global minimum corporate tax system since his appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Lucy Frazer:

The UK have been active participants throughout the process to introduce a global minimum corporate tax, with the Chancellor playing a leading role in securing G7 commitment to a global minimum tax rate of 15 per cent in June 2021, setting a foundation for the wider agreement reached by over 130 members of the OECD Inclusive Framework in October 2021.

As part of the normal policy making process, the Chancellor maintains strong and ongoing working relationships with both HM Treasury officials and Cabinet colleagues alike on the policy direction and the current status of the global minimum tax.

■ Cost of Living

Ian Byrne: [\[156625\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate the Government has made of the basic cost of living for a family comprised of one adult and two children.

Ian Byrne: [\[156626\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate the Government has made of the basic cost of living for a family comprised of one adult and three or more children.

Ian Byrne:

[\[156627\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate the Government has made of the basic cost of living for a family comprised of two adults and one child.

Ian Byrne:

[\[156628\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate the Government has made of the basic cost of living for a family comprised of two adults and two children.

Mr Simon Clarke:

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has increased the price and volatility of energy and some other commodities, and has added to disruption in global supply chains. This has started to affect the prices that UK consumers pay for goods including for fuel and domestic energy. Based on market prices taken after Russia invaded Ukraine, the Office for Budget Responsibility forecast inflation to peak at 8.7% in Q4 2022 before falling back towards the 2% target in late 2023.

The government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living. These are global challenges, however the government is providing support worth over £22 billion in 2022-23 to help families with these pressures.

This includes providing millions of households with up to £350 to help with rising energy bills and helping people keep more of what they earn. The government has cut the Universal Credit taper rate, frozen alcohol duty and has further increased the National Living Wage to £9.50 an hour from April 2022. The Spring Statement went further, with the government announcing an increase to the annual National Insurance Primary Threshold and Lower Profits Limit to £12,570, a cut to fuel duty, and an additional £500m to help with the cost of essentials through the Household Support Fund.

This builds on action the government has already taken that will help families with the cost of living. Since 2017 the government has offered eligible working parents of 3- to 4-year olds 30 hours of free childcare per week. We have also introduced Tax-Free Childcare, where for every £8 parents pay into their childcare account, the Government adds £2 up to a maximum of £2,000 in top up per year for each child up to age 11 and up to £4,000 per disabled child until they're 17. Alongside this, £500m to transform 'Start for Life' and family help services for parents and babies, and carers and children in half of the council areas across England and over £200 million a year to continue the Holiday Activities and Food programme and deliver the government's Flexible Childcare Fund commitment.

At each fiscal event HM Treasury has regularly published distributional analysis of the impact of tax, welfare and spending decisions on households. Distributional analysis published at Spring Statement 2022 shows that in 2024-25, the tax, welfare and spending decisions made since Spending Round 2019 will have benefitted the poorest households most (as a percentage of income). The government will continue to keep the situation under review.

■ Cost of Living: Disability

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[154047\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to take further steps to support disabled people with (a) energy price increases and (b) the increased rate of inflation.

Helen Whately:

Living with a disability can impact significantly on the cost of living. This is why the government invests heavily in supporting disabled people through the welfare system.

The government is committed to help protect customers from price spikes, especially vulnerable customers and is very aware of the difficulties that consumers are experiencing as a result of the rise in energy prices. The government is providing significant financial support – up to £350 – to the majority of households, which will cover more than half of the April rise in energy bills for the average household. This support is worth £9.1bn in 2022-23.

The government is providing further support for vulnerable households, elderly, and low-income people through the Warm Home Discount - which is being expanded by a third to 3m people and increased to £150 – in addition to the continuation of Winter Fuel Payments and Cold Weather Payments.

The government is also providing an additional £500m for the Household Support Fund from April, on top of the £500m we have already provided since October 2021, bringing total funding to £1 billion. In England, Local Authorities are best placed to direct this help to those in their areas who need it most and will receive £421m, whilst the devolved administrations will receive £79m through the Barnett formula.

The government continues to support vulnerable groups through NHS

services. The additional funding announced at the Spending Review, made possible by the new Health and Social Care Levy, means that the NHS resource budget will increase to over £160 billion in 2024-25. These investments will allow the NHS to continue providing the services people need.

■ Credit

Beth Winter:

[\[151308\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of inflation on the growth in consumer credit borrowing.

John Glen:

HM Treasury regularly monitors changes in the consumer credit market as part of its normal process of policy development. However, it does not routinely forecast the impact of inflation on consumer credit usage.

It is worth noting that the ONS Quarterly National Accounts found that the household debt to income ratio has decreased to 136% in Q4 2021, down from a high of 163% in Q1 2008. Around three quarters of total debt is secured against housing.

Unsecured debt as a share of household income is now 32% (Q4 2021), down from its peak of 43% before the financial crisis (Q1 2007).

Retrospective analysis of trends in consumer credit product usage is produced by other organisations, including the Bank of England's monthly statistical releases on money and credit and the Financial Conduct Authority's Financial Lives Surveys.

Beth Winter:

[\[151309\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the level of reliance on consumer credit borrowing for essential household purchases.

John Glen:

Overall, household finances are healthier than before the pandemic and compared to the Global Financial Crisis of 2008.

Households accumulated around £230 billion in additional savings between the start of 2020 and Q3 2021, while total consumer credit borrowing decreased by 11% in the two years to February 2022.

The Government is committed to delivering a well-functioning and sustainable consumer credit market which is able to meet the needs of all consumers.

The Government is also committed to supporting the affordable credit sector. At Budget 2021, the government announced up to £3.8m for a pilot No-Interest Loans Scheme to support vulnerable consumers who would benefit from affordable credit to meet unexpected costs as an alternative to relying on high-cost credit.

■ Dormant Assets Scheme

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[150080\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps is he taking to claim orphan funds through the Dormant Assets Scheme.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[150081\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps is he taking to claim funds from orphan stocks & shares and insurance policies through the Dormant Assets Scheme.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[150082\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much money has he claimed through the Dormant Assets Scheme in the last calendar year.

John Glen:

The UK Dormant Assets Scheme is led by the financial services industry and initiatives across the UK whilst protecting the original asset owner's right to reclaim. Assets that are classed as dormant always remain the property of their owners, who can reclaim money owed to them in full at any time. Dormant account funds are transferred to an authorised reclaim fund, Reclaim Fund Ltd (RFL) which retains enough funds to meet any future reclaims, and then distributes the surplus funding onwards to The National Lottery Community Fund to be used for public benefit.

In April 2021, RFL became a Treasury-owned arm's length body, but it remains financially and operationally separate from HM Treasury. Dormant account funds do not ever enter the Treasury and the Government does not have access to dormant monies that are transferred into the Dormant Assets Scheme. RFL received £127 million of dormant balance transfers in 2021, taking total amounts received by RFL since it commenced operations in 2011 to over £1.5 billion.

The Dormant Assets Act 2022 delivers on the Government's commitment to expand the Scheme, potentially unlocking a further £880 million over the coming years. It enables a wider range of dormant assets to be transferred into the Scheme from the insurance and pensions; investment and wealth management (including orphan monies attributable to collective scheme investments); and securities sectors.

The decision on what new assets are included in the future will depend on a number of factors, including: identifying asset classes with high instances of dormancy; setting the dormancy definitions for such assets, and how restitution would be achieved. It would also be important to consider whether other mechanisms for dealing with dormancy already exist. Any further expansion will require the same close collaboration between Government, an authorised reclaim fund, and industry that has supported this phase of expansion.

■ Economic Crime

Siobhain McDonagh:

[\[155566\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to the Treasury Committee's Economic Crime Report published on 2 February 2022; what assessment he has made of (a) the potential merits of that report's recommendations on authorised push payment scams and (b) the effectiveness of the Contingent Reimbursement Model Code in providing sufficient protection to consumers in the context of the findings of that report on that matter.

John Glen:

The Government has now shared its response to the Treasury Select Committee's Economic Crime report with the Committee.

The Government is committed to tackling fraud within payment networks, including to protect people against Authorised Push Payment (APP) fraud. The Government welcomed the publication of the Payment Systems Regulator's (PSR) Consultation on 18 November 2021 regarding further measures to counter APP scams, and announced alongside that it would address any legislative barriers to the PSR taking regulatory action on mandatory APP reimbursement.

■ Energy: Housing

Stephen Farry:

[\[150283\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the European Commission on the application of changes to VAT for the installation of energy saving materials in Northern Ireland.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government has been clear that a constructive solution must be found that ensures the whole of the UK can benefit from the energy saving materials reforms and that Northern Ireland remains an integral part of the UK market.

The Government will engage with the European Commission on this matter as soon as possible, within wider discussions regarding the Northern Ireland Protocol.

In the interim, the Northern Ireland Executive will receive a Barnett share of the value of this relief.

Stephen Farry:[\[150284\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the number of EU member states that are currently enabling reduced VAT treatment of the installation of energy saving materials.

Lucy Frazer:

At Spring Statement 2022, the Chancellor announced that the VAT relief for the installation of energy saving materials (ESMs) in residential accommodation would be expanded in Great Britain from 1 April 2022. The changes have removed complex eligibility conditions, reinstated wind and water turbines as qualifying materials, and reduced the rate of VAT to zero per cent for the next 5 years.

EU rules restrict the VAT reliefs which can be introduced in EU Member States. As such, no Member State can currently apply a new VAT zero rate or reduced rate to the installation of ESMs which is equivalent to that being introduced in Great Britain.

Under the EU VAT Rates Proposal officially adopted at ECOFIN on Tuesday 5 April 2022, and due to be introduced across the EU from 1 January 2025, the list of items on which Member States can apply reduced rates and zero rates will be expanded. However, this expanded list only covers the supply and installation of solar panels and does not include other key items in the UK's ESM measure, such as insulation or wind and water turbines.

■ Energy: Prices**Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[153838\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support his Department has provided to families in response to recent increases in gas and electricity prices.

Helen Whately:

The government is committed to help protect households from price spikes and is very aware of the difficulties that families are experiencing as a result of the rise in energy prices. The government is providing significant financial support – up to £350 – to the majority of households, which will cover more than half of the April rise in energy bills for the average household. This support is worth £9.1bn in 2022-23.

The government is also providing an additional £500m for the Household Support Fund from April, on top of the £500m we have already provided since October 2021, bringing total funding to £1 billion. In England, Local Authorities are best placed to

direct this help to those in their areas who need it most and will receive £421m, whilst the devolved administrations will receive £79m through the Barnett formula.

■ Fossil Fuels

Steve McCabe: [\[153711\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the level of final support provided by UK banks for new oil and gas projects.

Steve McCabe: [\[153712\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of UK banks providing financial support to new oil and gas projects.

Helen Whately:

Bank's decisions on commercial lending are matters for them.

The British Energy Security Strategy, published on 7 April 2022, sets out the importance of oil and gas to energy security and the transition to net zero. Nearly all major UK banks are signatories to the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (GFANZ) and are committed to transition their lending to align with Net Zero.

■ Fossil Fuels: Taxation

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[153907\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government plans to take to help mitigate the loss of revenue from taxation on fossil fuels in the next 20 years.

Helen Whately:

The government takes its environmental responsibilities seriously and has published the Net Zero Strategy on how the UK will deliver on its commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050. The government has also published the Net Zero Review exploring the key issues and trade-offs as the UK decarbonises, including the fiscal impact of the transition.

All taxes are kept under review and any changes are considered and announced by the Chancellor.

■ Fuels: Excise Duties

Chi Onwurah: [\[156439\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the extent to which the 5 pence fuel duty reduction has been passed on to consumers.

Helen Whately:

The government expects those in the supply chain to pass the fuel duty cut through to consumers, and has written to industry stakeholders to set out this expectation.

The government will continue to monitor fuel prices closely.

■ Health and Social Care Levy

Luke Pollard: [\[154373\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much money HM Treasury will receive this year from the National Insurance increase in financial year 2022-23; and how much funding will be allocated to the (a) NHS and (b) care sector from that rise in that year.

Lucy Frazer:

In 2022-23, the Health and Social Care Levy takes the form of an increase to National Insurance contributions. The most recent estimate of the net yield from this increase is £12.7 billion, which was published in Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021.

A population share of receipts from the 2022-23 increase will go to the NHS or equivalent in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, as with the existing NHS National Insurance contributions allocation.

Funding for Health and Social Care over the next three years was confirmed at Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021.

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[156623\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he approved the HMRC guidance, Prepare for the Health and Social Care Levy, issued on 31 January 2022 and last updated on 7 February 2022.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC work in partnership with HM Treasury and Ministers on developing and delivering policy, including in connection with the implementation of the temporary increase to certain National Insurance Contributions rates rise for 2022-23 from April 2022.

HMRC regularly publishes operational guidance on all manner of Income Tax and National Insurance changes to relay the detail of how a given policy is intended to operate for staff and the general public. Ministers are not involved in the sign off of operational guidance, but there is a stringent process in place to quality assure all published guidance.

■ Health and Social Care Levy: Off-payroll Working and Self-employed

Kirsten Oswald: [\[150194\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the impact of the Health and Social Care Levy on the earnings of (a) freelance and (b) other off-payroll workers.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government has made several assessments of the overall impact of the introduction of the Health and Social Care Levy, including in the Tax Information and Impact Note for the measure which was published on gov.uk.

From April 2022, all eligible employees and self-employed individuals will pay the 1.25 percentage point increase in National Insurance contributions (NICs), and the Health and Social Care Levy from April 2023. This includes eligible freelancers and off-payroll workers.

Off-payroll workers who fall inside the off-payroll working rules as deemed employees, and their deemed employers, are included in the scope of the Levy, as the Levy applies wherever there is a Class 1 NICs liability. It will be the responsibility of the deemed employer to pay the employer Levy contribution and deduct the employee Levy contribution.

The increase to the NICs Primary Threshold/Lower Profits Limit announced at the Spring Statement 2022 means that, from July, around 70 per cent of NICs payers will be better off, even when taking the Levy into account.

■ Health and Social Care Levy: Publicity

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[156622\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions (a) he or (b) other Ministers in his Department have had with HMRC about the advice issued to employers to add the message, 1.25 per cent uplift in NICs funds NHS, health & social care, to payslips in relation to the increase in national insurance.

Lucy Frazer:

The Health and Social Care Levy (HSCL) was developed in partnership with HM Treasury, Ministers, and HMRC. The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the policy on 7 September 2021 and the HSCL was legislated for via the HSCL Act 2021.

HMRC is responsible for the administration and successful delivery of tax policy set by the Government. As part of this function, HMRC have issued guidance to employers to include factual messaging on payslips in 2022-23 to highlight the temporary change in NICs rates before the new Levy begins in 2023-24; however, this is not mandatory.

From April 2023, the HSCL will be a separate tax and will be itemised as a separate deduction on payslips.

■ Individual Savings Accounts

Apsana Begum: [\[151299\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government plans to increase the property price cap for Lifetime ISAs in line with the rate of inflation.

John Glen:

The Lifetime ISA is intended to support younger people saving for their first home or for later life by offering a generous government bonus of 25% on up to £4,000 of savings each year. These funds, including the government bonus, can be used to purchase a first home up to the value of £450,000.

The Government considers that the £450,000 price cap is suitable to support the majority of first-time buyers across the UK, who typically purchase less expensive properties than other buyers, while also ensuring sustainable public finances. The most recent Office for Budget Responsibility forecast stated that bonus payments will have an exchequer cost of £3.5 billion between 2021 and 2027. The price cap ensures that this significant investment of public money is more precisely targeted towards households that may find it more difficult to get onto the property ladder.

First-time buyers who can purchase a home valued over £450,000 are likely to have an income significantly above that of the average household in the UK and are therefore more likely to be able to purchase a first home without the support of this scheme.

However, the Government continues to keep all aspects of savings policy under review.

■ **Military Aid: Ukraine**

Luke Pollard:

[\[154372\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much money he has allocated for military support for Ukraine as of 14 April 2022.

Mr Simon Clarke:

UK military and economic assistance to Ukraine is longstanding. The UK has been in the vanguard in supplying military aid to Ukraine during the current conflict, providing a package worth over £450 million in lethal and non-lethal aid to Ukraine, including thousands of anti-tank weapons, air defence systems, helmets, body armour, and night vision goggles.

In addition, we are providing export financing to enhance Ukrainian naval capabilities, and since 2014 have invested in building Ukrainian military capacity, including training thousands of Ukrainian troops.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[153825\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse for financial year 2022-23 of postponing for 12 months the inflation-linked increases in Vehicle Excise Duty that took effect from 1 April 2022.

Helen Whately:

The Chancellor confirmed at Autumn Budget 2021 that, in 2022-23, Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) rates for cars, vans and motorcycles would increase in line with Retail Price Index only.

Since 2010, VED rates have increased in line with inflation, meaning that VED liabilities have not increased in real terms.

Raising VED in line with inflation helps to maintain the sustainability of the public finances over the longer term.

■ NHS: Cost Effectiveness**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[150978\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 29 March to Question 146546 on Health and Social Care Levy, if he will take steps to ensure that the NHS also reports regularly to Parliament on steps taken to meet the efficiency target.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Government is committed to ensuring that Parliament is able to scrutinise public spending effectively.

The NHS and the Department of Health and Social Care report regularly to Parliament, including through the Health and Social Care Committee and the Public Accounts Committee. The Government's Mandate and Financial Directions to NHS England are presented to Parliament ahead of the start of each Financial Year, and the Government's subsequent assessment of how the NHS performed against the objectives set by the Government is also presented to Parliament. The NHS also publishes its board papers online, which include their in-year assessment of their financial position.

The delivery of the increased efficiency target is a key priority, and as such the Government is committed to ensuring that information on its delivery is made available through existing Parliamentary reporting processes.

■ Offshore Industry: Taxation**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[154447\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact and merits of introducing windfall tax on gas and oil producers.

Helen Whately:

The UK Government places additional taxes on the extraction of oil and gas, with companies engaged in the production of oil and gas on the UK Continental Shelf subject to headline tax rates on their profits that are currently more than double those paid by other businesses. To date, the sector has paid more than £375 billion in production taxes.

All taxes are kept under review and any changes are considered and announced by the Chancellor.

■ Pensions: Tax Allowances**Rob Roberts:**[\[156620\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue has been raised in each of the last five years as a result of the pensions annual allowance tax charge from (a) defined contribution and (b) defined benefit scheme members.

John Glen:

We do not hold the information requested. Annual Allowance (AA) tax charges can be reported via Accounting for Tax (AfT) returns which are completed by the scheme administrator, and via Self-Assessment (SA). Neither AfT nor SA returns require information on the type of pension scheme that the charge relates to. In addition to this, the AA applies to an individual's pension accrual across all pensions held, which could cover both defined benefit and defined contribution schemes.

However, HMRC publish data on the number and value of AA charges reported to us through AfT and SA, as well as the value of contributions exceeding the allowance. The AfT and SA columns are not mutually exclusive, the same case could appear in both columns. Individuals are required to report AA breaches through SA returns even if their scheme pays the charge and reports the breach through AfT returns. However, in practice individuals may be reported through AfT and not report themselves through SA, or vice versa, in error. The data for the last five available tax years is below:

TAX YEAR	NUMBER OF ANNUAL ALLOWANCE CHARGES REPORTED BY THE SCHEME THROUGH ACCOUNTING FOR TAX RETURNS	TOTAL VALUE OF ANNUAL ALLOWANCE CHARGES REPORTED BY THE SCHEME THROUGH THE ACCOUNTING FOR TAX RETURNS (£ MILLION)	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS REPORTING PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS EXCEEDING THEIR ANNUAL ALLOWANCE THROUGH SELF ASSESSMENT	TOTAL VALUE OF PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS EXCEEDING THE ANNUAL ALLOWANCE REPORTED THROUGH SELF ASSESSMENT (£ MILLION)
2015 to 2016	3,010	62	5,460	143
2016 to 2017	2,920	63	18,710	584
2017 to 2018	6,710	122	29,920	912
2018 to 2019	13,700	210	34,260	819
2019 to 2020	21,410	253	42,350	949

■ **Public Finance: Northern Ireland**

Lisa Nandy:

[151093]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the effect of provisions included in the Spring Statement 2022 on Northern Ireland.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Chancellor's Spring Statement on 23 March 2022 announced a number of measures to support households and businesses in every region and nation of the UK and to relieve the immediate pressure on our cost of living. It sets out that taxes are being cut, debt is falling and public spending is increasing.

For example, raising the National Insurance thresholds is a tax cut for 800,000 workers in Northern Ireland, saving the typical employee over £330 a year, and the 1ppt cut to the basic rate of income tax from 2024 will benefit 870,000 taxpayers in Northern Ireland.

Further support for UK households and businesses included the £1,000 increase to the Employment Allowance, which will benefit around half a million businesses across the UK, as well as the cuts to fuel duty on petrol and diesel, by 5p per litre, for the next 12 months.

In addition to this UK-wide action, the Chancellor also announced that the UK government is providing the Northern Ireland Executive with an additional £47 million through the Barnett formula in 2022/23 as a result of measures announced in the Spring Statement.

■ Public Finance: Wales**Lisa Nandy:**[\[151092\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an impact assessment of the potential effect of measures included in the Spring Statement 2022 on Wales.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Chancellor's Spring Statement on 23 March 2022 announced a number of measures to support households and businesses in every region and nation of the UK and to relieve the immediate pressure on our cost of living. It sets out that taxes are being cut, debt is falling and public spending is increasing.

For example, raising the National Insurance thresholds is a tax cut for 1.2 million workers in Wales, saving the typical employee over £330 a year, and the 1ppt cut to the basic rate of income tax from 2024 will benefit 1.5 million taxpayers in Wales.

Further support for UK households and businesses included the £1,000 increase to the Employment Allowance, which will benefit around half a million businesses across the UK, as well as the cuts to fuel duty on petrol and diesel, by 5p per litre, for the next 12 months.

In addition to this UK-wide action, the Chancellor also announced that the UK government is providing the Welsh Government with an additional £27 million through the Barnett formula in 2022/23 as a result of measures announced in the Spring Statement.

■ Research: Tax Allowances

Chi Onwurah:

[\[156449\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the statement on page 31 of the Spring Statement that the definition of R&D for tax reliefs will be expanded by clarifying that pure mathematics is a qualifying cost and that the Government will legislate so that expenditure on overseas R&D activities can still qualify, what assessment has been made of the financial implications of that matter; and what the rationale was for that decision.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[156450\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the factors that contributed to the doubling of R&D tax credit claims in 2019-2020 when compared to 2018-2019; and in which regions that increase occurred.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government recognises that pure mathematics research underpins wider R&D expenditure. It is therefore right that expenditure on mathematical research should be considered as qualifying expenditure for tax reliefs. This reform will support sectors where the UK has a comparative advantage such as AI, quantum computing, and robotics, while also supporting sectors such as manufacturing and design. The Government believes this reform will have negligible effects on the public finances.

There has been a rise in claims for tax credits in recent years, but these have not doubled in the period between 2018-19 and 2019-20. In 2019-20, 82,950 companies submitted claims, of which 9,675 were for R&D expenditure credit (RDEC) and 76,225 were for the small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) scheme. This compared to 71,760 claims in the previous year, of which 8,725 were for RDEC and 65,480 were for the SME scheme. Regional analysis into the location of where the R&D takes place does not exist, as only the locations of companies' registered offices are recorded.

The Government is currently undertaking a review of R&D tax reliefs, to ensure the UK remains a competitive location for cutting edge research, that the reliefs continue to be fit for purpose, and that taxpayer money is effectively targeted. The review is also considering reasons for why the cost of support for both schemes has increased substantially in recent years. As announced at Spring Statement 2022, the Government will consider further reforms ahead of the Autumn.

■ Revenue and Customs: Newcastle upon Tyne

Mr Nicholas Brown:

[\[156389\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who owns the freehold for the Benton Park View site in Newcastle upon Tyne that is used by HMRC.

Lucy Frazer:

Newcastle Estates Partnership, part of the Semperian Group, own the freehold for the Benton Park View site in Newcastle upon Tyne.

■ Royal Mint: Non-fungible Tokens**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[154240\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the total cost of creating the Royal Mint non-fungible token; and if he will provide a breakdown of that cost by spending on (a) staff time and resource, (b) development, (c) marketing and (d) other relevant costs.

John Glen:

The Chancellor has asked the Royal Mint to produce a non-fungible token (NFT) as an emblem of the UK's forward-looking approach to crypto-technologies.

The Royal Mint staff involved in the development of the NFT are also involved in a number of other commercial activities. Work on the NFT is at an exploratory phase and costs are not separately identifiable.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme**Daisy Cooper:**[\[150271\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2022 to Question 127486 on Self-employment Income Support Scheme, if he will direct HMRC to accept payment arrangements under their Time to Pay policy which are longer than 12 months for people experiencing difficulties in paying income tax liable on self-employment grants.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC is working hard to help all taxpayers with temporary cash-flow issues, and to provide them with the support they need.

HMRC's longstanding Time to Pay policy allows taxpayers in temporary financial difficulty to schedule their tax debts into affordable and sustainable instalment arrangements with no maximum repayment period. However, HMRC will seek to take payment in the shortest period of time affordable for the taxpayer. These arrangements are flexible and can be amended if circumstances change.

In addition, HMRC has a well-established Extra Support Service which is accessible by all taxpayers. HMRC customer service advisers have the skills to identify taxpayers who need extra help, to empathetically handle their queries, and make reasonable adjustments.

Any taxpayer concerned about their ability to pay should contact HMRC to discuss the support available.

Zarah Sultana:[\[156604\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to support self-employed workers facing (a) financial hardship or (b) bankruptcy due to tax repayments on SEISS grants.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government has supported UK households throughout the pandemic with nearly £400 billion of COVID support, including through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) which provided over £28 billion in grants to 2.9 million individuals.

The SEISS was designed to support those whose income had dropped temporarily due to COVID-19. Like self-employed income, SEISS grants are subject to Income Tax and self-employed National Insurance contributions at the recipient's rate of Income Tax in the year the grant was received. This was set out by the Chancellor when announcing the scheme in March 2020, and in subsequent SEISS guidance throughout the scheme's lifetime.

The Government does not think it is right to allow SEISS recipients to alter the rate of tax paid on that income over time. This is to ensure fairness for recipients of support across various schemes and for the taxpayers who are funding the schemes.

The Government has implemented an unprecedented package of support for taxpayers struggling with paying tax liabilities. HMRC has scaled up its longstanding Time to Pay policy, which allows any business or individual in temporary financial difficulty to schedule their tax debts into affordable, sustainable, and tailored instalment arrangements.

Anyone experiencing difficulties paying their tax bill can discuss payment options with HMRC, who are committed to supporting taxpayers through difficult times and will agree a Time to Pay arrangement wherever possible. There are further details available on GOV.UK.

■ Social Services: Finance**Stephen Morgan:**[\[151257\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will commit to allocating funding for early intervention, such as early help and family support services, to the same level that funding was at in 2010.

Mr Simon Clarke:

Local authorities have responsibility for delivering early help and family support services in their area. At the Spending Review, the government provided the largest annual increases in core funding for local authorities in over a decade. To support further investment in vital family help services, the government also increased funding for the Supporting Families programme to nearly £700m, and provided an investment in Start for Life and Family Hub services of more than £300m, over the next three years.

■ Soft Drinks: Taxation**Jim Shannon:**[\[153956\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy on the finances of affected companies.

Helen Whately:

Sales of soft drinks have increased since the Soft Drinks Industry Levy was introduced. "Sugar Reduction - Report on progress between 2015 and 2019" published by Public Health England, shows that there has been an increase in sales of all soft drinks included in the SDIL, but a reduction in the total sugar sales from those drinks of 35.4%, reflecting the shift in sales towards lower sugar drinks.

The impact on individual companies will vary depending on their product portfolios.

■ Taxation: Domicil**Abena Oppong-Asare:** [\[155942\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has attended policy discussions with officials in his Department on (a) the non-domicile status of taxpayers, (b) the treatment of foreign nationals in the UK tax system and (c) the treatment of people paying tax in more than one country since his appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Lucy Frazer:

As with all aspects of the tax system, the Government keeps policy surrounding tax residence under review as part of the Budget process.

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[156621\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he took to avoid a conflict of interests when considering changes to tax rules for non-domiciled residents.

Lucy Frazer:

The Ministerial Code sets out the process by which Ministers should declare their interests, and take advice from their Permanent Secretary and the Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests about any action that may be needed to avoid a conflict or the perception of a conflict.

■ Taxation: Russia**Christine Jardine:** [\[155887\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many Russians sanctioned under the Global Magnitsky Sanctions regime have claimed non-domiciled status in the UK.

Christine Jardine: [\[155889\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many Russians have claimed non-domiciled tax status in each of the last ten years.

Lucy Frazer:

The information requested is not readily available to HMRC and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Christine Jardine: [\[155888\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many Russians have been denied non-domiciled tax status in each of the last ten years.

Lucy Frazer:

The information requested is not available.

■ Treasury: Disclosure of Information**Emily Thornberry:**[\[155611\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether a leak inquiry has been commissioned by his Department into the source of media reports on 21 March 2022 revealing data on the UK's debt interest payments taken from (a) the ONS's 22 March publication of the public sector finances for February 2022 and (b) the Office of Budget Responsibility's 23 March Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Emily Thornberry:[\[155640\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if a leak inquiry has been commissioned by his Department into the source of reports in The Daily Mail newspaper on 20 March revealing his plans for a temporary cut of 5 pence in fuel duty to be announced in the Spring Statement on 23 March.

Emily Thornberry:[\[155641\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether a leak inquiry was carried out by his Department into the source of photographs of the Prime Minister taken from the State Rooms in 11 Downing Street on 15 May 2020 and published in The Guardian on 19 December 2021.

Emily Thornberry:[\[155642\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether a leak inquiry was carried out by his Department into the source of reports by ITV News on 25 October 2021 setting out the detail of increases in the National Minimum Wage to be announced in the Budget on 27 October 2021, including quotes about the rationale behind those increases attributed to him.

Emily Thornberry:[\[155643\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether a leak inquiry was carried out by his Department into the sources of reports in The Times newspaper on 20 October 2021 concerning projections for public finance where it was suggested they were contained in early drafts of his Department's Net Zero Review Final Report published on 19 October 2021.

Helen Whately:

It is a long-established practice of the Treasury not to comment either on whether a leak inquiry has been established, or on its conduct or outcome.

■ Treasury: USA**Emily Thornberry:** [\[153824\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his Department's transparency data on ministerial travel published on 31 March 2022, who paid for the cost of his (a) flights and (b) accommodation for his visit to Washington DC from 12 to 14 October 2021.

Helen Whately:

The Chancellor personally covered the cost of his flight to Washington in October 2021 for the IMF annuals and meetings with G7 counterparts. The Chancellor stayed at the British Embassy in Washington DC, which did not incur a cost.

■ UK Government Investments: Staff**Emily Thornberry:** [\[155621\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 4 April to Question 148084, for what reason his Department's contract with Health Management Ltd., tendered through procurement reference CESH21A12, states the headcount of UK Government Investments (a) to have been 159 in 2021-22 and (b) to be 200 in 2022-23.

Helen Whately:

The procurement exercise (CESH21A12) was run in June 2021. The figures in the contract were estimates provided at this time.

The average headcount UKGI employed in 2021-22 was 152. UKGI's headcount for 2022-23 is being finalised but is not planned to exceed 160. Budget allocations for 2022-23 will be published once voted on by Parliament as part of the Main Estimates process.

WALES**■ Asylum: Rwanda****Ruth Jones:** [\[154390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government ahead of the Government's proposals to open an offshore asylum processing centre in Rwanda.

Simon Hart:

While immigration is a reserved matter, representatives from across Government have met with counterparts in the Welsh Government regarding the New Plan for Immigration announcements and will continue to do so as part of regular engagement with the Devolved Administrations.

This is part of the United Kingdom's plan to address the international challenge of illegal migration, control our borders and break the business model of people smuggling gangs.

■ Wales Office: Information Officers

Deidre Brock:

[155784]

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how many communications staff are employed by his Department (a) full time, (b) part time and (c) on flexible working arrangements as of 19 April 2022.

Simon Hart:

There are six full-time communications staff employed by the office. One further member of staff works part-time. Of the six full-time staff members, one has formal flexible working arrangements although all staff members have the option to work flexibly.

Deidre Brock:

[156501]

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how much his Department spent on communications staff in (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21 and (c) 2021-22.

David T C Davies:

The total salary costs (including National Insurance and pension costs) spent on communications staff in each of the last 3 financial years is shown below:

FINANCIAL YEAR	SALARY COSTS (£)
2019-20	376,547
2020-21	392,857
2021-22	452,481

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Alcoholism: Discrimination

Dan Carden:

[R] [155898]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the impact the exclusion of alcohol dependence and other addictions from the protections of the Equality Act 2010 has had on (a) discrimination and (b) stigmatisation of people with a history of alcohol dependence.

Kemi Badenoch:

While the Government recognises the personal challenges faced by people with addictions or dependencies such as alcohol, we subscribe to the view of successive Governments since the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, that it is not appropriate to give such conditions protected status under discrimination law. Alcohol addiction or dependency therefore remains specifically excluded from the Act's definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010 (Disability) Regulations 2010.

Addiction and dependency can however sometimes cause a disability – for example lung or kidney failure – or be the result of a disability, for example a mental health condition. Where the addiction arises due to medically prescribed drugs or other medical treatment – for example an individual who has an addiction to painkillers because they are prescribed following an accident or surgery – protection may also be available under the Act. We believe that this offers the right balance between protecting individuals on the one hand and employers and service providers on the other.

■ Equal Pay

Neil Coyle: [\[156489\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps her Department is taking to review the gender pay gap reporting regulations now that five years have elapsed since they were first implemented.

Kemi Badenoch:

Under The Gender Pay Gap Information Regulations 2017 we are required to produce a post-implementation review. This will be published in due course.

■ Equal Pay: Gender

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[154106\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps her Department is taking to help encourage businesses to complete horizontal pay audits requiring companies to identify whether there are patterns of unequal pay between men and women at different levels in their organisations.

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[154109\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she plans to take to help strengthen the application of the principle of (a) equal pay for equal work and (b) equal pay for work of equal value between men and women.

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[154113\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will take steps to ensure that companies with a gender pay gap above the national average must publish an evidence-based action plan to set out how to recruit and retain women in high-value roles.

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[154114\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps her Department is taking to help encourage businesses to eliminate those elements of companies' pay and reward structures that are defined as high risk by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Equality Act 2010 contains strong equal pay protections – it is unlawful for employers to pay men and women differently for doing the same work, similar work, or work of an equal value.

Many employers already conduct regular equal pay audits, in order to ensure that they are not acting unlawfully, and the Equality and Human Rights Commission provides detailed guidance to assist them in completing these. In 2014, the Government strengthened equal pay protections by introducing mandatory equal pay audits for organisations that lose an equal pay claim.

Since 2017 all large employers have been required to publish specific gender pay gap (GPG) information on an annual basis; and many employers choose to take the additional step of producing an action plan. Not all causes of the GPG are within employers' control but we want employers to tackle those that are. For example, there is evidence to show greater pay transparency helps women negotiate a better deal when they apply for a job.

On International Women's Day this year, we called on all employers to provide salary information in all of their job adverts, and to stop asking about previous salary during recruitment. We also announced that we would be working with employers to develop a methodology to enable them to take these steps. This methodology is likely to cover how employers should go about introducing a fair and transparent pay and grading system, and so will also be encouraging organisations to exhibit best practice within their pay and reward structures which is a crucial part of ensuring equal pay as well as pay transparency.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme: Coronavirus

Steve McCabe:

[155572]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on the annual award renewal of the Access to Work Scheme.

Chloe Smith:

The Department has not completed a specific assessment of award renewals during the Covid-19 period. However, the Access to Work Official Statistics provide information on approvals, payments and expenditure by element type, which covers the period up to March 2021: [Access to Work statistics: April 2007 to March 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/access-to-work-statistics-april-2007-to-march-2021)

■ Children: Maintenance

Steve McCabe:

[150983]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of child maintenance arrangements were unpaid in (a) February 2022 and (b) March 2022.

Guy Opperman:

The Department publishes quarterly Child Maintenance Service (CMS) statistics, with the latest statistics available to the end of December 2021.

[Stat-Xplore - Home \(dwp.gov.uk\)](https://www.dwp.gov.uk)

■ Cold Weather Payments

Rachael Maskell:

[150220]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the eligibility criteria for cold weather payments to include people who are (a) unable to work and (b) retired.

Guy Opperman:

Cold Weather Payments are intended to provide extra help to the people most vulnerable to the cold, who are in receipt of certain income-related benefits. This includes:

- Retired people in receipt of Pension Credit.
- People unable to work, in receipt of income-related Employment and Support Allowance that includes a work-related activity or support component.
- People in receipt of Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance in the assessment phase, or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, and who have a pensioner or disability premium or receive the additional element paid with Child Tax Credit where there is a disabled child in the family, or a have child under the age of five.
- People in receipt of Universal Credit if they, or their partner, are not employed or self-employed and one of the following apply: they have a health condition or disability and have limited capability for work (with or without work-related activity); they have a child under 5 living with them.
- People in receipt of Universal Credit which includes a disabled child amount, whether they are employed or not.
- People in receipt of a Support for Mortgage Interest Loan will also usually be eligible.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Freedom of Information

Ms Karen Buck:

[156350]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 7 April 2022 to Question 147025, which Minister took the decision to withhold the Prime Minister's Implementation Unit's report in 2019; and on what date was that decision taken.

David Rutley:

The Minister that authorised Section 36 was the Minister for the Lords. The decision was taken on 24 September 2021.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Redundancy

Mike Amesbury:

[\[150259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether there will be any redundancies following the closure of the offices in her Department's estate from which staff will not be relocated to an alternative premise.

Guy Opperman:

The Department's priority will be to retain, retrain, and redeploy staff either within DWP, or within other Government Departments in the area.

Redundancies will be only considered as a very last resort, and only after all efforts to redeploy within DWP or other Government Departments in the area have been fully exhausted.

■ Industrial Health and Safety: Immunosuppression

Rosie Cooper:

[\[155672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will take steps to encourage employers to carry out covid-19-specific health and safety risk assessments in the workplace to help support severely immunocompromised employees.

Chloe Smith:

COVID-19 remains a public health issue. There is no longer a requirement for every business to consider COVID-19 in their risk assessment or have COVID-19 control measures in place. The United Kingdom Health Security Agency has published [guidance](#) on [reducing the spread of respiratory infections, including COVID-19, in the workplace](#).

For people in England who are immunosuppressed (including employees), the Department of Health and Social Care has published guidance entitled: '[COVID-19: guidance for people whose immune system means they are at higher risk](#)'.

■ Members: Correspondence

John Penrose:

[\[150136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she will reply to the letters from the Member for Weston-super-Mare of 14 January and 24 February 2022 on behalf of my constituent David Walsh on the state pension.

Guy Opperman:

A full response was sent to the hon member on the 11 April 2022.

David Linden:

[\[151251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when her Department will respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Glasgow East, emailed on 4 February 2 March and 22 March 2022, reference DL11285.

Guy Opperman:

A telephone response was provided to the office of David Linden MP on 1 April 2022.

David Linden: [\[151252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when her Department plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Glasgow East to the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work sent on 1 February 2022 and sent by email on 8 March 2022 and 21 March 2022, reference DL10869.

Guy Opperman:

A reply was sent to the hon. Member by the Area Director for Universal Credit, on behalf of the Secretary of State, on 26 March 2022.

Robert Largan: [\[151333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she will respond to the correspondence of 8 December 2022 from the hon. Member for High Peak, reference RL31129.

Guy Opperman:

A reply was sent to the hon. Member by the Minister for Welfare Delivery, on behalf of the Secretary of State, on 1 April 2022.

■ **Personal Independence Payment****Justin Madders:** [\[155793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average response time for answering personal independence payment new claims calls was in each month from December 2021 to March 2022.

Chloe Smith:

The following table presents Personal Independent Payment (PIP) New Claims (NC) Monthly Management Information for period December 2021 to March 2022.

MONTH	AVERAGE SPEED OF ANSWER (MIN:SEC)	TOTAL CALLS ANSWERED
Dec-21	01:11	73,386
Jan-22	04:03	106,814
Feb-22	07:29	98,929
Mar-22	03:17	119,560

Please note this information is derived from the Department's management information designed solely for the purpose of helping the Department to manage its business. As such, it has not been subjected to the rigorous quality assurance checks applied to our published official statistics. As DWP holds the information internally, we have released it. However, it is possible information held by DWP may change due to operational reasons and we recommend that caution be applied when using it.

■ Social Security Benefits: Appeals

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[154041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the cost to her Department of mandatory reconsiderations for employment support allowance and personal independence payment benefits claims in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Chloe Smith:

The information for the Financial years covered by the request are detailed in the tables below:

	2019-20 (£M)	2020-21 (£M)
PIP	£23.7	£24.8
ESA	£6.6	£1.6

Cost figures are rounded to the nearest £0.1m

Data Source: ABM

The cost figures quoted are estimated DWP level 1 operating costs, including both direct delivery staff and non-staff costs. Non-staff costs are only those costs incurred in local cost centres, relating to direct delivery staff.

Please note that the data supplied is from the Departmental Activity Based Models. This data is derived from unpublished management information, which was collected for internal Departmental use only, and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standards. It should therefore be treated with caution. The Departmental Activity Based staffing models are a snapshot of how many people were identified as undertaking specified activities as assigned by line managers.

■ Social Security Benefits: Deductions

Beth Winter:

[\[151307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of temporarily pausing deductions from benefits to repay Government debt, such as benefit overpayments.

David Rutley:

DWP currently have no plans to suspend benefit debt deductions.

DWP makes every effort to avoid the overpayment of benefits. Where overpayments do occur, we have a duty to recover them as quickly and efficiently as possible, but without causing hardship to those making repayments.

We have a well-established process to support anyone experiencing financial hardship and actively encourage people in this position to contact the Department's Debt Management Team. Our agents will always look to negotiate an affordable and

sustainable repayment plan. There is no limit on the number of times a person can request a change to their repayment rate. In exceptional cases a temporary suspension of recovery may be agreed.

It may be possible to waive recovery, if very specific and compelling grounds apply, such as where there is evidence that the recovery of the overpayment has a particularly detrimental impact on the health and/or welfare of the individual or their family. These rare cases must meet HM Treasury's Managing Public Money guidance.

DWP remains committed to Her Majesty's Treasury's Beathing Space policy, which provides those with problem debt the right to legal protections from creditor action for a period of 60 days in order to enable them to receive debt advice and enter into an appropriate debt solution

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Rob Roberts:

[\[156619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has had recent discussions with (a) officials in her Department and (b) Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of a temporary uplift to disability benefits in order to support people with disabilities with the rising cost of living in the context of those people potentially having to power specialist machinery and equipment as a result of their needs.

Chloe Smith:

I meet regularly with Ministers and officials from across Government to discuss a wide range of issues related to support for disabled people, including rising costs.

The government has announced a package of support to help households with rising energy bills, worth £9.1 billion in 2022-23. This includes:

- A £200 discount on their energy bill this Autumn for domestic electricity customers in Great Britain. This will be paid back automatically over the next 5 years.
- A £150 non-repayable Council Tax Rebate payment for all households that are liable for Council Tax in Bands A-D in England.
- £144 million of discretionary funding for Local Authorities to support households who need support but are not eligible for the Council Tax Rebate.

■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[155841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 7 February 2022 to Question 113786 on Social Security Benefits: Medical Assessments, what progress her Department has made towards its evaluation of the Health Transformation Programme.

Chloe Smith:

Evaluation will be undertaken throughout the life of the programme to ensure that evidence is driving decision-making.

■ Social Security Benefits: Tribunals**Kirsten Oswald:**[\[154042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the cost to her Department of tribunals for employment support allowance and personal independence payment benefits claims in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Chloe Smith:

The information requested is not collated centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Kirsten Oswald:[\[154043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact on the finances of personal independence payment and employment support allowance claimants of appeals to a tribunal to receive their correct benefits award.

Kirsten Oswald:[\[154044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that claimants receive the correct benefit award after their initial assessment and do not require a mandatory reconsideration or tribunal.

Chloe Smith:

The Department's aim is to make the right decision as early as possible in the claim journey. We have made improvements to our decision-making processes to ensure that people get the support they are entitled to as quickly as possible. The new approach ensures Decision Makers have sufficient time to contact claimants and gather relevant additional evidence earlier in the process.

■ Social Security Benefits: Up-rating**Mike Amesbury:**[\[157499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will increase (a) personal independence payment (b) disability living allowance and (c) universal credit in line with inflation.

Chloe Smith:

The Secretary of State is legally required to conduct an annual review of benefit rates to determine whether they have retained their value in relation to the general level of prices. We have used the same approach since April 1987 of up-rating benefits based on the relevant inflation index in the 12 months to the previous September and since 2011 the preferred index has been the Consumer Price index. We will spend over £64 billion this year on benefits to support disabled people and people with health conditions.

Personal Independence Payment and Disability Living Allowance are non means-tested and non-contributory, thus they are paid regardless of any income or savings and were not subject to the benefits freeze. They are currently paid at between £24.45 and £156.90 a week, tax free.

In Universal Credit the limited capability for work and work-related activity amount is currently £354.28 a month.

■ State Retirement Pensions

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[155756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason her Department does not allow full backdating of state pension credits for non-working claimants who claim child benefit late.

Guy Opperman:

There are no credits for State Pension purposes alone. Child Benefit claims give eligibility for National Insurance credits, which count for a range of contributory benefits and the new State Pension. The Government believes that three months is a reasonable period to backdate claims for Child Benefit. A longer period of backdating would make it harder to verify evidence and establish entitlement, since Child Benefit relies upon being responsible for a child each week.

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

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[155757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of the reduction in claims for child benefit since August 2012 on entitlement to the full state pension by gender.

Guy Opperman:

No such assessment has been made.

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

■ Universal Credit

Rachael Maskell:

[\[150219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will remove the five-week wait time for universal credit in the context of the increases in the cost of living.

David Rutley:

There are no plans to change the payment structure of Universal Credit.

The Universal Credit payment structure is a fundamental part of its design. Universal Credit reflects payment patterns in the world of work, where the majority of people are paid monthly or four-weekly. Ensuring similarities between paid employment and being on benefits eliminates an important barrier which could prevent claimants from adjusting to paid employment.

When joining Universal Credit, no new claimant has to wait 5 weeks before receiving financial support from DWP. This is because, if new claimants need support before their first award payment is made, all new claimants can request an advance of their entitlement to support them. This advance means that new claimants can receive a payment of up to the expected amount of their UC award during their first assessment period, which can then be repaid over a period of 24 months.

■ Universal Credit Complex Needs Steering Group

Ms Karen Buck:

[\[156346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 4 April 2022 to Question 147022 on Universal Credit Complex Needs Steering Group, for what reason her Department disbanded the Complex Needs Steering Group.

David Rutley:

The Universal Credit Complex Needs Steering group was stood down in 2019 and was replaced by a new governance/meeting structure which was led by the newly forming Customer Experience Directorate to ensure greater coherence and support more efficient decision making within the Programme and the Department.

■ Universal Credit: Self-employed

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[155753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many self-employed claimants who claimed universal credit for the first time between 30 March 2020 and 31 July 2021 were subsequently found to be gainfully self-employed; and of these how many were granted the start-up period.

David Rutley:

As of March 2022, 115,000 individuals who started on Universal Credit for the first time between 30th March 2020 and 31st July 2021 have been assessed as gainfully self-employed, of which 107,000 were placed in a start-up period.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Football Governance

Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Civil Society (Nigel Huddleston):
[[HCWS781](#)]

I wish to inform the House that the Government has today published its response to the recommendations made by the Independent Fan Led Review of Football Governance.

The Government's response focuses on responding to the Review's ten strategic recommendations. We accept or support all of the ten strategic recommendations in our response that sets out the Government's planned reform of football. The sum total of our plans amount to significant reform with an independent regulator focused on financial sustainability, and a strengthened approach to ownership of football clubs and their governance.

The Government builds on the case for reform set out in the Review. We believe that there are two key problems in English football. Firstly, there is significant risk of financial failure among clubs, and secondly, the cultural heritage of English football is at risk of harm. We have identified that these two problems have three root causes: the structure and dynamics of the market create incentives for financial overreach, inadequate corporate governance often affords unchecked decision-making power and the existing regulation is ineffective. Without reform these financial failures will persist, and the economic and social costs would be substantial. Therefore, the Government believes that there is a need to intervene in football to secure the future of the game.

The issues highlighted in the Review are complex and our reforms need detailed and considered analysis to ensure the sustainability of the sector long-term. As a result, we have committed to publish a White Paper in the summer which will set out further details on the implementation of reform.

In response to the strategic recommendations, the Government response sets out a vision for the reform of English football:

- An independent regulator for football will be established. The response sets out the proposed objective, scope and powers of the regulator, and that it would oversee a licensing regime of the top five leagues.
- The regulator will have a focus on financial regulation. The financial regulation regime will take a holistic approach, bringing together the Owners' and Directors' Test, corporate governance and equality, diversity and inclusion as part of one regime.
- The current Owners' and Directors' tests do not go far enough in assessing suitability for ownership of clubs. The response sets out that the tests should be strengthened by enhancing due diligence to check source of funds and the strength

of business and financial plans, and that an integrity style test will be introduced. The forthcoming White Paper will provide further details on how the enhanced tests will work, and what will be in scope of the integrity test.

- We believe that football needs a new approach to corporate governance, proposing a new model to be designed and overseen by the regulator. Football also needs to take further action on diversity and inclusion through their own plans for action. Further consideration will be given to ensure the model is proportionate and appropriate for football.
- We agree with the Review that supporters should be properly consulted by clubs, but we propose to share details in the White Paper on a more flexible approach to supporter engagement by making a minimum level of fan engagement a condition of the regulator licence. We have also committed to share details in the White Paper on the regulator implementing a licence condition which requires clubs to have a mechanism for fans to consent to changes to key items of club heritage.
- On financial distributions in the football pyramid, we agree that more could be done by the Premier League to enhance financial flows through the wider football pyramid, and ideally this would be through a football-led solution. We have committed to revisit whether backstop powers are needed for the regulator to implement a new distribution agreement, if a solution is not found before the White Paper.
- We agree with the Review on the importance of football clubs to local communities, and set out that the position on 'existing provisions' (which applies to football stadiums) in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will be retained in the revised NPPF, in conjunction with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities colleagues.
- Finally, in response to the Review's recommendations regarding alcohol and football, we are committing to review The Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985, in conjunction with Home Office colleagues.

The Government is fully committed to reforming football governance to enable a long-term, sustainable future for the game. Accepting or supporting all of the strategic recommendations within the Review is the next step to do exactly this, and will represent a wholesale change in the way football is governed in England.

We recognise the scale of change that is required, and the impact that our proposals will have within football and more broadly. That is why we are setting a strategic direction in reforming football for the better, but taking some time to consider the details of exactly how we will enact these changes. We will set out even more information on the precise implementation of our reforms in a White Paper which we will publish this summer, and are committing to implementing the reforms as soon as possible.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Room to Run Guarantee**

Minister for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (Vicky Ford): [\[HCWS779\]](#)

It is normal practice, when a Government Department proposes to undertake a contingent liability in excess of £300,000 for which there is no specific statutory authority, for the Minister concerned to present a departmental minute to Parliament giving particulars of the liability created and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from incurring the liability until 14 parliamentary sitting days after the issue of the statement, except in cases of special urgency.

I have today laid a departmental minute outlining details of a new liability (the Room to Run Guarantee) which FCDO plans to undertake in order to guarantee a US\$1.6 billion (£1.23 billion at the current exchange rate) portfolio of African Development Bank loans.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) is Africa's premier regional financial institution. It is a well-respected Multilateral Development Bank which lends to 50 countries and the private sector within Africa. The UK is a long-term AfDB shareholder.

The UK is creating this new liability for two reasons. Firstly, to meet a clear climate financing need. Africa has large and growing financing needs for clean and green development. It is estimated that \$3 trillion is needed to implement Africa's climate strategies over the next ten years. Secondly, to support the AfDB. The economic impact of the pandemic has constrained AfDB's capacity to lend to member countries. This guarantee would allow the AfDB to continue to prudently increase its lending capacity at an important time.

The liability is expected to last for up to 15 years. FCDO would only pay Official Development Assistance if a default occurs and if first loss cover provided by the African Trade Insurance Agency (ATI) is exhausted. The Departmental Minute sets this out in detail.

HM Treasury has approved the proposal. If, during the period of 14 parliamentary sitting days beginning on the date on which this minute was laid before parliament, a Member signifies an objection by giving notice of a parliamentary question or by otherwise raising the matter in parliament, final approval to proceed with incurring the liability will be withheld pending an examination of the objection.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Completing the Move to Universal Credit by 2024**

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey):
[\[HCWS780\]](#)

In 2012, Parliament voted to end legacy benefits and replace them with a single modern benefit system, Universal Credit (UC). The UC system stood up to the challenges of the pandemic and ensured support was provided for a significant number of new claimants

with varying needs across the country. As the rest of government and society returns to business as usual, it is appropriate to resume the process to complete the move to UC by 2024.

There are around 2.6 million households receiving legacy benefits and tax credits who need to move across to UC. The natural migration process, where claimants experience a change in circumstances and consequently move to UC, has largely continued throughout the last two years. The voluntary migration process has also been available throughout. We are taking steps to increase people's awareness of the fact that they could be better off financially if they were receiving Universal Credit, including through the publication of our document, *Completing the Move to Universal Credit*, today on GOV.UK. I will place copies in the libraries of both Houses.

In that document, we set out our analysis which estimates that 1.4 million (55%) of those on legacy benefits or tax credits would receive a higher entitlement on UC than on legacy benefits and would benefit from moving voluntarily, rather than waiting for a managed migration. This is particularly the case for tax credit claimants, with our analysis estimating around two-thirds of them would benefit. That is why we have included information on UC in this year's renewal forms for current tax credit recipients. It is important for current recipients to satisfy themselves that they would be better off on UC using independent benefit calculators before moving voluntarily, as once the claim is made, recipients cannot revert to tax credits or legacy benefits, nor receive any transitional protection payments. More information is included in the document.

For those claimants who do not choose to move and have not migrated naturally, we will manage their migration to UC. Parliament committed to providing transitional financial protection to those who are moved onto UC through the managed migration process. Whilst many households will be better off financially on UC, for those with a lower calculated award in UC than in their legacy benefits, transitional protection will be provided for eligible households. This means they will see no difference in their entitlement at the point they are moved to UC, provided there is no change in their circumstances during the migration process.

Before the pandemic, the department had started testing processes for managed migration in a pilot based in Harrogate. In 2020, the pilot was stopped to handle the significant increase in new claims for UC resulting from the pandemic. During this pilot there was proactive engagement with 80 people, 38 of these were moved to UC. 35 claimants were better off and only three people required transitional protection. The remainder of moves were not completed before the pilot was stopped. This pilot only involved claimants that the department had an existing relationship with. No claimants on Working Tax Credits were approached directly to commence a Move to UC.

The pilot provided valuable insights. First, while claimants will likely look for support from organisations they already know, such as a local authority, we are no longer assuming that all engagement needs to be managed by that organisation. Second, claimants can and will move autonomously, but some may need more support, particularly on digital access. The pandemic reinforced the importance of claimants being able to manage their own claims online and the strength of this system. Third, claimants can successfully

choose a date for their claim, factoring in other income and expenditure points during the month. Finally, the pilot allowed the department to understand the processes and tools required to complete a managed move, such as those needed to calculate transitional protection.

As I have said to the House previously, we are not resuming the Harrogate pilot. We have learned from that experience and our wider experience over the last two years. As we complete the Move to UC, I am absolutely committed to making this a responsible and safe transition. Next month, we will be starting a multi-site approach across the country with a small number of claimants, approximately five hundred initially, being brought into the mandatory migration process. We will continue to develop our processes and systems to scale the migration process and complete by 2024.

We are resuming under existing regulations, though I intend to bring forward to Parliament amendments to the UC Transitional Provisions Regulations, following their consideration by the Social Security Advisory Committee.

Universal Credit is a dynamic welfare system fit for the 21st century. As part of our levelling up agenda to support the British public, we will continue to help people into work and progress in work, taking advantage of the recent reduction in the taper rate and boost to work allowances.