



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 19 May 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:04 P.M., 19 May 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ Consumers: Protection

**Kim Leadbeater:**

[2728]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what (a) recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of UK consumer protections and (b) steps he will take to protect consumers from unscrupulous companies through public reviews and complaints.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government consulted in July 2021 on a number of proposals concerning consumer protection law. The Government's response was published recently, and set out our approach to ensuring consumers are supported with a robust set of rights. It can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-competition-and-consumer-policy/outcome/reforming-competition-and-consumer-policy-government-response>.

In particular, the Government will consult in due course on adding fake reviews to the list of banned practices – giving greater clarity to business on the current law and, where fake reviews are posted, allowing enforcers to take effective action quickly.

#### ■ Economic and Social Research Council: Public Appointments

**Chi Onwurah:**

[2477]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 25 April 2022 to Question 155735 on Economic and Social Research Council: Public Appointments, on how many occasions in each of the last ten financial years has no candidate been deemed suitable; and whether Professor Michie was deemed suitable by the independent selection panel.

**George Freeman:**

The most recent campaign for an Executive Chair for ESRC is the only campaign on records where no candidate was deemed suitable.

Appointment campaigns are confidential, so it is not possible to disclose details of applicants or the views of the panel.

#### ■ Electricity: Storage

**Alan Brown:**

[2541]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan published on 20 July 2021, what his timeframe is for bringing forward legislative proposals to amend the Electricity Act 1989 to define electricity storage as a distinct subset of generation.

**Greg Hands:**

In the 2021 Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan, the Government committed to defining electricity storage as a distinct subset of generation in primary legislation, when parliamentary time allows.

**■ Insolvency Service: Closures****Chris Stephens:****[R] [2536]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the gov.uk news story of 11 May 2022, Insolvency Service transitions to regional hubs as part of efficiency drive, what estimate his Department has made of the potential cost of (a) recruitment, (b) training and (c) development that will be required to replace staff as a result of the decision to close Insolvency Service offices.

**Paul Scully:**

The Insolvency Service announced its transforming workplaces strategy on 11 May 2022. It is not the intention of that strategy to reduce workforce numbers either by redundancy or otherwise.

**■ Insolvency Service: Redundancy****Chris Stephens:****[R] [2539]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the gov.uk news story of 11 May 2022, Insolvency Service transitions to regional hubs as part of efficiency drive, what estimate his Department has made of the cost of redundancies as a result of Insolvency Service office closures.

**Paul Scully:**

The Insolvency Service announced its transforming workplaces strategy on 11 May 2022. It is not the intention of that strategy to reduce workforce numbers either by redundancy or otherwise.

**Chris Stephens:****[R] [2540]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the gov.uk news story of 11 May 2022, Insolvency Service transitions to regional hubs as part of efficiency drive, whether his Department will offer the option of homeworking to mitigate potential redundancies for staff based in Insolvency Service offices that are due to be closed.

**Paul Scully:**

In order to support employees moving to a new regional centre location, the Insolvency Service will be exploring with each employee what adjustments can be made to their working arrangements to support their move. The Insolvency Service offers a range of flexible working arrangements including hybrid working.

## ■ Insolvency Service: Training

**Chris Stephens:** [R] [\[2537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much his Department has spent on Insolvency Service Investigator Programme training for staff in the Insolvency Service in each of the last three financial years.

**Paul Scully:**

Spending on the Insolvency Service's investigator programme over the last 3 years was:

YEAR	SPEND (£)
2019/2020	242,151
2020/2021	314,213
2021/2022	115,336

**Chris Stephens:** [R] [\[2538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many and what proportion of Insolvency Service staff started but did not complete Insolvency Service Investigator Programme training in each of the last three years; and what the associated costs were.

**Paul Scully:**

The number of Insolvency Service staff beginning but not completing the investigator programme over the last three years was:

YEAR	NO OF LEARNERS ENROLLED	NO OF LEARNERS LEAVING WITHOUT COMPLETION	%	COST (£)
2019/20	128	45	35	85,131
2020/21	74	9	12	38,214
2021/22	10	0	0	0

## ■ Nuclear Power Stations: Construction

**Alan Brown:** [[2542](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the impact assessment of the Nuclear Energy (Financing) Act 2022 published on 26



October 2021, if his Department has updated its assessment of the cost of building and financing a nuclear power plant under a Regulatory Asset Base (RAB) model.

**Greg Hands:**

The Government has not updated the analysis presented in the Impact Assessment for the Nuclear Energy (Financing) Act.

Individual projects being considered for RAB funding under the Act will be subject to Value for Money assessment both at the point of its designation, and as part of wider Government approvals.

■ **Scottish Limited Partnerships: Fines**

**Jonathan Reynolds:**

[\[752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many Scottish limited partnerships have been fined since the people with significant control register came into force.

**Paul Scully:**

One Scottish limited partnership has been fined since the people with significant control register came into force. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Glasgow Central on 3 March 2022 to Question [131220](#), as no more Scottish limited partnerships have been fined since this question was answered.

## CABINET OFFICE

■ **Civil Servants: Coronavirus**

**Damien Moore:**

[\[1323\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent steps his Department has made to encourage the return to office work for civil servants across the Government.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:**

There is full agreement across government on the clear benefits from face-to-face, collaborative working.

I also wrote to departments earlier this year to underline the importance of workplace attendance and to ensure we are making efficient use of the government estate.

Departments' progress is being monitored and we are seeing civil servants have been increasingly returning to the office.

■ **Civil Servants: Workplace Pensions**

**Mr Clive Betts:**

[\[1477\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many retired civil servants are in receipt of a pension via the civil service Classic scheme; and how many of those individuals are in receipt of a (a) widows and (b) widowers' pension.

**Mr Clive Betts:****[1478]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what proportion of the total number of retired civil servants in receipt of the Civil Service Classic Scheme pension are women.

**Mrs Heather Wheeler:**

A total of 660,782 Civil Servants are in receipt of a pension under classic terms.

Of those

1. 92,550 are in receipt of a widows pension and;
2. 15,905 a widowers pension.
3. 552,327 are in receipt of the classic pension

50.47% (278,762) of retired Civil Servants in receipt of a classic pension are women.

The number of widows and widowers who have had their pensions suspended is given in the below table.

Year in which pension suspended	NUMBER OF PENSIONS SUSPENDED IN YEAR	
	Widows	Widowers
2017	42	48
2018	22	13
2019	5	7
2020	1	3
2021	3	0
2022	0	0

MyCSP, the pension administrator, are unable to split the numbers based on those remarrying and those cohabiting as their system does not record it in this manner.

The numbers provided are based on MyCSP's current data holding and include those that were suspended and have not since been restored on their system.

Where a spouse's Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) remains payable and only the spouse pension in excess of this is suspended, MyCSP are unable to include these in the data provided because their system will show the benefit as 'in payment' although the excess element is suspended. Therefore, the record does not show as suspended.

## ■ Employment: Young People

**Emma Hardy:** [\[1298\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the number of 18-24 year olds not in full-time education are employed (a) on zero hours contracts, (b) through agencies and (c) are self-employed.

**Mrs Heather Wheeler:**

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority.

A response to the hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of 12 May is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA response [UKSA\_Response\_to\_PQ1298 (1).pdf]

## ■ Peers: Honours

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[857\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps are available to remove peerages; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to enable the removal of such titles from people who have been sanctioned or imprisoned.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[858\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps are available to remove councillors of state; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to enable the removal of such titles from people who have been sanctioned or imprisoned.

**Michael Ellis:**

Removing peerages would require bespoke primary legislation. The Government currently has no plans to bring forward such legislation.

Changes to the list of those who are Counsellors of State would require amending the Regency Act 1937, which the Government currently has no plans to do.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Aircraft Carriers: Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft

**Wayne David:** [\[2383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the capacity of the new aircraft carriers to use data from the F-35 Lightning effectively.

**Jeremy Quin:**

It would be inappropriate to comment in detail on the capacity of the aircraft carriers to use data from the F-35B as to do so would or could be likely to prejudice the capability of our Armed Forces.

However, I can confirm that the aircraft carriers have a dedicated, integrated mission planning and de-brief facility which is used to analyse data the F-35Bs have gathered during their mission. These facilities proved invaluable on the most recent Carrier Strike Group deployment (CSG21) and provide a significant organic capability for the Ministry of Defence now and into the future.

## ■ Ajax Vehicles

**Wayne David:** [\[2384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the future of the Ajax vehicle; and if he will make a statement.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Ajax Update I have issued today through a Written Ministerial Statement.

**Attachments:**

1. Ajax Update [WMS Ajax Update HOC.pdf]

## ■ Armed Conflict: Explosives

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** [\[2535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he (a) has had and (b) will have any civil society organisations on the Political Declaration on the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas prior to the final round of negotiations on that declaration.

**James Heappey:**

UK Government officials have held numerous discussions with multiple civil society organisations on the Political Declaration on the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas and will continue to do so ahead of the final round of negotiations.

## ■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[1271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what support is available for people who are required to pay for consultant grade mental health diagnoses in order to claim compensation from Veterans UK.

**Leo Docherty:**

A consultant's report obtained through the NHS should not incur a cost. If an individual chooses to seek this through private healthcare, that is a personal choice.

## ■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and War Pensions

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[1270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of Veterans UK accepting diagnoses letters from clinical psychologists, rather than psychiatrists of consultant grade, when applying for compensation for mental ill health from AFCS or War Pensions.

**Leo Docherty:**

For mental health awards under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS), the Ministry of Defence (MOD) requires evidence of the diagnosis by either a psychiatrist or a clinical psychologist, at the consultant grade. This was a recommendation of the 2013 report by the Independent Medical Expert Group (IMEG), the Advisory Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by MOD that provides assurance that AFCS policy and decision-making reflect contemporary medical understanding on causation and progress of disorders and injuries. The Department accepted this recommendation. This approach was reviewed by the IMEG again in their report of 2020, which maintained its recommendation that diagnosis is made at the consultant level by either a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist. The next IMEG report, expected to be published in June of this year, will make any new recommendations to the Department on the approach to mental health awards under the AFCS.

No such requirement exists under the War Pension Scheme, which predates the AFCS and operates under a different burden of proof and award system.

**■ Armed Forces: Bullying****Stephanie Peacock:****[1279]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what data his Department holds on (a) incidences of and (b) complaints regarding military initiation rituals, in each year since 2010.

**Leo Docherty:**

Initiation ceremonies are prohibited within Defence and are not tolerated. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is committed to the welfare of its people and anyone who finds themselves a victim of any form of assault or harassment can access a range of support. This includes from the Service Police, from welfare officers, the chain of command, and pastoral support via the chaplaincy. Assisting Officers are also available to support people where cases are being investigated. In addition, we have an independent bullying, harassment and discrimination helpline run by trained professionals and local Diversity and Inclusion Advisers.

Independent support is also available via the charitable sector. For example, SSAFA (The Armed Forces Charity) provides help to all Service personnel and veterans with mental or emotional health concerns. SSAFA can signpost individuals to specific organisations for further targeted support. In addition, the MOD works with The Samaritans and other charities to support Serving personnel, veterans, and their families.

This detailed information requested is not held in a format that would allow an answer to be generated without incurring disproportionate costs.

**■ Armed Forces: Housing****Jamie Stone:**[\[1290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) longest, (b) shortest and (c) average period of time taken was to make repairs to an armed forces accommodation property after a call out in the last period for which figures are available.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The longest, shortest and average period of time taken to make repairs to a Service Family Accommodation between November 2021 and March 2022 are shown below:

Longest 234 days (in respect to repairing a damaged fence)

Shortest 21 minutes

Average 15.9 days

The Future Defence Infrastructure Services (FDIS) Accommodation contracts came into effect on 1 April 2022. In developing the new FDIS Accommodation contracts DIO collaborated closely with key stakeholders, including the Single Services and the Families Federations, to ensure that Service families' needs are fully considered and an improved 'lived experience' is provided.

**■ Armed Forces: Offences against Children****Dave Doogan:**[\[2317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 26 April 2022 to Question 154397 on Armed Forces: Offences against Children, how many of the 22 investigations into sexual offences against recruits at the Army Foundation College in 2021 concerned suspects who were (a) fellow recruits and (b) members of AFC staff.

**Leo Docherty:**

In 2021 there were nine sexual offence investigations at AFC(AH) involving 22 victims who were recruits. The suspects in eight of these investigations were fellow recruits. In one investigation the suspects were three members of AFC(A) staff.

**Dave Doogan:**[\[2318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 26 April 2022 to Question 154397 on Armed Forces: Offences against Children, what new measures are being put in place to protect young recruits from sexual assault in the Army Foundation College.

**Leo Docherty:**

The Ministry of Defence and the Army have a Zero Tolerance attitude towards sexual offending in the training environment. In March 2022 The Secretary of State for Defence announced that Sexual offences and sexual relationships between instructors and trainees have no place in Defence, or wider society, and a zero-tolerance approach will ensure our commitment to providing a better working environment for our serving personnel is met. We are sending a clear message that the women and men of the Armed Forces must uphold our values and standards

The Army Foundation College has comprehensive measures in place to ensure a safe working environment. This is represented by Junior Soldiers' ability to raise issues or concerns in any of three ways (1) to the Military Chain of Command, (2) in person to the Independent Advisory Panel or (3) via an anonymous reporting tool to the Independent Advisory Panel. All Recruits are well briefed on the multiple methods of raising concerns; all issues raised are taken seriously and are investigated by the appropriate agency be that Civilian Police, Service Police, or the Chain of Command. Junior Soldiers are also surveyed on their experiences during their time at the AFC through the Recruit Training Survey.

AFC maintains a Supervisory Care and Safeguarding Directive which is updated on an annual basis. This Directive ensures we have immediate safeguarding mechanisms in place such as appropriate supervision, impartial assurance mechanisms, and easily accessible welfare outlets.

AFC(H) was marked as Outstanding in 2021 by Ofsted. Ofsted found that "The chief instructor, as the designated safeguarding lead, has a very good understanding of safeguarding. He is a member of the North Yorkshire Children's Safeguarding Partnership. He uses his extensive links with partner agencies to make sure that the few safeguarding incidents that are reported are investigated thoroughly and the recruits involved get the help, support and guidance they need."

## ■ **Armed Forces: Sexual Offences**

**Stephanie Peacock:**

[\[1284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what processes are in place to gather forensic evidence from survivors of military sexual assault or rape where the incident takes place while overseas.

**Leo Docherty:**

Processes can vary considerably, dependent on where the offence takes place. In places where Defence has a well-established presence and appropriate forensic examination facilities exist, standing arrangements will be in place to utilise such facilities, as this allows the best evidence to be obtained. In places where Defence does not have a well-established presence, or where there are no appropriate forensic facilities available, the Service Police Officer in command will need to decide whether an in-theatre examination should be conducted by a UK Medical Officer (MO) who is not qualified in forensic medical examination. If so, the MO will conduct the primary recovery of forensic evidence with the victim's consent. The MO would be guided by a specially trained Service Police person in this process. The victim would then, with their consent, be recovered back to the UK to attend a Sexual Assault Referral Centre where additional evidence may be gathered and support offered.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

[\[1285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what data his Department holds on the number of service personnel who retract a statement of sexual assault or rape after questioning from the Special Investigation Branch.

**Leo Docherty:**

It will take time to collate the requested information and I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

**Stephanie Peacock:**[\[1286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of routinely taking forensic evidence in military hospitals, where injuries were sustained as a result of alleged military sexual assault or rape.

**Leo Docherty:**

Defence does not have any military hospitals in the UK. Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) run by the NHS remain the primary facility for military victims/survivors of rape or sexual assault to be examined by specialist medical and forensic services. SARCs are purpose designed to be multi-functional, for interviews, forensic examinations and counselling services to be undertaken by specialist staff.

**Stephanie Peacock:**[\[1525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's Zero Tolerance approach to sexual offences published on 30 March, whether that policy will be applied retrospectively to those previously convicted of a sexual offence.

**Stephanie Peacock:**[\[1526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's new Zero Tolerance approach to sexual offences published on 30 March 2022, whether his Department will be (a) collecting and (b) publishing data on the number of service personnel discharged through the policy.

**Leo Docherty:**

Sexual offence convictions that pre-date the introduction of the Zero Tolerance policy will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant single Service policy, which may well result, or have resulted, in discharge.

Data will be collected to understand the number of personnel discharged as a result of the policy, but it has not yet been decided whether the data will be published.

**■ Armed Forces: Vacancies****Jamie Stone:**[\[1288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the percentage shortfalls are for each pinch point trade in the (a) Army, (b) Royal Navy and (c) Royal Air Force (i) as of 12 May 2022 and (ii) in each of the last five years.

**Leo Docherty:**

In 2015 Ministers agreed that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) would no longer release detailed information on Pinch Points into the public domain as it could be of advantage to potential adversaries and thereby impact national security. MOD provides broad information on skills gaps as part of the Annual Report and Accounts each year, the latest edition of which can be found at the following link:



<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-defence-annual-report-and-accounts-2020-to-2021>

## ■ **Armed Forces: Violent and Sex Offender Register**

**Stephanie Peacock:**

**[1522]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 8 February 2022 to Question 117868, in what particular exceptional circumstances serving personnel listed on the sex offender register will not be discharged from the armed forces.

**Leo Docherty:**

The Ministry of Defence's Zero Tolerance to Sexual Offences policy came into force on 31 March 2022. Under this policy, all Service persons who are convicted of a sexual offence, or who are placed on the Sex Offenders Register, will be dismissed from the Armed Forces as a matter of course. My answer to Question 117868 refers to those few situations where a decision to discharge would be legally unsafe as it conflicts with existing law; for example, cases that are subject to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. However, we continue to review this area and are committed to making further improvements to ensure that Defence is a safe and respectful environment.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

**[1523]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 8 February 2022 to Question 117868, what risk assessments are in place to safeguard personnel serving alongside registered sex offenders.

**Stephanie Peacock:**

**[1524]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 8 February 2022 to Question 117868 on Veterans: Violent and Sex Offender Register, what information his Department holds on potential circumstances in which serving personnel who are on the Sex Offenders Register might be in contact with vulnerable people as part of their service.

**Leo Docherty:**

Defence places great importance on the appropriate management of both suspected and convicted sex offenders. Different arrangements are in place across the three Services. These may include an Employment Suitability Risk Assessment (ESRA) for those under investigation or made subject to registration under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. ESRAs provide a record of management and risk mitigation plans, are completed by the chain of command upon receipt of expert policy advice, and are updated at least every six months. The cases of those convicted of, or in receipt of a caution for a sexual offence could also be referred to the Standing Committee for Employment Risk Analysis (SCERA) who will provide advice on the appropriate action to be taken. Although appointment to roles requiring contact with vulnerable persons or under-18s is conditional upon a clean Disclosure and Barring Service certificate, additional risk assessment may be conducted by the chain of command and decisions may be reviewed by SCERA. An 'Assignment Restriction' note can

also be placed on a subject's personnel file within the Joint Personnel Administration System to ensure the individual does not get posted to units where it may be inappropriate to do so.

This is an area of great importance to Defence as we recognise the risk that sex offenders pose to others. We will continue to review and improve our policies and procedures to ensure that they are rigorous and that appropriate safeguarding measures are in place to enable a safe and respectful working environment.

## ■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles

**Jamie Stone:** [\[1287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armoured vehicles of each type are (a) in the service with the Army and (b) fit for purpose as of 12 May 2022.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 7 March 2022 to Question [132161](#) to the Rt hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne (Mr Healey).

**Attachments:**

1. Armoured Fighting Vehicles [UIN 132161.docx]

## ■ Army

**Jamie Stone:** [\[1289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the deployable strength of the Army (a) as of 12 May 2022 and (b) in each of the last five years.

**James Heapey:**

Not all members of the Army are employed in deployable posts – those in staff roles or in training establishments, for example, would be included in the headline strength of the Army but would not be counted as deployable. Similarly, Reservists would not be included in the headline strength of the Army but many will be deployable if mobilised.

The “deployable” strength of the Army is perhaps best captured by the strength of the Field Army, which is summarised as follows:

DATE	DEPLOYABLE STRENGTH WITHIN FD ARMY
May 2022	45,178
May 2021	46,480
May 2020	42,291
May 2019	42,739
May 2018	42,391

**■ Defence Medical Services: ICT****Stephanie Peacock:**[\[1277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress he has made on the rollout of Programme Cortisone.

**Leo Docherty:**

Programme CORTISONE will provide an enduring information capability that will fully and effectively support the delivery of evidence-based medical and dental health and healthcare. In due course, it will provide connectivity between the MOD, NHS and our NATO allies and partners.

The recent launch of the CORTISONE MyHEALTH app has for the first time given Service personnel ready access to a subset of their Healthcare record (including vaccination status) through their mobile electronic devices.

The CORTISONE Primary Medical Care (PMC) Solution is currently being developed: it will link MOD systems with National NHS systems in all 4 home countries. In parallel, other parts of the system are being developed to support areas such as occupational health, mental health, rehabilitation, and dental services. CORTISONE services are due to extend beyond Great Britain to all fixed UK Armed Forces locations overseas as well as enable the provision of healthcare services to entitled personnel on deployed operations.

The programme is designed to bring services online in stages: the PMC solution is set to go live early next year, with an estimated eighteen months rollout period across the DMS. While this will be slightly later than originally anticipated due to COVID related issues, full functionality of CORTISONE capabilities is still expected to be delivered by the end of 2025.

**■ Dstl: Hikvision****Catherine West:**[\[2597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made a security assessment of the reported use of Hikvision equipment at the Porton Down facility.

**Jeremy Quin:**

It is Defence policy not to comment on security arrangements on the grounds of safeguarding national security.

**■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft****John Healey:**[\[1106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent estimate he has made of the whole life cost of the UK's F-35 fleet.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Based on 48 aircraft the March 2022 Government Major Projects Portfolio factsheet estimates the Whole Life Cost at £18,762.542 million

**■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft: Procurement****John Healey:** [\[1104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many F-35 jets his Department has ordered as of 12 May 2022.

**Jeremy Quin:**

48 Lightning aircraft are on contract. We have made provision to buy additional aircraft, and our planning assumption is that we will purchase additional Lightning aircraft, but this remains subject to negotiation.

**■ Military Bases: Insulation****John Healey:** [\[2357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 1 November 2021 to Question 64544 on Armed Forces: Housing, how many buildings on the defence estate have flammable cladding fixed to them; and how many of those buildings are (a) service living accommodation and (b) service family accommodation.

**Jeremy Quin:**

There are a total of 779 accommodation buildings on the Defence Estate which have been identified as potentially having combustible components in their external wall system. 591 are Single Living Accommodation and 188 are multi-occupied Service Family Accommodation.

25 of these buildings are categorised as high rise (six storeys and over). This figure has reduced from 27 as the remediation of Vanguard Building at HMS Nelson is complete and Peninsula Tower is no longer under investigation following finding of a site inspection.

754 of these buildings are categorised as low rise (five storeys and under). This figure is an increase from 728 given in my answer in November, as it now includes data from United States Visiting Forces sites.

All buildings have a current Fire Risk Assessment and remain legally compliant for continued occupation.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Cybersecurity****John Healey:** [\[2361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many supply chain cyber attacks have been successfully carried out against internal (a) Ministry of Defence systems and (b) systems outsourced by his Department since January 2021.

**John Healey:** [\[2362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many supply chain cyber-attacks his Department has successfully prevented since January 2021.

**James Heappey:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) takes the cyber security of its supply chains very seriously. However, for security reasons we do not comment on specific details of cyber attacks, as to do so could provide useful information for our adversaries.

The Defence Cyber Protection Partnership is a joint MOD and industry initiative put in place to improve the protection of Defence's supply chain against cyber threats. Defence contracts undergo a risk assessment to determine a cyber risk profile and what the supplier must do to demonstrate compliance with these requirements. This risk assessment and requirement to comply flows down the supplier's supply chain until the point where no MOD information is affected.

There are also contractual requirements put on suppliers to maintain cyber security controls and to report all security incidents involving MOD assets or information to the Defence Industry Warning and Reporting Point, which then coordinates investigations as appropriate.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Insulation**

**Luke Pollard:** [\[1553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of buildings used as accommodation on the Defence estate will have their combustible cladding removed this year.

**John Healey:** [\[2358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what dates work will begin to remove flammable cladding from each building on the defence estate housing armed forces personnel and their families.

**Jeremy Quin:**

One fully clad high-rise accommodation block, Vanguard Building at HMS Nelson, Portsmouth, has been fully remediated this year.

The remaining 25 high-rise buildings which are partially clad have been surveyed. The results are being used to determine required remedial work, after which, completion dates will be set.

A similar programme to assess low-rise accommodation buildings for external wall systems containing combustible components is underway.

All buildings have a current Fire Risk Assessment in place and remain legally compliant for continued occupation.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Japanese Knotweed**

**Luke Pollard:** [\[1552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much the removal of Japanese knotweed from the Defence estate cost his Department last year.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Information on the cost of removal of Japanese Knotweed from the Defence Estate is not held, as any cost is not separately identifiable under the Department's maintenance contracts.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Staff****Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department plans to institute £2.5 billion reductions to the Department's workforce costs.

**Jeremy Quin:**

As part of the department's Annual Budget Cycle process, we are scoping options to secure c£2.5 billion of savings by 2030. This is reflected in our Spending Review 20 settlement. It is too early to state how these savings will be achieved by 2030 but following the workforce reductions set out in the Integrated Review, there will be wider non-headcount related savings identified as a result of a smaller workforce. We also have ambitious transformation and efficiencies programmes that aim to improve our systems, user experience, decision making, productivity and deliver savings.

**■ Portsmouth Dockyard: Insulation****John Healey:** [\[2356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 11 November 2022 to Question 65371 on Ministry of Defence: Buildings, whether the work to remove the flammable cladding from a building at HMS Nelson has been completed.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Construction work to the replace the external wall system of Vanguard building, HMS Nelson, has been completed.

**■ RAF Honington: Sexual Offences****Stephanie Peacock:** [\[1282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what support was made available for those in the disbanded unit at RAF Honington following allegations of sexual abuse.

**Leo Docherty:**

The RAF offers advice and support to all personnel affected by allegations of sexual abuse through its internal welfare system. That the unit involved, the Support Weapons Flight, was disbanded is a measure of how seriously the RAF regards the matter.

**■ Ukraine: Humanitarian Aid****John Healey:** [\[1098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps the UK armed forces are taking to assist with humanitarian supplies in countries bordering Ukraine.

**James Heappey:**

The UK was swift to provide immediate and practical humanitarian support to our allies and partners following Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine, with 1,000 military personnel both deployed and on standby as the Humanitarian Assistance Task Force (HATF). These troops have provided advice and support to the Polish Government's humanitarian relief activities.

Whilst no formal requests for support have been received approximately 100 troops of the HATF are currently deployed in Poland and could rapidly be re-tasked to support any emerging requirements. In addition, 900 personnel are being held at progressive levels of readiness in the UK, with 40 vehicles forward based in Germany to provide a response to any emergent humanitarian tasking.

Humanitarian assistance is led by the FCDO. Neither the MOD nor the FCDO have reviewed any request for support from countries bordering Ukraine.

**■ Ukraine: Military Aid****John Healey:**[\[1099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department received a request from the Ukrainian Government for Harpoon anti-ship missiles.

**James Heappey:**

We are examining all options to assist Ukraine, including anti-ship missiles. We are currently not providing Harpoon launchers or missiles to Ukraine.

**Luke Pollard:**[\[1329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many personnel from the Ukrainian military have been given training in the UK by his Department since 24 February 2022.

**James Heappey:**

Since 24 February 2022, around 300 members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine have received training in the UK, delivered by the Ministry of Defence.

**Luke Pollard:**[\[1330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate his Department has made of the number of personnel from the Ukrainian military that his Department will train in the UK in (a) May, (b) June, (c) July and (d) August 2022.

**James Heappey:**

The Ukrainian Armed Forces have been training in the United Kingdom since April 2022. Around 300 Ukrainian Armed forces personnel have been trained in the UK. We do not propose to release the exact numbers of Ukrainian troops participating in current or future training initiatives.

**Luke Pollard:**[\[1331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether personnel from the Ukrainian military on training in the UK have full access to NHS services and treatments.

**James Heappey:**

While training in the UK, personnel from the Ukrainian military are eligible to receive full access to NHS services and treatments, without being liable to paying the NHS surcharge.

**John Healey:**[\[2354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), (b) items of communications equipment, (c) items of ear defence equipment and (d) night vision devices the UK has sent to Ukraine.

**James Heappey:**

At this time, we are not releasing detail about the UAVs or communications equipment we are providing as this information could potentially assist the Russians. As I have previously informed the House, we have sent more than 4,000 night vision devices, as well as 75,000 Ear Defence items.

**John Healey:**[\[2355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 28 April 2022 to Question 158858 on Ukraine: Military Aid, how many Stormer armoured vehicles have been sent to Ukraine.

**James Heappey:**

The UK is sending a small number of Stormer vehicles to Ukraine. The Secretary of State for Defence will update the House on the number provided in due course.

**Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[2434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what artillery support has been provided to the Ukrainian military.

**James Heappey:**

The UK has not yet delivered any UK artillery systems or ammunition from our stockpiles. The UK has, however, been encouraging other countries to provide ammunition for existing Ukrainian systems and we've been facilitating the movement of that ammunition to Ukraine. The UK will provide artillery directly to Ukraine, details of these donations will be notified to the House once completed and the operational security situation allows.

**■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[2389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether there are any plans to extend Operation Isotrope beyond 31 January 2023.

**James Heappey:**

The plan is for military primacy to end on 31 January 2023, at which point responsibility will revert to the Home Office and Border Force. Any decision on a potential extension to operation ISOTROPE will be taken nearer that time and will take into account the operational requirements and funding arrangements.



**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[2390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which existing surface and surveillance capabilities will be enhanced as part of Operation Isotrope.

**James Heappey:**

Utilising the £50 million made available to deliver military primacy of small boat operations in the English Channel, the Home Office and Defence are seeking to bring online a range of additional surface and surveillance assets. The objective of procuring new capabilities is to ensure that all small boat crossings can be detected and intercepted such that no migrants arrive on UK shores on their own terms. Specific capabilities are subject to ongoing commercial discussions and will be disclosed in due course.

**■ Veterans: Injuries****Stephanie Peacock:**[\[1276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if his Department will publish a formal response to the Forces in Mind Trust report entitled Lives in Transition: returning to civilian life with a physical injury or condition, published on 27 April 2022.

**Leo Docherty:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) welcomes this Forces in Mind Trust report and will consider its analysis and recommendations as part of ongoing work to strengthen both the recovery and transition provision for Service personnel and their families.

MOD does not routinely publish a formal response to research that has not been commissioned by the Department. There are no plans to provide a formal response at this time.

**EDUCATION****■ Children: Swimming****Stephen Morgan:**[\[1314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of research by Swim England that suggests three in five primary school children will not be able to swim 25 metres by the 2025-26 academic year.

**Will Quince:**

The department recognises that children have missed out on opportunities to learn to swim and be taught how to be safe in and around water due to COVID-19 restrictions as highlighted in the report published by Swim England.

To help address this, the department is working closely with Swim England and other swimming and water safety organisations to provide support to schools and pool operators to restart school swimming lessons, including comprehensive guidance, webinars, and direct advice.

Additionally, through the Opening Schools Facilities programme, the department is supporting schools with swimming pools to be able to open their facilities beyond their normal hours, to give young people more opportunities to learn to swim.

The department is currently procuring a national delivery partner for the next academic year, to allocate funding and offer advice and guidance to schools, including on how they can use their swimming pools and other facilities to provide an increase in the local offer of swimming and other physical activity and extracurricular sports.

## ■ Family Hubs: Finance

**Justin Madders:** [1189]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what approach his Department plans to take to select local authorities for the family hubs transformation fund.

**Will Quince:**

The department has launched a £12 million Family Hubs Transformation Fund (Transformation Fund 1) to support at least 12 local authorities in England to move to a family hub model of service delivery and open family hubs by March 2024. The application window closed in December 2021 and we received 84 bids from upper-tier local authorities. We expect a public announcement on the first wave of successful local authorities in the coming weeks, following a cross government assessment process to review the bids.

In October 2021, as part of the Autumn Budget, the government announced £301.75 million to transform Start for Life and Family Hub services in 75 upper-tier local authorities across England (Transformation Fund 2). The 75 eligible local authorities were announced on the 2 April 2022. Local authorities have been pre-selected in rank order using 'Income Deprivation Affecting Children Indices – Average Rank', ensuring a minimum of 25% of local authorities, from each rural urban classification, have been pre-selected. More information on this methodology can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-hubs-and-start-for-life-package-methodology-for-pre-selecting-local-authorities>.

## ■ National Curriculum Tests

**Stephen Morgan:** [932]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of similarities between elements of the 11+ practice examination paper and this year's key stage 2 Standard Assessment Test; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The test development process used by the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) is rigorous, with teachers and experts commenting on the materials throughout the three-year development process. These reviewers are selected to be broadly nationally representative, in terms of geography and school type, to minimise bias.

The 2022 key stage 2 reading test went through these processes and the expert reviewers considered all materials appropriate and fair.

STA cannot entirely mitigate against pupils having already read certain texts, or against them being used by other organisations developing materials for schools, though checks are undertaken throughout the process. There are many resources and practice papers in the public domain, and it would be impractical and expensive to monitor them all. When it is identified late in the development process that a text has been used elsewhere, STA must also consider whether setting aside the text would be an appropriate use of public money. Although STA makes use of specifically written texts where possible, particularly for non-fiction, fiction texts can come across as contrived and the use of high-quality texts by published authors is essential.

STA are confident that the 2022 reading test was appropriate and accessible for all pupils.

## ■ Pre-school Education: Finance

**Justin Madders:** [801]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the early years funding rates are for (a) 2 year olds and (b) 3 to 4 year olds in each Local Authority in England

**Will Quince:**

For the 2022/23 financial year, the department has increased the early years hourly funding rates for all local authorities by 21p an hour for the two-year-old entitlement and, for the vast majority of areas, by 17p an hour for the three- and four-year-old entitlement. Those rates, for each local authority, for two, three and four-year-olds, including a step-by-step guide, are published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-funding-2022-to-2023>.

## ■ Refugees: Ukraine

**Thangam Debbonaire:** [304]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what provision has been made within the (a) Homes for Ukraine scheme and (b) Ukraine Family Visa scheme to access (i) student loan scheme and (ii) home fee status so that Ukrainian refugees can attend higher education.

**Michelle Donelan:**

We are extending access to Higher Education (HE) student support, home fee status, tuition fee caps, Advanced Learner Loans and FE19+ funding for those who are granted leave under one of the three schemes for Ukrainians introduced recently by the Home Office, the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship scheme, the Ukraine Family scheme, and the Ukraine Extension scheme. 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 FE19+ funding, but would need only to have been ordinarily resident in the UK since their grant of leave.

I have written to English HE providers asking that they exercise flexibility in their approach to eligibility for home fees and draw upon the £4million of additional funding made available to distribute to students from Ukraine in need of financial assistance.

Access to student support is crucial in enabling students from Ukraine 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.

## ■ Schools: Sports

**Justin Madders:**

[\[810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 3 February 2022 to Question 113149, what the timetable is for publishing the update to the School Sport and Activity Action Plan.

**Will Quince:**

The department will publish the update to the School Sport and Activity Action Plan later this year to align with timing of the government's new sport strategy. The plan will set out the actions that the government is taking to support schools to provide more opportunities for children and young people to take part in physical education (PE), sport and physical activity, in the context of the wider strategy.

The department is continuing to take action ahead of publishing the updated plan. The Girls Competitive Sport Your Time programme is for girls aged 8 to 16. It will give girls access to competitive sport opportunities, whilst also establishing new sports leadership roles. The Inclusion 2024 programme aims to increase and improve opportunities for young people with special educational needs and disabilities to engage and participate in PE and school sport.

The department is also taking forward delivery of its programmes to provide £30 million a year to improve the teaching of PE at primary school and open school facilities outside of the school day. On 11 May, the department published an invitation to tender to procure the services of a national delivery partner to support schools to open their facilities and provide greater access and opportunities for pupils to access extra-curricular sport and physical activity.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Appeals

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[2329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 25 April 2022 to Question 155726 on Special Educational Needs: Tribunals, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the introduction of compulsory mediation on the ability of families with disabled children to access the SEND Tribunal and obtain redress when necessary.

**Will Quince:**

As the SEND and AP green paper sets out, the new national system will be designed to minimise uncertainty and disagreements throughout the system and improve parental confidence. The department recognises, however, that disputes around decision-making may still occur.

The government's proposals seek to resolve issues earlier and improve relationships locally by strengthening mediation, including consulting on making it mandatory. Appeals to the tribunal should only need to be made in cases where parents feel that their child's needs or proposed provision arrangements are not in line with the new national SEND standards, and mediation has not resolved the dispute. Mediation helps to maintain and improve relationships between providers, local authorities and families which is important for long-term collaborative working and supports better outcomes for children and young people.

This will reduce the need for cases to escalate to tribunal. The department will make sure there is appropriate support available to parents to help them understand the mediation process and how best to engage with it. However, parents will still be able to go to tribunal if necessary.

The green paper is now out for public consultation on its proposals until 22 July.

**Alex Cunningham:****[2330]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the proposal in his Department's SEND review to only allow families with disabled children to pick a school from a pre-defined list, what assessment he has made of the potential impact on the mental health of parent carers from having to appeal this list in order to have their child attend a school that meets their disabled child's needs.

**Will Quince:**

Through the proposals set out in the SEND and AP green paper, it is our aim to provide parents and carers with a clearer understanding of the support that should be available to meet their child's needs, regardless of where they live.

Where specialist provision is required, the department is consulting on proposals for a simplified process where parents will be supported to express an informed preference for a suitable placement from a tailored list of settings that are appropriate to meet their child's needs.

This aims to give parents and carers clarity on what is available locally which may still include mainstream, special, independent, or out of borough provision where appropriate in order to meet their child's needs.

The expectation is that all schools on the list will be settings that can meet the child's special educational needs as identified in their education, health and care needs assessments, therefore reducing the need to appeal and improving the choice offered to parents.

## ■ **Special Educational Needs: Hearing Impairment**

**Huw Merriman:**

**[1204]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to (a) increase the number of teachers for deaf children and (b) ensure that deaf awareness is included in all initial teacher training.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The department is determined that all children and young people, including those who are deaf or have a hearing impairment, receive the support they need to succeed in their education.

Our reformed Initial Teacher Training Core Content Framework (ITT CCF) and the new Early Career Framework (ECF), both developed with sector experts, will equip teachers with a clear understanding of the needs of all children. This includes those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

ITT courses must be designed so that trainee teachers can demonstrate that they meet the teachers' standards at the appropriate level. This includes the requirement that all teachers must have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those who are deaf or have a hearing impairment.

Consideration of SEND underpins both the ITT CCF and ECF which were both produced with the support of sector experts. The ECF is designed to support all pupils to succeed and seeks to widen access for all.

All teachers in local authority-maintained schools or non-maintained special schools in England are required to hold Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), which is awarded upon successful completion of an ITT course.

In specialist settings, in addition to holding QTS, it is a legal requirement for teachers of classes of pupils who have sensory impairments to hold the relevant mandatory qualification. Providers must be approved by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education to offer these qualifications. Teachers working in an advisory role to support such pupils should also hold the appropriate qualification.

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

Wider decisions relating to teachers' professional development rest with schools, headteachers, and teachers themselves, as they are in the best position to judge their own requirements, which may include further training and development.

## ■ **Supply Teachers: Pay and Workplace Pensions**

**Navendu Mishra:**

**[994]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will intervene to ensure supply teachers employed by agencies and umbrella companies are (a) paid the same rate as those

employed directly by a school or local authority and (b) able to access to the Teachers' Pension Scheme.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

Most supply teacher salaries are paid by supply agencies, and schools can negotiate fees with these agencies. The department trusts schools to agree a fair price for teachers. Supply teachers can register with multiple agencies to find the best pay and conditions to meet their own circumstances.

Agency Worker Regulations provides that all workers on assignments that exceed 12 weeks are paid on equal terms as permanent staff after the 12<sup>th</sup> week.

The Teachers' Pensions Regulations provide for supply teachers participating in the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) where they are employed by a scheme employer. These are local authorities, academies, and further education colleges.

Where supply teachers are self-employed or employed by a supply agency and their services are provided under a 'contract for services', it is not possible for them to participate in the TPS as there is no organisation to undertake the employer role which includes remitting contributions to the scheme.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Air Pollution: Pollution Control

**Geraint Davies:** [\[2345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government is on track to reduce particulate matter emissions by 46 per cent by 2030 as set out in the Clean Air Strategy; and what that represents in (a) annual emissions of PM2.5 and (b) premature deaths caused by air pollution.

**Jo Churchill:**

2030 UK Emission projections for PM2.5 were published in March 2021 and can be found at this link: [UK Emission projections](#)

**Geraint Davies:** [\[2347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what local measures and targets he is planning to introduce to reduce air pollution.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Government works closely with local authorities who manage air pollution at the local level and there are local standards in place for a number of air pollutants, as set out in the Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000. We have recently awarded £11.6 million from Defra's annual Air Quality Grant Scheme to 41 local authorities in England for local projects to tackle air pollution. The scheme will reopen for applications later this year, building on more than £38 million investment so far since 2010.



In addition, we have recently launched consultations on new guidance to local authorities, on designating National Highways as Relevant Public Authority for air quality, and on an ambitious set of new, legally-binding environmental targets, including two on PM2.5. When these consultations are concluded, we will be considering the role local authorities can play in meeting our new targets.

### ■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Departmental Responsibilities

**Jim McMahon:** [\[1521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure (a) value for money from his Department's projects and (b) that those projects are completed (i) on time and (ii) within budget.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The department is strongly committed to delivering value for money and, wherever possible, completing projects as expected. To do so we work through the Defra Board, where ministers, senior officials and non-executive directors maintain oversight of the department's work, and through specific Delivery and Investment committees acting on delegated authority from the main board, that provide targeted scrutiny and oversight.

### ■ Infant Foods

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[2529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the (a) availability and (b) affordability of infant formula.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[2530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to regulate the cost of infant formula in response to recent price increases.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain, as demonstrated throughout the Covid-19 response. It is well equipped to deal with situations with the potential to cause disruption. Our high degree of food security is built on supply from diverse sources; strong domestic production as well as imports through stable trade routes.

Food prices are set individually by businesses. It is not for the UK Government to set retail food prices nor to comment on day-to-day commercial decisions by companies.

Defra has well established ways of working with the industry and across Government to monitor risks that may arise. This includes extensive, regular and ongoing engagement with major food retailers, who have not informed us of any availability issues with infant formula.



## ■ Sharks: Animal Products

**Virginia Crosbie:** [\[2726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ban the (a) import of shark fins and (b) sale of shark fins; and what steps he plans to take to enforce a ban on shark fin products.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The UK Government is strongly opposed to shark finning, the practice of removing the fins of a shark at sea and returning the finless body to the water. We are committed to banning the import and export of detached shark fins and shark fin products. This ban will ensure that shark fins obtained through unsustainable and cruel finning practices are not entering the UK.

The UK does not oppose the sustainable fishing of sharks or the sale of shark fins and shark fin products, if obtained through sustainable fishing practices. Therefore, we do not support a total ban on the sale of shark fins and shark fin products if landed or imported into the UK with their fins naturally attached.

## ■ Washing Machines: Microplastics

**Alberto Costa:** [\[825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure washing machines are fitted with microfibre plastic capture filters.

**Alberto Costa:** [\[826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prevent microfibre plastic pollution.

**Rebecca Pow:**

I know of the hon. Member's commitment to addressing plastic pollution, and in particular the issue of microfibres, where he has ably chaired an All-Party Parliamentary Group. Following the report of that APPG, Defra commissioned a rapid evidence assessment to understand the potential impact of this proposal.

Along with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, we are reviewing the assessment report, and considering what action, if any, is appropriate.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Africa: Foreign Relations

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[1135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 25 April 2022 to Question 158906 on Africa: Foreign Relations, whether any written Africa Strategy document exists beyond what is set out in the Integrated Review and in her speeches, articles and social media posts.

**Vicky Ford:**

In line with current practice, we have no plans at present to publish a written version of the Africa Strategy. I [Minister Ford] refer the Honourable Member to the answer of 28 April to question 158906 on how we continue to share information on the implementation of our approach.

**■ Burkina Faso and Guinea: Politics and Government****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[1139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with (a) Economic Community of West African States and (b) African Union partners in relation to the approach to be taken following the passing of deadlines for the coup authorities in (i) Guinea and (ii) Burkina Faso to set out timetables to return power to civilian governments.

**Vicky Ford:**

We are concerned by the deteriorating situation across West Africa and the Sahel, and the impact on regional security. Alongside the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union, and international partners we condemned the coups in Burkina Faso (January 2022) and Guinea (September 2021). We support the urgent call made by the UN Secretary-General on 2 May for a swift return to democratic, civilian and constitutional rule without delay. In meetings with ECOWAS' President Jean-Claude Kassi Brou in February, and with Vice President Finda Koroma in March, I [Minister Ford] set out the UK's continued support for ECOWAS' mediation efforts.

**■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Military Intervention****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to support (a) inclusiveness, (b) accountability, (c) human rights protections, (d) financial sustainability and (e) African Union and United Nations mandates for any regional intervention force that is created to address violence and abuses in the eastern regions of Democratic Republic of Congo.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK is committed to supporting efforts to build stability and reduce violence in the country. We continue to liaise extensively with the UN Peacekeeping Mission MONUSCO, and engage bilaterally with the Government of DRC and regional partners on the security situation in the east. We welcome the positive trend of enhanced diplomatic outreach and dialogue among countries in the region, including the recent regional heads of State Conclave on Eastern DRC hosted by President Kenyatta in Nairobi. The UK will continue to encourage countries in the region to improve regional cooperation, address shared security challenges, improve humanitarian access, protect human rights and reduce violence.

## ■ Democratic Republic of the Congo: Ebola

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[1138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the risks of the Ebola outbreak identified in Mbandaka, Democratic Republic of Congo on 23 April 2022.

**Vicky Ford:**

Ebola virus disease is endemic to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and naturally present in some animal species. The outbreak identified in Mbandaka is DRC's 14th outbreak on record and the fifth in the past 4 years. Since the current outbreak was declared on 23 April there have been 3 confirmed cases, all sadly deceased. The World Health Organisation (WHO) assess the risk of the outbreak as moderate at the regional level and low at the global level. DRC's growing expertise in responding to outbreaks, the development of effective vaccines, and the greater inclusion of communities in response efforts, has led to significant progress in the management of Ebola outbreaks.

The DRC Government initiated a rapid response to the current outbreak with key activities, including vaccination, beginning within days of the outbreak being declared. UK supported response mechanisms, such as the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund which has allocated \$2 million, have enabled the response to address key risks and meet immediate needs. No new cases have been confirmed since 4 May. We continue to work with the DRC Government and partners to track the outbreak and response. The UK Health Security Agency is closely monitoring the situation, including assessing the risk to the UK.

## ■ Development Aid

**Layla Moran:**

[\[2640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will public the impact assessment for the International Development Strategy.

**Amanda Milling:**

We are confident that funding decisions reflect the priorities in the International Development Strategy, including putting women and girls at the heart of what we do. Assessments of the impact on different beneficiary groups are ongoing, including through the upcoming business planning process. The Foreign Secretary was clear with parliament that Equalities Assessments will not be published, due to the chilling effect it would have on advice provided from officials to ministers.

## ■ Diplomatic Relations

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[1126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, in what year (a) Eritrea, (b) Palau, (c) Palestine, (d) Somaliland, (e) Taiwan and (f) Timor Leste were granted privileges in the UK within the terms of the (i) Consular Relations Act 1968 and (ii) Diplomatic Privileges Act 1964.

**Amanda Milling:**

The Diplomatic Privileges Act 1964 and the Consular Relations Act 1968 give effect in domestic law to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations respectively. The UK maintains diplomatic and consular relations with Eritrea, which acceded to both Conventions on 14 January 1997, and with Timor-Leste which acceded to the Conventions on 30 January 2004; Palau, Somaliland and Taiwan are not party to either Convention. The position of Her Majesty's Government is clear that the UK will recognise a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the objective of peace.

**East Africa: Food****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[1145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans she has to tackle (a) global food insecurity and rising food prices and (b) the food insecurity crisis in East Africa through the upcoming G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' meetings and the G7 Leaders' Summit in June 2022.

**Vicky Ford:**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is exacerbating global food insecurity risks, which were already heightened by climate change, conflict and Covid-19. 43 million people are living a step away from famine and almost 570,000 people are already estimated to be living in famine-like conditions. With 1.7 billion people in over 100 countries now facing food, energy and commodity price rises, the global impact of Russia's war and the pursuit of practical solutions will be a key priority.

The UK is taking action to respond. At the spring meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in April, the UK and our partners secured the largest ever financial commitment from the World Bank of US\$170 billion until June 2023 to support countries faced with the wide range of current economic challenges including the impact of the Russian invasion. With G7 allies, we agreed to address, including in support of the United Nations Global Crises Response Group, the causes and consequences of the global food crisis through a Global Alliance for Food Security, as a joint initiative to ensure momentum and coordination that will be launched by G7 Development Ministers.

We used the recent G7 Foreign Ministers' communique of 14 May to draw attention to deteriorating food security needs throughout East Africa and in particular the emergence of famine conditions in Somalia and Ethiopia. Alongside our G7 partners, we committed to strengthening the resilience of people and economies across the region and to work together to address the region's mounting humanitarian pressures. Our work with the G7 builds on the UK's generous humanitarian support to East Africa which includes £72.25 million towards Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan since January 2022.

**Sarah Champion:**[\[771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help ensure that the humanitarian response to the East Africa hunger crisis reaches girls with (a) food and (b) protection measures in the context of the potential increased risk of gender-based violence, child, early and forced marriage, and removal from school.

**Vicky Ford:**

In 2022 to support communities affected by drought and also flooding and conflict the UK has provided £72.25 million to Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan. Elements of the UK's support will target the specific protection needs of women and girls including survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. For example, on 21 January I [Minister Ford] announced £14.5 million of new funding for the crisis in Ethiopia, of which £5 million is for health and education services for people affected by the conflict. As the conflict continues, children, especially girls, are at increased risk of gender-based violence, being coerced into marriage, and sexual exploitation and abuse.

The UK supports child protection services in Somalia through partners such as UNICEF. In 2021, UK funding supported community based awareness raising for approximately 30,000 people, to address harmful social norms and strengthen the protective environment for children and women. In addition, UK-funded education projects are improving water supplies in schools and providing additional support to teachers and students. The UK-supported Global Partnership for Education has supported accelerated funding to be mobilised to finance the government's drought response in schools.

**■ East Africa: Food Supply****Sarah Champion:**[\[772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she (a) has had and (b) plans to have discussions with non-governmental organisations and civil society on ways of responding to the hunger crisis in East Africa.

**Vicky Ford:**

Officials from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) both at headquarters and at UK missions in East Africa maintain an ongoing and productive dialogue with non-governmental organisations (NGOs). FCDO officials, including senior members of staff, have had regular discussions with NGOs about the conflict in northern Ethiopia and more recently discussions have focused on the worsening drought and growing food insecurity. In January, prior to my [Minister Ford] visit to East Africa, I [Minister Ford] met UK NGOs to hear their perspectives on conflict-related sexual violence in relation to the conflict in Tigray.

Ministers would welcome further discussions with NGOs on wider humanitarian requirements in East Africa and we appreciate the nature of engagement with NGOs to-date.

## ■ Ethiopia: Crimes against Humanity

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[1143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help prevent destruction of any evidence of (a) ethnic cleansing and (b) other war crimes, crimes against humanity, and human rights abuses in (i) western Tigray, and (ii) other areas of Ethiopia; and what steps she will take to support accountability for any actions of destruction of such evidence that have already taken place.

**Vicky Ford:**

Reports of widespread human rights violations and abuses in Ethiopia committed by all sides to the conflict are very disturbing. These include extrajudicial killings, torture, sexual and gender-based violence, ethnic targeting, and the looting and destruction of civilian infrastructure. In my statement of 28 April, I [Minister Ford] reiterated the need for justice and accountability for the survivors and victims of crimes committed in Tigray, Amhara and Afar during this conflict. It is imperative that those who have committed or commanded human rights violations and abuses are held to account.

We have supported the Joint Investigation into human rights abuses and violations during the conflict, conducted by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and we welcome the Ethiopian Government's creation of an Inter-Ministerial Taskforce to take forward recommendations of the Joint Investigation report. At a Special Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) in December 2021, the UK co-sponsored a resolution mandating the creation of an International Commission of Human Rights Experts to investigate human rights abuses and violations committed during the conflict. I [Minister Ford] have urged all parties to cooperate with this International Commission.

The UK's new Human Rights and Peacebuilding programme (HARP) is providing £4.5 million support to help build the capacity of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (including through enhanced investigative capacity), improve the availability and accessibility of services for survivors of gender-based violence, support peacebuilding initiatives and establish a national conflict research facility.

## ■ EU Countries: Visas

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[1242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with the EU on lengthening the duration of Schengen Area visas for UK citizens travelling to the EU beyond the current 90-day limit.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK and EU both currently provide for visa-free travel for short-term visits for each other's nationals in accordance with their respective laws. The detail of those arrangements is set by domestic law, and in line with EU legislation. British Citizens are able to travel visa-free to the Schengen Area for short stays of up to 90 days in a rolling 180-day period. British Citizens who are planning to stay longer than 90 days

in a rolling 180-day period will need permission from the relevant Member State. This may require applying for a visa and/or permit.

Negotiations with the EU have concluded and the Government is focused on the smooth, robust and effective implementation of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

The Government keeps advice for British Citizens travelling abroad under regular review.

## ■ Finland and Sweden: Defence and Security

**John Healey:**

**[1092]**

To ask the Secretary for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she plans to lay the security and defence agreements signed between the UK, Sweden and Finland before Parliament under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010; and if she will make a statement.

**James Cleverly:**

The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 makes provision for treaties subject to ratification first to be laid before Parliament. The Act's definition of a treaty does not capture arrangements which are not legally binding under international law.

The joint statements made between the UK and Finland and the UK and Sweden on 11 May both note that they are political declarations and are not legally binding obligations under international law. The statements in their entirety were published on gov.uk immediately after their signature. These are available at:

[https://www.gov.uk/international/foreign-affairs#policy\\_and\\_engagement](https://www.gov.uk/international/foreign-affairs#policy_and_engagement)

## ■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Private Education

**Emily Thornberry:**

**[121]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding his Department allocated to the Continuity of Education Allowance to fund school places (a) overseas and (b) in the UK in 2021-21; and how many children were covered by that funding.

**Vicky Ford:**

In Financial Year 2021/22 legacy FCO allocated funding of £10,540,536 to Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) for 531 children in boarding schools in the UK.

In Financial Year 2021/22 legacy FCO allocated funding of £21,378,864 to 902 legacy FCO children in education overseas.

Information on the number of school places funded both in the UK and overseas is not held centrally for staff on legacy DFID terms and conditions.



**Emily Thornberry:**[\[122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the maximum level of Continuity of Education Allowance payments provided by his Department were for (a) primary and (b) secondary pupils in the UK in 2021-22.

**Vicky Ford:**

The ceilings for the 2021/22 school year are (per term, 3-term school year):

Senior Boarder (£11,814)

Senior Day (£8,270)

Junior Boarder (£10,385)

Junior Day (£7,629)

In September 2021 the eligibility entry age for legacy FCO officers to claim for CEA was increased to 11 years old (UK school year 7 or above).

**■ Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria****Steve Brine:**[\[2465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking in their engagement with the G7, G20 and Commonwealth to help ensure the Global Fund To Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria reaches its target of at least \$18 billion in their seventh replenishment in 2022.

**Amanda Milling:**

The UK has a long-standing partnership with the Global Fund, investing £4.1 billion to date. We are the second largest donor of the 6th replenishment. The Global Fund remains an essential partner for the UK in the fight against HIV, TB and malaria. We will continue to work and engage with our allies in the G7, G20, and the Commonwealth to encourage support of the Global Fund's 7th replenishment and to strengthen health systems. We have been supporting the German G7 Presidency to ensure a sustained G7 commitment to the Global Fund and are working with the Indonesian G20 Presidency to support its focus on TB financing which includes a successful Global Fund replenishment.

**■ Human Rights: Females****Stella Creasy:**[\[2474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential effect on the human rights of women throughout the world of any change to the Roe vs Wade ruling on abortion.

**Vicky Ford:**

I understand this is a leaked document rather than an official decision, but this is a matter for the US courts. It would not be appropriate for a foreign government to lobby the independent court process. In general, the UK supports women's reproductive rights globally, including the right to access safe and legal abortion.



## ■ India: Religious Freedom

**Afzal Khan:** [\[2642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representation she has made to her Indian counterpart on the protection of religious minorities.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK Government is committed to defending Freedom of Religion or Belief for all and promoting respect and tolerance between different religious and non-religious communities. We engage with India on a range of human rights matters and where we have concerns, we raise them directly with the Government of India, including at Ministerial level. 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. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for South Asia, also regularly speaks to the High Commissioner of India, and Freedom of Religion or Belief forms part of that dialogue.

The British High Commission in New Delhi and our network of Deputy High Commissions across India regularly meet religious representatives and have run projects supporting minority rights. We work with the UN, G7, and other multilateral fora to promote Freedom of Religion or Belief. On 5-6 July 2022, we will host an international Ministerial conference in London, driving forward international efforts on Freedom of Religion or Belief and demonstrating our leading role in supporting freedom and openness.

## ■ Israel: Journalism

**Afzal Khan:** [\[2641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations the Government has made to the Israeli Government on its treatment of journalists.

**Amanda Milling:**

The UK is committed to the protection of media freedom around the world. The safety of journalists across the globe is vital and they must be protected when carrying out their critical work. During a call with the Israeli Ambassador on 19 May, I made clear the UK's sadness at the recent death of Shireen Abu Aqleh whilst working in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. I also urged a thorough and transparent investigation and pushed for action to safeguard the work of journalists.

## ■ MI6: Environment Protection

**Kenny MacAskil:** [\[2659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when she intends to deposit in the House of Commons Library the annual environmental sustainability reports made by MI6 for 2011 to 2021.

**James Cleverly:**

It is the longstanding policy of successive British Governments not to comment on intelligence matters.

**■ Myanmar: Health Services****Dr Dan Poulter:**[\[2455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to support the Health Partnerships for Myanmar group.

**Amanda Milling:**

In 2021/22 the FCDO provided £49.4 million in aid to Myanmar. 70 percent of this was to deliver healthcare and humanitarian support. Through our Tropical Health and Education Trust programme, we support the Royal Colleges and Cambridge Global Health Partnership to help address the acute health workforce crisis that followed the coup. This includes getting Myanmar doctors and nurses access to web-based learning materials, and helping establish an innovative service delivery mechanism (e.g. telemedicine) in this difficult security context. We are now making arrangements for this important work to continue in the immediate term.

**■ Northern Ireland Protocol****Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[2436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking in relation to the Northern Ireland Protocol to support the Union.

**James Cleverly:**

The situation in Northern Ireland is serious: there is no longer a fully functioning devolved government. We remain fully committed to fixing the problems with the Protocol and to protect the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in all its dimensions. As the Foreign Secretary set out on 17 May, we must make progress urgently to provide a platform for a stable, effective power-sharing executive.

As we have said consistently, our preference is for a negotiated settlement with the EU however we will take steps in legislation should negotiations be unable to reach a landing zone. This legislation will fix the issues facing communities in Northern Ireland. This is about delivering for the people of Northern Ireland, restoring political stability and preserving peace.

**■ Shireen Abu Akleh****Mr David Jones:**[\[2402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations she has made to her Israeli counterpart on the violence at the funeral of Shireen Abu Akleh.

**Amanda Milling:**

On 11 May, I publicly expressed my sadness upon hearing news of the tragic death of veteran Palestinian Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh, and called for a thorough investigation. The Foreign Secretary also made this clear in a statement on 12 May. We were also deeply disturbed by the scenes in Jerusalem at her funeral. Her death was a tragedy and those mourning must be treated with respect and dignity. We call for urgent steps to de-escalate tensions and for restraint in the use of force. The UK Ambassador to Israel has reiterated the importance of an investigation with the Israeli authorities. The safety of journalists across the globe is vital and they must be protected when carrying out their critical work.

**Claire Hanna:**[\[2697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the (a) fatal shooting of Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in the West Bank and (b) attack on pallbearers as they carried her coffin; and what steps the Government is taking in response to these events.

**Amanda Milling:**

On 11 May, I publicly expressed my sadness upon hearing news of the tragic death of veteran Palestinian Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh, and called for a thorough investigation. The Foreign Secretary also made this clear in a statement on 12 May. We were also deeply disturbed by the scenes in Jerusalem at her funeral. Her death was a tragedy and those mourning must be treated with respect and dignity. We call for urgent steps to de-escalate tensions and for restraint in the use of force. The UK Ambassador to Israel has reiterated the importance of an investigation with the Israeli authorities. The safety of journalists across the globe is vital and they must be protected when carrying out their critical work.

**■ Somalia: Food Supply****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[1146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to UK steps to help tackle the prospect of famine in Somalia, published on 26 April 2022, how this aid package will be allocated.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK's £25 million package of support, announced on 26 April 2022, will help tackle the famine through the provision of: £19.5 million to support life-saving food, nutrition, water supply, sanitation and health services, which will be delivered by the UN and NGO partners in locations most at risk of famine; £5.5 million to UNICEF to support life-saving nutrition services for women and children facing severe malnutrition; and critical health services, including responding to increasing cholera and measles outbreaks.

## ■ Somaliland: Press Freedom

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[1137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she has taken to raise reports of the detention of 14 journalists arrested on 13 April 2022 in connection with their coverage of a prison riot in Somaliland with the authorities in that country.

**Vicky Ford:**

We are deeply concerned about the reports of 17 journalists detained in Hargeisa after reporting from outside the central prison. Although two were released the same day, 15 others were detained for longer. Our Ambassador to Somalia raised these concerns directly with Somaliland President Bihi on 20 April, and met with some of those released. We continue to press for a fair and transparent judicial process for the three journalists still detained. Media freedom is an essential component of a functioning democracy and the British Government is committed to media freedom and freedom of expression. This incident reflects diminishing media freedom in Somaliland, which is seeing rising numbers of arrests and physical assaults of journalists. We will continue to encourage Somaliland's Government to pass a stalled media law that would help secure important protections for journalists.

## ■ Sri Lanka: Politics and Government

**Catherine West:**

[\[2596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has discussed political violence in Sri Lanka with (a) the Sri Lankan Government and (b) other partners in that region.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK Government is concerned by the outbreaks of violence that followed on from the attacks against peaceful protesters at Galle Face, in Colombo, on 09 May. The Minister of State for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, has emphasised that violence against peaceful protestors is unacceptable. Those responsible for attacks should be held to account, and fundamental rights including the right to peaceful protest must be protected.

We discuss our concerns with the Government of Sri Lanka. Lord Ahmad raised the need to improve human rights and deliver justice and accountability with the Sri Lankan President and Foreign Minister when he visited Sri Lanka 18-20 January 2022. The Foreign Secretary raised the importance of upholding human rights when she met Foreign Minister Peiris on 26 October 2021.

The UK Government has urged all parties to explore constructive and democratic ways of resolving the current political and economic challenges. The UK High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Sarah Hulton, has called for independent and transparent investigations into violence against peaceful protesters. My officials are engaging with counterparts in the region on this issue and will continue to closely monitor political, economic and security developments in Sri Lanka.

## ■ Sudan: Armed Conflict

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to (a) support investigations into the killings in the Krink region of West Darfur, Sudan on 24 April 2022, including reports of the complicity of Rapid Support Forces, and (b) help prevent further violence in that region.

**Vicky Ford:**

I [Minister Ford] am concerned at ongoing violence and destruction in West Darfur, including the Krink region. We issued a statement on 25 April, setting out our concerns and the need for the Sudanese authorities to deliver their responsibilities to protect civilians. We then underscored the importance of an independent investigation into the violence at the UN Security Council (UNSC) on 27 April and helped to secure a UNSC statement condemning the violence on 29 April. We are also in contact with the UN about providing humanitarian assistance to those affected. We have frequently raised our concerns at levels of violence in Darfur with a range of actors in Sudan, including the leadership of the Rapid Support Forces, most recently during a visit by the UK Envoy for the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea and other envoys on 27-29 April, and will continue to do so.

The UK has repeatedly called for the Sudanese authorities to accelerate implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement to help address violence and instability in Darfur and other historically marginalised areas in Sudan. The fragile security situation across the country has been exacerbated by the ongoing political crisis and underlines the urgent need for an agreement which re-establishes a civilian-led government. Since the coup, we have encouraged all Sudanese political actors to engage in the talks facilitated by the UN and the African Union to resolve the political crisis; a message our Ambassador in Khartoum delivered to Sudan's military leadership on 6 April.

## ■ Ukraine: Armed Conflict

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps her Department has taken to help prevent of sexual violence against women and girls during in the conflict in Ukraine.

**James Cleverly:**

In response to reports of atrocities, the UK worked with partners to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC), establish a Commission of Inquiry through the UN Human Rights Council and establish an OSCE Mission. In addition to our support to the ICC, we deployed specialist UK war crimes and sexual violence expertise to the region to support investigations.

The UK has pledged £220 million of humanitarian assistance. This is supporting life-saving assistance, targeted services, legal support and crisis accommodation. Funding through UN Populations Fund is helping the Ukrainian Government set up

support mechanisms for gender-based violence (GBV) survivors. We are also supporting the effective documentation of GBV cases. We have dedicated funding supporting the critical needs of women and children. Our new two-year £10 million civil society fund will support local organisations, including those gathering evidence of war crimes such as conflict-related sexual violence.

## ■ USA: Abortion

**Jessica Morden:** [\[1131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with her counterpart in the US Government on the implications of any decision by its Supreme Court to reverse the Roe vs Wade judgment.

**James Cleverly:**

This is a matter for the US courts and it would not be appropriate for a foreign government to lobby an independent court process. The UK supports women's reproductive rights globally, including the right to access safe and legal abortion.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Air Pollution: Pollution Control

**Geraint Davies:** [\[2344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has analysis to show by how much particulate matter emissions need to be reduced in order to reduce premature deaths caused by air pollution in the UK by half.

**Maggie Throup:**

No specific analysis has been undertaken. However, the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants has assessed the long-term exposure to man-made air pollution in the United Kingdom, based on studies reporting associations of mortality risk with fine particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide. It was estimated that for a one microgram per cubic metre reduction in nitrogen dioxide, approximately 420,000 to 903,000 life years could be saved in the UK over the next 106 years, associated with an increase in life expectancy at birth of two to five days.

### ■ Alcoholic Drinks: Labelling

**Wayne David:** [\[2381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he will publish (a) the consultation on calorie labelling of alcoholic products and (b) the labelling elements under consideration by that consultation.

**Wayne David:** [\[2382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) increase awareness of the links between alcohol abuse and cancer and (b) introduce a health warning on alcohol labels.

**Maggie Throup:**

The consultation to seek views on whether to introduce mandatory calorie labelling on prepacked alcohol and alcohol sold in on-trade businesses such as pubs and restaurants will be launched in due course. The consultation will also seek views on whether the provision of the United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers' (CMOs) low risk drinking guidelines and a drink-driving warning should be mandatory or continue on a voluntary basis. Respondents to the consultation will be able to provide suggestions for additional labelling requirements, including additional warnings pertaining to health.

The UK CMOs' low risk drinking guidelines highlight that the risk of developing a range of health problems, including cancer, increases with greater alcohol consumption on a regular basis. We continue to promote these guidelines through public health messaging, including the 'Better Health' campaign and the Drink Free Days app.

**Ambulance Services: Barnsley Hospital**

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[1533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average ambulance response times were at Barnsley Hospital in each year since 2010.

**Edward Argar:**

The information is not collected in the format requested. Response times are not measured at individual hospital level.

**Ambulance Services: Shropshire**

**Daniel Kawczynski:** [\[2430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve ambulance response times in Shropshire.

**Edward Argar:**

The West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) is introducing a team to triage lower priority cases and diverting patients to other services to reduce attendances at accident and emergency (A&E). Hospital Ambulance Liaison Officers are working with hospital staff to improve the flow of patients and coordinate one ambulance crew to care for to four patients, releasing other crews to respond to patients. A Same Day Emergency Centre at Royal Shrewsbury Hospital receives ambulances directly, improving handover times at A&E. A £9.3 million upgrade at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital will also deliver additional capacity. Further expansion plans are also being developed to manage the demand in A&E.



## ■ Ambulance Services: Standards

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[1532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to provide (a) support and (b) compensation to families who have been bereaved due to slow ambulance response times.

**Edward Argar:**

All National Health Service providers have a complaints process to support families who may have concerns regarding NHS services. Patients who believe that their care was negligent can bring a legal claim for compensation. Where negligence is established, the Government supports patients' entitlement to compensation.

## ■ Armed Forces: Sexual Assault Referral Centres

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[1283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of women in the armed forces who have (a) been taken to a sexual assault referral centre (SARC) and (b) have received support from a mobile SARC unit following military sexual assault or rape, in each year since 2010.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The information requested is not held centrally. From April 2022, NHS England and NHS Improvement are collecting information on whether people accessing sexual assault referral centres are veterans or currently serving in the armed forces.

## ■ Asthma

**Jim Shannon:** [\[2307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been admitted to hospitals in England as a result of exacerbations of their asthma in the last 12 months.

**Jim Shannon:** [\[2308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been admitted to hospitals in England as a result of exacerbations of their asthma in the last five years.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The information is not collected in the format requested. The following table shows a count of finished admission episodes (FAEs) with a primary diagnosis of asthma in English National Health Service hospitals and NHS commissioned activity in the independent sector from 2017/18 to 2020/21. Data for 2021/22 is not yet available.



YEAR	FAEs
2017/18	78,890
2018/19	84,343
2019/20	84,003
2020/21	39,216

Source: NHS Digital

### ■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

**Steve McCabe:** [\[1089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy and effectiveness of support given to care homes since the publication of the Government's Living with Covid-19 document in February 2022.

**Gillian Keegan:**

No specific assessment has been made. However, on 31 March 2022 updated guidance for the sector was published to ensure sufficient protections for care recipients remain. Care home residents will continue to be prioritised for vaccinations, the free provision of personal protective equipment remains and testing will continue to be provided to the sector.

We are also investing £5.4 billion over the next three years to begin the reform of adult social care, including £1.36 billion to move towards a fair cost of care.

**Steve McCabe:** [\[1474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department will take to ensure adequate supply of (a) PCR and (b) LFT covid-19 testing kit supplies to care homes.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The UK Health Security Agency continues to work with commercial partners to procure sufficient test kits and ensure a continuous supply to care homes. Care homes can order rapid lateral flow device (LFD) tests for regular asymptomatic testing, symptomatic testing of staff and residents and LFD and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing in the case of outbreaks. A courier booking service remains available to all care homes for completed PCR test kits in during outbreaks.

### ■ Care Homes: Dementia

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of care home staff who have received training on dementia.

**Gillian Keegan:**

No specific estimate has been made. However, between 2012 and 2020, more than one million National Health Service staff and one million social care staff had received basic dementia awareness training. The training needs for relevant staff are set out in the Dementia Training Standards Framework. We will set out plans for dementia in England later this year, which will include training on dementia.

**■ Care Homes: Energy****Steve McCabe:**[\[1087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support care homes manage the rising cost of energy.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The Local Government Finance Settlement makes an additional £3.7 billion available to councils. As part of this settlement, local authorities have access to an additional £1 billion specifically for social care in 2022/23 and also funding from unring-fenced grants, including the 2022/23 Services Grant and council tax to manage cost pressures such as energy costs. This settlement includes £162 million for adult social care reform in 2022/23 to support local authorities to prepare markets for these reforms and to move towards paying a fair cost of care.

**Rachael Maskell:**[\[1225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps is he taking to assist care homes with rising energy costs.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The Local Government Finance Settlement makes an additional £3.7 billion available to councils. As part of this settlement, local authorities have access to an additional £1 billion specifically for social care in 2022/23 and also funding from unring-fenced grants, including the 2022/23 Services Grant and council tax to manage cost pressures such as energy costs. This settlement includes £162 million for adult social care reform in 2022/23 to support local authorities to prepare markets for these reforms and to move towards paying a fair cost of care.

**■ Care Homes: Labour Turnover****Steve McCabe:**[\[1085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take tackle improve staff retention in the care home sector.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We will invest at least £500 million to develop and support the workforce over the next three years and improve retention. This will include new wellbeing interventions such as talking therapies, increased training places and a Knowledge and Skills Framework to provide pathways for development within roles.

## ■ Death Certificates

**Kim Leadbeater:** [\[1563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of clause 128 of the Health and Social Care Act 2022 on delays to the death certification process; and what steps he is taking to reduce those delays.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Section 128 of the Health and Care Act 2022 refers to the 'Health Services Safety Investigations relating to Wales and Northern Ireland', which does not relate to death certification.

## ■ Dementia: Diagnosis

**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[1489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve dementia diagnosis rates in England.

**Gillian Keegan:**

In 2021/22 we allocated £17 million to specifically address dementia waiting lists and increase the number of diagnoses. This funding was made available to clinical commissioning groups in June 2021. In 2022/23, NHS England will provide funding to support general practitioners to pilot diagnostic approaches to increase the number of diagnoses. We will set out plans for dementia in England for the next 10 years later this year, which will include a focus on dementia diagnosis.

**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[1490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the trends in dementia diagnosis rates among (a) ethnic minority communities and (b) other groups; and if he will make a statement.

**Gillian Keegan:**

No formal assessment has been made. NHS England and NHS Improvement have commissioned the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities' Dementia Intelligence Network to investigate the underlying variation in dementia diagnosis rates in specific areas in England. This investigation will include a focus on social and economic deprivation; rurality; demographic characteristics including age, ethnicity and educational attainment; and general health and life expectancy.

We will set out plans for dementia in England for the next 10 years later this year, which will include a focus on dementia diagnosis.

**Alberto Costa:** [\[829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve levels of dementia diagnosis.

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of dementia diagnoses in England; and if he will make a statement.

**Gillian Keegan:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement are continuing to monitor monthly trends in the dementia diagnosis rate. The national target is for more than 66% of people living with dementia to receive a formal diagnosis. Following the impact of the pandemic, in March 2022 the diagnosis rate increased to 62%.

In 2021/22, we allocated £17 million to address dementia waiting lists and increase the number of diagnoses. NHS England and NHS Improvement made this funding available to clinical commissioning groups in June 2021. In 2022/23, NHS England will provide funding to support general practitioners in pilots on the approaches to diagnosing dementia for people living with advanced dementia in a care home setting. We will set out plans for dementia in England later this year. The strategy will focus on the specific health and care needs of people living with dementia and their carers, including dementia diagnosis.

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the regional variation in dementia diagnosis rates in England; and what steps he is taking to tackle potential variation.

**Gillian Keegan:**

While no formal assessment has been made, NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to monitor the monthly dementia diagnosis rate and analyse trends at regional and sustainability and transformation partnership level.

In 2021/22, we made £17 million available to clinical commissioning groups to address the needs of those waiting for a diagnosis and those with a diagnosis who were unable to access support services due to the pandemic. Factsheets were also provided to encourage conversations to understand local patterns and potential reasons for trends in dementia diagnosis rates, as well as identifying specific areas for support. We will set out plans for dementia in England later this year, including a focus on dementia diagnosis.

## ■ Dementia: Training

**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[1491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure care home staff can access evidence-based training on dementia.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We are investing £500 million over the next three years to support the development of social care staff. This will include Knowledge and Skills Framework to supplement existing resources such as the Dementia Training Standards Framework and providing additional training places and qualifications, including for those supporting

individuals with Parkinson's and dementia. We will set out plans for dementia in England for the next 10 years later this year, which will include a focus on dementia training.

## ■ Dialysis Machines

**Kenny MacAskill:**

[\[2657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his department has to work with its devolved counterparts to ensure consistent access for patients across UK to equal reimbursement of the energy costs incurred by home dialysis.

**Maria Caulfield:**

We have no current plans to do so as this is a devolved matter. For adult home dialysis NHS England do not reimburse patients directly. Patients' additional direct utility costs, which may include electricity, water, gas and telephone, are met through the payment of the national tariff to providers, which provide reimbursement to the individual.

## ■ Health Services: Home Visits

**Colleen Fletcher:**

[\[2505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people who have unmet care needs in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England; and what steps his Department is taking to ensure those care needs are met.

**Gillian Keegan:**

No specific assessment has been made. Under the Care Act 2014, Local authorities are responsible for assessing individuals' eligibility for care and support and where the individual is eligible for financial support, for meeting those needs. Where individuals are not eligible for financial support, local authorities may assist them to make arrangements for care. The assurance framework, being delivered through the Health and Care Act 2022, includes a new duty for the Care Quality Commission to review and make an assessment of local authorities' delivery of adult social care duties.

## ■ Healthy Start Scheme

**Alison Thewliss:**

[\[2528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will increase the value of healthy start vouchers in response to the increasing cost of infant formula.

**Maggie Throup:**

While there are no current plans to do so, the value of the Healthy Start scheme is kept under review. From April 2021, the value increased from £3.10 to £4.25, providing additional support to pregnant women and families on lower incomes to make healthy food choices.

## ■ Learning Disability: Mental Health Services

**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[1244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to (a) reinstate and (b) increase provision of day services for people with learning disabilities to help them overcome ongoing mental health difficulties created by the covid-19 outbreak.

**Gillian Keegan:**

Local authorities have a duty under the Care Act 2014 to provide and arrange services to meet the needs of the local population.

We have recently written to local authority leaders to highlight the importance of access to good quality day services which provide a range of activities, including educational, leisure, social and skills-based opportunities and providing unpaid carers with a break from their caring responsibilities.

## ■ Leukaemia: Health Services

**Cat Smith:** [\[1516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that the (a) 10-Year Cancer Plan and (b) other strategic documents are fit for purpose for chronic lymphocytic leukaemia patients on active monitoring whose needs are different from people undergoing treatment.

**Cat Smith:** [\[1517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that every leukaemia patient has equal access to a clinical nurse specialist from diagnosis so that chronic lymphocytic leukaemia patients on active monitoring have the tailored support they require.

**Cat Smith:** [\[1518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to improve the mental wellbeing of people with chronic lymphocytic leukaemia who are on active monitoring and not receiving treatment.

**Cat Smith:** [\[1519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will provide further investment, training and resources to the NHS to help ensure that chronic lymphocytic leukaemia patients have the tailored support they need for their mental and physical wellbeing.

**Maria Caulfield:**

We are currently analysing the responses received to the call for evidence to develop the 10 Year Cancer Plan, which will be published later this year. The Plan will set out how we will improve cancer services, including for those patients with chronic lymphocytic leukaemia.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have committed to ensure that every patient has access to a clinical nurse specialist (CNS). In 2021/22, Health Education England invested an additional £52 million to develop the cancer and diagnostics workforce, which included training opportunities for 754 existing and aspiring CNS. The 2019 Cancer Patient Experience Survey found that 89% of nearly 10,000 respondents with haematological cancers reported that they were given access to a CNS who would support them through their treatment. Data from Cancer Alliances in March 2021 showed that approximately 83% of all cancer multi-disciplinary teams had implemented Personalised Care and Support Planning based on Holistic Needs Assessments. NHS England and NHS Improvement have requested that Cancer Alliances identify any gaps in mental health provision as part of the 2022/23 Planning Guidance. NHS England and NHS Improvement are also supporting adults experiencing cancer with access to Improving Access to Psychological Therapies mental health services.

#### ■ **Maternity Services: Standards**

**Mary Glendon:**

[\[2478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the journal article entitled, A Quality Improvement Bundle to Improve Outcomes in Extremely Preterm Infants in the First Week, published in February 2022 in the context of assessing practices on the care of premature infants.

**Maria Caulfield:**

No specific assessment has been made. The National Maternity Safety Ambition is to halve maternal and neonatal deaths, stillbirths and brain injuries by 2025. It also includes reducing the rate of pre-term births from 8% to 6%. We have introduced specific targeted interventions to achieve this ambition, such as the Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle Version 2 and the Brain Injury Reduction Programme.

The Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle Version 2 brings together five elements of care that are widely recognised as evidence-based and best practice. One element focuses on reducing preterm birth and includes three interventions to improve the prediction and prevention of pre-term birth and better preparation when pre-term birth is unavoidable.

#### ■ **Members: Correspondence**

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he will respond to the letter of 23 December 2021 from the Member for St Albans on the poor service standards of covid-19 travel test providers TestnGO and Covid Travel Clinics.

**Edward Argar:**

We replied to the hon. Member on 13 May 2022.

## ■ **Mental Health Services: Finance**

**Rehman Chishti:** [\[700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Integrated Commissioning for Better Outcomes framework on funding for highly specialised mental health services.

**Gillian Keegan:**

No specific assessment has been made.

## ■ **Neurology**

**Peter Aldous:** [\[733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve health and social care services for people with neurological conditions.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The National Neurosciences Advisory Group (NNAG) is currently developing optimal clinical pathways for people with neurological conditions. The pathways aim to support the improvement of treatment, care and support services and enable better commissioning of neurological services locally and nationally. The Neuroscience Services Transformation Programme will use these pathways to inform its workplan and support integrated care systems to improve outcomes.

The NNAG has published two toolkits on progressive neurological conditions and epilepsy. The toolkits prioritise faster and more accurate diagnoses, collaborative working between different disciplines and increased availability of neurorehabilitation, reablement, and psychosocial support. NHS England and NHS Improvement plan to recruit a National Clinical Director for Neurology to provide clinical leadership and advice across neurology. The Department has announced the development of a cross-Government strategy on acquired brain injury. The strategy will be informed by a call for evidence inviting views on whether other related neurological conditions should also be included in its scope. We will also set out plans for dementia services in England in a strategy which will be published later this year.

## ■ **NHS: Dental Services**

**Daniel Kawczynski:** [\[1132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to help with the provision of new NHS dental practices.

**Maria Caulfield:**

New National Health Service dental contracts are commissioned where additional need is identified according to regional budgets or in cases where contracts are handed back. Commissioners work with local stakeholders to identify need in these cases. The Department, NHS England and NHS Improvement and the British Dental Association are working on reforms to the NHS dental contract in order to make the NHS dental offer more attractive for dentists and their teams.



## ■ Obesity: Mental Health

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[2615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the conclusion of the Sixth Report of Session 2019–21 of the Women and Equalities Committee, Changing the perfect picture: an inquiry into body image, HC 274, that the use of BMI inspires weight stigma, contributes to eating disorders, and disrupts people's body image and mental health; and whether his Department plans to implement the recommendation of the Committee to stop using BMI as a measure of individual health.

**Maggie Throup:**

While the Department has not made a specific assessment of the Committee's conclusions, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is currently updating its existing guidelines on weight management, including the use of Body Mass Index as a measure of individual health. It has recently consulted on its draft guideline on the identification and classification of overweight and obesity and is considering how current medical practice may exacerbate weight stigma. NICE expects to publish its final updated guidance in September 2022.

## ■ Palliative Care

**Alex Norris:**

[\[2627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will introduce new guidance on the duty in the Health and Care Act 2022 to commission palliative care services; and whether that guidance will be statutory.

**Alex Norris:**

[\[2628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will introduce new guidance on the duty in the Health and Care Act 2022 to commission palliative care services and for that guidance to include reference to support the wishes of patients and their families.

**Alex Norris:**

[\[2629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will introduce new guidance on the duty in the Health and Care Act 2022 to commission palliative care services and for that guidance to specify an expectation that palliative care services should be available in every setting, on a 24/7 basis, by telephone and in person, through a single point of contact.

**Gillian Keegan:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement plan to introduce new statutory guidance to support integrated care boards (ICBs) in the duties under the Health and Care Act 2022, including the provision of palliative care. In addition to the statutory guidance, NHS England and NHS Improvement will work with stakeholders to consider how ICBs can be supported in the discharge of these duties. This includes determining any further additional technical guidance and tools required to support commissioners

on the provision of palliative and end of life care services, according to the needs of the local population. All guidance developed will take account of appropriate best practice guidance, including the World Health Organization's definition of palliative and end of life care and guidelines published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

### ■ **Pancreatic Cancer: Mortality Rates**

**Theresa Villiers:** [\[2401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will include steps to improve survival rates for pancreatic cancer in his Department's forthcoming Ten Year Cancer Plan.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Officials are analysing response to call for evidence to inform the development of the 10 Year Cancer Plan, which will be published later this year. The Plan will address all types of cancer, including those which are rare and less survivable, such as pancreatic cancer.

### ■ **Platinum Jubilee 2022: Medals**

**Steve McCabe:** [\[596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of recognising health sector personnel in backroom roles including (a) administrative, (b) clerical and (c) IT support staff through awards of the Platinum Jubilee Medal.

**Edward Argar:**

The criteria for each Jubilee Medal was agreed with all Government Departments, the devolved administrations and Crown Dependencies, confirmed by the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals and approved by Her Majesty.

In line with the police and fire service, Jubilee Medals will be awarded to front-line ambulance staff responding in person to 999 emergency calls. The established definition and criteria for Jubilee Medals does not apply to other National Health Service staff. There are no plans to amend the eligibility criteria for the Platinum Jubilee Medal which follows the precedent set for the Diamond Jubilee.

### ■ **Primary Health Care**

**Feryal Clark:** [\[1382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 25 April 2022 to Question 154467 on Primary Health Care, how much money has been allocated to (a) a national campaign to increase awareness of access routes to general practice services and (b) developing a campaign to promote the services of community pharmacy in 2022-23; and which companies were successful in those tenders.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The proposed budgets for national campaigns to raise awareness of access routes to general practitioner services and to encourage use of community pharmacy services for minor ailments have not yet been approved, so at present no funding has been allocated.

A competitive procurement process is currently underway to appoint the external agencies to work on all National Health Service campaigns in England.

**■ Prostate Cancer: Screening****Justin Madders:**[\[807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 16 December 2021 to Question 87714 on the roll out of the Galen technology by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to test for prostate cancer, when the findings of the trial by the Imperial College Healthcare, University College London, University Hospital of Coventry and Warwickshire, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital and University Hospitals Southampton will be published.

**Edward Argar:**

The trial is due to finish on 31 March 2023 and its findings will be published in due course following its completion.

**■ Streptococcus: Clinical Trials****Feryal Clark:**[\[1383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage hospitals to participate in the GBS3 clinical trial.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Department is working with the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), the NIHR's Clinical Research Network and NHS England and NHS Improvement to encourage trusts to participate in the trial and mitigate any challenges which might prevent trusts from doing so.

The Excess Treatment Cost (ETC) threshold, which forms part of the mechanism to fund non-commercial research in the National Health Service, has been cited as a barrier to participation by NHS organisations. Therefore from 1 April 2022, the organisational ETC threshold was lowered from 0.01% of operating budget to 0.001% to reduce the costs of undertaking research.

**■ Surgery: Waiting Lists****Rachael Maskell:**[\[849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the socioeconomic cost of untreated patients not participating in the national workforce.

**Gillian Keegan:**

No specific assessment has been made.

**Rachael Maskell:****[850]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the cost to the NHS of patients who receive more invasive procedures as a result of deteriorating health conditions while waiting for elective procedures.

**Edward Argar:**

No formal assessment has been made. The 'Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care' sets out how the National Health Service will recover and expand elective services over the next three years. It also includes targeted support for patients who are waiting for care by developing guidance to support local health systems. The plan commits clinicians to work with patients to ensure their planned care remains the best option.

Additionally the 'My Planned Care' website launched in February 2022 and allows patients to find the average waiting time at their local hospital for treatment. The platform will be expanded in the coming months to support patients on waiting lists.

**Rachael Maskell:****[851]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of how new technologies may be able to increase efficiency in the NHS for the purposes of tackling the elective backlog.

**Edward Argar:**

No formal assessment has been made. However, the Department is working with NHS England and NHS Improvement to support the National Health Service to reduce waiting lists, using innovative technologies where possible.

We have made £2 billion available to NHS providers through the Elective Recovery Fund and from 2022 to 2025, £8 billion has been committed to increase elective activity in England. A further £5.9 billion of capital funding will support elective recovery, diagnostics and technology.

**■ Veterans: LGBT+ People****Stephanie Peacock:****[1530]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the prevalence of PTSD amongst LGBTQ+ veterans compared to non LGBTQ+ veterans.

**Gillian Keegan:**

No specific assessment has been made as this information is not collected centrally.

Following the conclusion of the independent review into the impact of the pre-2000 ban of homosexual personnel in the military, we will consider its findings and assess whether any additional tailored support is needed for the LGBTQ+ community.

**HOME OFFICE****■ Abortion: Clinics****Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[2411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has plans to review the need to establish buffer zones around abortion clinics in England in the context of the Northern Ireland Assembly having voted to introduce such zones in Northern Ireland in March 2022 and the First Minister having committed to examine that matter in Scotland in May 2022.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[2412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of holding a summit on the introduction of buffer zones outside abortion clinics.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Home Office takes the matter of protesters outside abortion clinics extremely seriously and recognises the adverse impact that anti-abortion protests can have on patients and staff. We have conducted extensive reviews into these protests with the impact on women being at the centre of our consideration. We continue to welcome any new evidence on this important and sensitive issue, as we keep this matter under review.

We believe the police and local authorities have the necessary powers to provide appropriate local responses where there are harmful anti-abortion protests. Public Spaces Protection Orders have been implemented successfully to restrict harmful protests in Ealing, Richmond, and Manchester.

**■ Asylum: Finance****Helen Hayes:**[\[2592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how long asylum seekers who have been granted section 95 status currently have to wait to receive an Aspen card.

**Helen Hayes:**[\[2593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce the waiting time between asylum seekers being granted section 95 status and receiving an Aspen card.

**Kevin Foster:**

When an asylum seeker in full-board initial accommodation (where there is Migrant Help physical presence) has been granted section 95 status an Aspen card will be issued within 4-6 working days. Where individuals are in other accommodation locations they will be sent Aspen cards by Royal Mail post, once issued.

We have undertaken improvement work to reduce the waiting time by introducing twice weekly reporting and ensuring prompt data sharing with Migrant Help.

**■ Asylum: Housing****Tom Hunt:** [\[1347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact on residents of using town centre buildings to house asylum seekers.

**Kevin Foster:**

When procuring accommodation, our accommodation providers will consult on each new property to be procured, this provides Local Authorities with an opportunity to set out concerns about the impact on local services, regeneration schemes and anti-social behaviour.

**■ Asylum: Linton-on-Ouse****Kevin Hollinrake:** [\[2565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the compatibility of the proposed asylum processing site at Linton-on-Ouse with section 1.7 of the National Audit Office report entitled COMPASS contracts for the provision of accommodation for asylum seekers, published in 2014, which states that contractors are required to consider a range of social cohesion, housing and community factors alongside cost when proposing properties for dispersal accommodation for asylum seekers and the level of risk of increased social tension if the number of asylum seekers increases within a given area.

**Kevin Foster:**

The COMPASS contracts ended when the Asylum Accommodation and Support Services Contracts (AASC) were awarded in 2019. The Home Office's use of the of Linton-on-Ouse will be as an accommodation centre not dispersed accommodation.

**■ Asylum: Rwanda****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the cost of her plan for processing migrants and asylum seekers in Rwanda.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Under the Migration and Economic Development Partnership the UK is investing an initial £120 million into the economic development and growth of Rwanda.

Funding will also be provided to support the delivery of asylum operations, accommodation and integration. Every person's needs are different, but we anticipate the amount would be comparable to processing costs incurred in the UK. Funding is only provided while a person remains in Rwanda.

## ■ Biometric Residence Permits

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[2622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department taken to prepare for the transition from the Biometric Residence Permit after December 2024.

**Kevin Foster:**

We are developing a border and immigration system which is “digital-by-default”, which over time means we will increasingly replace physical and paper-based products and services such as biometric residence permits (BRPs) with accessible, easy to use online and digital services.

We have been rolling out eVisas since 2018, first with the EU Settlement Scheme and increasingly on other immigration routes, so the number of eVisa holders is continuing to rise.

We have also put in place the infrastructure to allow immigration status to be checked digitally, with simple online services for employers, landlords and other third parties, and system to system services which enable other Government departments and public authorities to access immigration status information automatically, without the individual having to share their status information. Such services currently include the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and NHS England and Wales, and we will continue to develop further services during 2022 and 2023.

The incremental rollout of eVisas has allowed us to improve our services based on user feedback and we continue to work to make our services as accessible as possible. We have also put in place support for those who experience issues or struggle to use digital services. The dedicated UKVI Resolution Centre (RC) can assist individuals to access their eVisa and use online services .

We are encouraging legacy immigration document holders to upgrade to a secure modern document. Since 6 April 2022, it has been free for those with [indefinite leave to enter or remain in the UK](#) to make an No Time Limit (NTL) application, which will provide them a BRP as a step towards moving to digital.

We will also develop an account registration service, allowing those who currently hold a BRP but no eVisa to register for an account and receive an eVisa, in advance of their BRP expiring. More guidance on this process and what action BRP holders need to take will be made available on gov.uk in due course.

We are planning further communications activity aimed at BRP holders and checkers, to tell them what they will need to do as we move to a digital by default in-country immigration system by the end of 2024. We will also endeavour to reach vulnerable citizens who are less digitally confident through collaboration with other Government departments and stakeholders.



**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[2624]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to ensure that people with Biometric Resident Permits are informed about the changes occurring to the BRP system post-December 2024.

**Kevin Foster:**

We tell people in the letter they receive with their biometric residence permit (BRP) about the transition from physical evidence of immigration status to online evidence of immigration status (eVisas) and the plan to phase out the use of physical documents before the end of 2024. We have also placed information on GOV.UK <https://www.gov.uk/biometric-residence-permits/report-problem>.

We also tell BRP holders to access the online checking service for right to work or right to rent purposes. The online service displays the expiry date of a person's leave.

**■ Burglary: Rural Areas****Helen Morgan:****[2729]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help increase the proportion of people who commit burglaries in rural parts of England being identified.

**Kit Malthouse:**

This Government recognises the devastating impact burglary has on communities and businesses. That is why we are recruiting 20,000 extra police officers and why we have introduced the Safer Streets Fund - which encompasses rural locations - to prevent these crimes from happening in the first place, supporting the deployment of solutions such as home security, increased street lighting and CCTV in high crime areas.

We have also taken measures to tackle reoffending, including the scheme electronically to monitor burglars and other neighbourhood crime offenders released on licence, and work driven by the Residential Burglary Taskforce includes encouraging forces to learn from each other and share best practice about effective investigations.

**■ Care Homes: Staff****Steve McCabe:****[1086]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department plans to take through visa and immigration policy to help tackle staff vacancies in the care home sector.

**Kevin Foster:**

We recognise the challenges the sector is currently experiencing in recruiting and retaining social care workers, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic and wider labour market dynamics yet Immigration should not be seen as the go to solution to these issues, rather than addressing wider issues in the sector. To support



local authorities and care providers address workforce pressures, the Government announced in our recent *People at the Heart of Care* White Paper we would invest at least £500 million to develop and support the workforce over the next three years, which we believe will boost the sector's ability to recruit and retain staff, as well as improve the recognition of our vital adult social care workforce.

The Government also put in place additional measures to support the sector last winter providing an additional £462.5m to boost recruitment and support existing care work through the winter until March 2022.

In addition, the introduction of the Health and Care visa in August 2020 made it quicker and cheaper for regulated health and care professionals to secure their visa to work in the Health and Care sector. A number of Health and Care occupations – such as care workers, senior care workers, nurses and auxiliary nurses and assistants – feature on the Shortage Occupation List (SOL).

On 27 April 2022 the independent Migration Advisory Committee published its report into the impacts of the ending of free movement on the adult social care sector. The MAC made a number of recommendations, spanning pay & conditions, workforce strategy and immigration policy. The Government thanks the MAC and is considering its position in relation to the issues raised.

#### ■ **Fraud: Russia**

**Tulip Siddiq:** [\[1253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of suspicious activity reports connected to Russian oligarchs received by the UK Financial Intelligence Unit since 24 February 2022 have been forwarded to law enforcement.

**Damian Hinds:**

The NCA does not target according to nationality.

#### ■ **Gender Recognition and Sexuality: Rwanda**

**Kate Osamor:** [\[1246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to paragraph 2.11.1 of her Department's publication of 11 May 2022 entitled Country policy and information note: Rwanda, assessment, May 2022, what the evidential basis is for the conclusion that the treatment of people in Rwanda based on their sexual orientation and gender identity or expression is not sufficiently serious to establish a systemic risk or to amount to persecution or serious harm.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The evidential basis for the assessment of the treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people in Rwanda is set out in section 9 of the 'Country policy and information note: Rwanda, general human rights'.

This was published alongside the 'Country policy and information: Rwanda, assessment' on 9 May and is available on the same GOV.UK page.

### ■ **Hate Crime: LGBT+ People**

**Alberto Costa:** [\[830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to encourage the reporting of LGBT+ hate crimes.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Increases in police recorded hate crime have been partly driven by general improvements in crime recording, better identification of what constitutes a hate crime by the police and increased victim willingness to come forward.

This is positive and reflects the hard work that has gone in to ensuring police can target their resources and understand the scale of the challenge, and that victims get the support they need.

The Government's new strategy for tackling hate crime will be published shortly. This strategy will set out steps to increase the reporting of all forms of hate crime – including hate crimes targeting sexual orientation or transgender identity – building on our achievements under the 2016-20 Hate Crime Action Plan.

### ■ **HM Passport Office: Standards**

**John McNally:** [\[821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what comparative assessment she has made of the efficiency of each HM Passport Office branch for processing passport applications and renewals; and what steps her Department is taking to improve efficiency in branches that are comparatively less efficient.

**Kevin Foster:**

Due to differences in some of the work undertaken at individual passport offices, such as more complex international work, productivity will vary at a local level. However, Her Majesty's Passport Office has a range of tried and tested arrangements in place to monitor performance at local and national level, which helps to ensure that there is no disparity in the handling of like-for-like cases across each site.

### ■ **Homes for Ukraine Scheme**

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[1117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure applications for Ukrainian citizens under the Homes for Ukraine scheme are grouped effectively to allow family members to enter the UK together.

**Kevin Foster:**

Where we have applications from family groups we would look to group these decisions together so families receive decisions wherever possible at the same time.

## ■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme: Children

**Anneliese Dodds:** [1320]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many unaccompanied under-18s have been granted visas under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

**Kevin Foster:**

Unaccompanied minors are only eligible under the Homes for Ukraine scheme if they are reuniting with a parent or legal guardian in the UK – this is outlined in the Immigration Rules.

Data on the number of people issued under Homes for Ukraine can be found on the GOV.UK webpage: [Ukraine Family Scheme and Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme \(Homes for Ukraine\) visa data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ukraine-family-scheme-and-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme)

**Dave Doogan:** [2331]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many unaccompanied 15 to 18-year-olds have applied for visas under the Homes for Ukraine scheme; and how many of those applications are currently pending.

**Dave Doogan:** [2332]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications to the Homes for Ukraine scheme by unaccompanied 15 to 18-year-olds have been successful; and how many applicants have been directly informed by her Department that their application has been unsuccessful.

**Kevin Foster:**

Unaccompanied minors are only eligible under the Homes for Ukraine scheme if they are reuniting with a parent or legal guardian in the UK – this is outlined in the Immigration Rules.

Data on the number of people issued under Homes for Ukraine can be found on the GOV.UK webpage: [Ukraine Family Scheme and Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme \(Homes for Ukraine\) visa data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ukraine-family-scheme-and-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme)

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**Stephen Morgan:** [1315]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she intends to respond to the correspondence from the Member for Portsmouth South of 25 October 2021 on the Angiolini Inquiry.

**Rachel Maclean:**

A response was sent by the Minister of State for Crime and Policing on 4 November 2021.

**■ MI5: Environment Protection****Kenny MacAskill:** [\[2658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to place in the Library the annual environmental sustainability reports made by MI5 for the years 2011 to 2021.

**Damian Hinds:**

It has been the policy of successive Governments neither to confirm nor deny matters relating to the activities of the security and intelligence services.

**■ Migrants: Hong Kong****Robert Jenrick:** [\[2497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an assessment of the threat of monitoring and surveillance to pro-democracy Hong Kong activists living in the UK.

**Damian Hinds:**

The Government regularly assesses potential threats to the UK, and takes the protection of individuals' rights, freedoms, and safety in the UK very seriously.

As you would expect, Home Office officials work closely with the FCDO and DLUHC as well as other government departments to ensure that the UK is a safe and welcoming place for people from Hong Kong.

**■ National Shipbuilding Office****Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[2392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether (a) she and (b) officials in her Department have met with the National Shipbuilding Office since the start of the 2022 calendar year.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office continues to work closely with the National Shipbuilding Office (NSO) and other government departments on the procurement of new Border Force vessels as referenced within the National Shipbuilding Strategy. Home Office Ministers attend the strategy's Inter-Ministerial Group on Shipbuilding supported by Home Office officials attending wider bilateral events. The NSO are similarly represented on the programme's governance which further supports close ongoing engagement.

**■ Passports: Applications****Thangam Debbonaire:** [\[1202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assistance her Department provides to people seeking a fast track passport appointment but who are unable to book a slot.

**Kevin Foster:**

Appointments for urgent services are released three weeks in advance. While this means new appointments are released on a daily basis at each of the seven public counters, in busy periods these will be booked quickly.

Her Majesty's Passport Office therefore continues to explore options to increase appointment capacity to further support its customers with urgent travel needs.

**Stephen Morgan:**[\[1307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate she has made of the number of cases in progress being handled by Her Majesty's Passport Office as of 12 May 2022.

**Kevin Foster:**

Since April 2021, people have been advised to allow up to ten weeks when applying for their British passport as more than 5 million people delayed applying due to the pandemic. The vast majority of all passport applications continue to be dealt with well within 10 weeks.

HM Passport Office has increased its staffing numbers by 500 since April 2021 and is in the process of recruiting a further 700. This has helped to ensure that passport applications continue to be processed in higher numbers than ever before. Across March and April 2022, HM Passport Office completed the processing of two million applications.

**Kevin Brennan:**[\[2385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to improve the time taken to process passport applications for (a) immigrants and (b) refugees not related to schemes for Ukrainian refugees.

**Kevin Foster:**

British passports are issued to British nationals only.

Should any person become a British citizen through naturalisation or registration, they should apply for a British passport in the usual way. All applicants in the UK using the standard service are currently advised to allow up to ten weeks to get their passport.

**Daisy Cooper:**[\[966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many appointments have been made available each week between February and May 2022 by Her Majesty's Passport Office for (a) fast track and (b) premium services to renew a British passport.

**Kevin Foster:**

Historic information about the number of appointments made available by Her Majesty's Passport Office for its urgent services is not held. However, all appointments are made available to be booked from GOV.UK. The table below shows the number of urgent service appointments booked each week between the weeks ending 6 February and 8 May 2022:

<b>APPOINTMENTS</b>	<b>SERVICE LEVEL</b>		
<b>Week Ending</b>	<b>Digital Premium</b>	<b>Fast Track</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
06/02/2022	3,232	7,691	10,923
13/02/2022	3,343	8,481	11,824
20/02/2022	3,243	8,006	11,249
27/02/2022	3,302	8,238	11,540
06/03/2022	3,661	8,344	12,005
13/03/2022	3,574	8,965	12,539
20/03/2022	4,069	10,535	14,604
27/03/2022	4,451	11,984	16,435
03/04/2022	4,581	13,167	17,748
10/04/2022	4,588	12,473	17,061
17/04/2022	3,652	10,900	14,552
24/04/2022	3,235	9,391	12,626
01/05/2022	4,303	11,968	16,271
08/05/2022	3,834	11,711	15,545
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>53,068</b>	<b>141,854</b>	<b>194,922</b>

### ■ Refugees: Afghanistan

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[2481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan nationals relocated to the UK via (a) the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and (b) Operation Pitting have been granted indefinite leave to remain as of 16 May 2022.

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[2482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan nationals relocated to the UK through (a) the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and (b) Operation Pitting are waiting to be granted indefinite leave to remain as of 16 May 2022.

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[2483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan nationals relocated to the UK via (a) the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and (b)

Operation Pitting with 6 months remain to leave have seen their status expire and are waiting to be granted indefinite leave to remain as of 16 May 2022.

**Kevin Foster:**

Over 15,000 people were supported to come to the UK directly following the evacuation of Afghanistan, with a further 3,000 having arrived since.

Following the evacuation from Afghanistan over the summer, work is underway to ensure information relating to all the individuals relocated under both schemes are recorded on case working systems. Once this work concludes, statistics on ACRS and ARAP will be included in future editions of the Immigration Statistics.

■ **Refugees: Rwanda**

**Alison Thewliss:**

[\[1200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help ensure that people living with HIV who are removed to Rwanda will have (a) access to the same standard of care, including medical treatment, (b) protections against stigma and (c) rights to confidentiality that they would have been entitled to in the UK.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Everyone considered for relocations will be screened and have access to legal advice. Decisions will be taken on a case-by-case basis, and nobody will be removed if it is unsafe or inappropriate for them, including in relation to an individual's specific medical needs.

Under the Memorandum of Understanding governing the Migration and Economic Development Partnership, the Government of Rwanda has committed to ensuring support is provided to ensure the health, security and wellbeing of relocated individuals.

Rwanda's constitution includes a broad prohibition on discrimination.

**Kate Osamor:**

[\[1245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that LGBTQ+ refugees relocated to Rwanda do not face discrimination and intolerance in that country.

**Kevin Foster:**

Rwanda is a safe and secure country with respect for the rule of law. Rwanda's constitution includes a broad prohibition on discrimination. We have carried out a robust assessment of the country which demonstrates our commitment to fully evaluating whether Rwanda would be suitable for each potentially eligible person to be relocated. Relocation decisions will be taken on a case by case basis and nobody will be relocated if it is unsafe or inappropriate for them.

We would only ever work with countries that we know are safe and will treat asylum seekers in accordance with relevant international human rights laws.

**■ Sexual Harassment: Public Places****John McDonnell:** [\[1473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the viability of bringing forward a public sexual harassment bill.

**Rachel Maclean:**

This Government is committed to taking action to address this issue, that is why in March we announced we will launch a public consultation by the summer recess on whether there should be a new offence of public sexual harassment.

We are also taking several non-legislative actions to address this issue. In September 2021 we launched the pilot of the new StreetSafe tool, which allows people to show on a map places where they have felt unsafe, enabling the police to take action to improve safety. More than 15,000 reports have been submitted to date.

Last December, the College of Policing published new guidance for police showing what they can do when they receive a report of public sexual harassment, including the criminal offences available and other protective tools which can be used.

Furthermore, the Home Office launched the 'Enough' communications campaign in March, which challenges public attitudes and tolerance towards crimes such as public sexual harassment and aims to ensure victims know how and where to report it.

**■ UK Border Force: Patrol Craft****Emily Thornberry:** [\[2421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the combined value is of contracts awarded by her Department in 2022-23 for repair work designed to ensure that (a) HMC Valiant and (b) CPV Active are able to meet Border Force's operational demands for the next five years.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[2422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to tender contracts during 2022-23 for repair work designed to ensure that Her Majesty's Cutters (a) Searcher, (b) Seeker, (c) Sentinel and (d) Vigilant are able to meet the Border Force's operational demands for the next five years.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[2423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to tender contracts during 2022-23 for repair work designed to ensure that coastal patrol vessels (a) Alert, (b) Eagle, (c) Hunter, (d) Nimrod and (e) Speedwell are able to meet Border Force's operational demands for the next five years.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[2424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to tender a contract for the replacement of the Border Force's existing fleet of five cutters; and when the five replacement cutters are expected to become operational.



**Emily Thornberry:**[\[2425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her department intends to tender a contract for the replacement of the Border Force's existing fleet of six Coastal Patrol Vessels; and when she expects the six replacement vessels will be operational.

**Emily Thornberry:**[\[2426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether Border Force's new fleet of five cutters and six coastal patrol vessels will serve alongside the existing fleet of cutters and coastal patrol vessels for a period of time; how long she estimates that period of time to last; and when she expects it to occur.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The key next step for the procurement will be the release of a Prior Information Notice (PIN) to commence market engagement. That will enable the development of the commercial and procurement strategies and of estimated timelines for letting a contract. It will also give a good sense of the supplier market hence likely delivery options, challenges, schedules, and operational in-service dates.

The intention is that the new vessels will replace the existing fleet on a one-for-one basis. Specifics of the transition, and associated commissioning and decommissioning activity, will be carefully managed to minimise any risk to operational activity.

This will enable Border Force to continue to tackle key maritime law enforcement and border security priorities.

Any future deployment of maritime capability will be flexible and responsive and will form part of a layered approach to coastal security and law enforcement, ensuring we have an effective capability, which works in partnership with other organisations to respond to current and future threats.

All assets are currently positioned in UK waters and are constantly deployed to protect the UK border as and when needed.

[ 2422 ] Border Force conduct a systematic approach to maintenance and repairs to our fleet of five (5) cutters every year and will continue to do so.

NB: HMC Sentinel has been retired.

[2423] Border Force conduct a systematic approach to maintenance and repairs to our fleet of six (6) coastal patrol vessels every year and will continue to do so.

[2421] Annual maintenance to CPV Active has been awarded to a SME supplier in the North West for £58,920.96.

A procurement to acquire the services for a Ships Life Extension Programme (SLEP) to HMC Valiant is currently being undertaken. Therefore, at the time of this question being asked an accurate response to the value of annual maintenance is not provided as the competition has not concluded.

**■ UK Visas and Immigration: Staff****Steve McCabe:** [\[593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will consider increasing the number of caseworker staff the UKVI has redeployed to process Ukrainian visa applications.

**Kevin Foster:**

We are committed to ensuring our operational teams have the resources they need to run an efficient and effective system, and we actively monitor workflows to ensure sufficient resources are in place to meet demand.

Over 500 staff are supporting our Ukrainian work. Improvements including a simplified application form and casework system enhancements have sped up decision-making and improved the system, while ensuring vital security checks are carried out.

**■ UK Visas and Immigration: Telephone Services****Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[1118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time is for telephone calls made from 1 May 2022 to the dedicated advice line for hon. Members for UK Visas & Immigration.

**Kevin Foster:**

We recognise that during peak periods waiting times can be considerably longer than that. This is due to an increase in call demand since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis.

As a result of the increased demand the Department has more than doubled the number of staff operating the helpline. MPs can also contact the Home Office via the MPs Urgent Enquiries inbox or in person at the Portcullis House walk-in hub.

**Justin Madders:** [\[1194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time on the MP UK Visas and Immigration helpline was in April 2022.

**Kevin Foster:**

We recognise during peak periods waiting times can be considerably longer than that due to an increase in call demand since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis.

As a result of the increased demand the Department has more than doubled the number of staff operating the helpline. MPs also have the ability to contact the Home Office via the MPs Urgent Enquiries inbox or in person at the Portcullis House walk-in hub.

## ■ Visas: Ukraine

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[1116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure travel permission permits for Ukraine citizens are issued prior to the issuing of visas.

**Kevin Foster:**

The process for issuing visas and permission to travel letters is different and distinct.

A visa is issued after the applicant has applied online and gone to their local visa application centre to submit their biometrics.

Permission to travel letters are issued for applicants who have a valid Ukrainian passport who can apply online to come to the UK from wherever they are and they then give their biometrics once in Britain.

Both visas and permissions to travel letter cannot be issued until after a decision has been made on a customer's application.

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the number of UK residents who applied to host Ukrainian refugees under the family visa route and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme; and if duplicate visas have been issued.

**Kevin Foster:**

Applicants are encouraged to apply under the scheme that matches their circumstances.

If an application under one scheme is not granted, an application under the alternative scheme may be considered, or a re-application under the same scheme. An application to the Homes For Ukraine scheme cannot be made by an individual who is already in the UK and so a person in the UK cannot switch between the different schemes.

## ■ Windrush Compensation Scheme

**Kate Osamor:**

[\[1247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason payments to Windrush Compensation Scheme claimants are delayed in the event that a review of a decision under that scheme is requested.

**Kate Osamor:**

[\[1248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Windrush Compensation Scheme claimants have requested a review of a decision under that scheme; and how many of those have received a decision from the adjudicator as of 12 May 2022.

**Kevin Foster:**

In response to UIN: 1247

A Preliminary Payment of £10,000 will be made as soon as a claimant can demonstrate an Impact on Life under the terms of the Scheme. In addition, the Urgent and Exceptional Payments Policy is still available and allows for urgent financial support to be paid in advance of a full compensation payment.

Entitlement to a full award under the Windrush Compensation Scheme arises when the customer provides written confirmation they accept a determination in full. If a review is requested on part of the award offered, the whole claim must progress to review.

In response to UIN:1248

The Home Office publishes Windrush Compensation Scheme Data monthly, including for Tier one reviews which are completed by a Home Office Senior Reviewer and Tier two reviews which are completed by the Independent Adjudicator's Office. Published data is available to the end of March 2022, [Migration transparency data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data) Windrush Compensation Scheme data: March 2022 refers.

The data covering the period ended 14 April 2022 and 12 May 2022 has not yet been published.

**HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION****■ All Party Parliamentary Groups: Finance**

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

**[1243]**

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what steps the Commission is taking to ensure that all-party Parliamentary groups disclose their financial accounts on request in the event that those accounts are not publicly available online.

**Sir Charles Walker:**

An APPG which has received over £12,500 from outside Parliament, in money or in kind, in its reporting year is required to complete an income and expenditure statement (paragraph 28 of the APPG Rules). That income and expenditure statement must be either published on the APPG's website or provided on request (paragraph 21 of the APPG Rules).

The Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards (OPCS) does not actively monitor APPGs' compliance with this requirement. However, the OPCS will investigate any complaints made about the non-disclosure of income and expenditure statements.

## ■ Palace of Westminster: Repairs and Maintenance

**Andrea Leadsom:**

[\[2476\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission will make a statement on the new short-term task brief agreed by the Restoration and Renewal Sponsor Body and Delivery Authority; and what steps have been agreed to be taken in order to prepare for the future transition of the programme to a new operating framework.

**Sir Charles Walker:**

Under the Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration and Renewal) Act 2019, it is for the Parliamentary Works Sponsor Body to task the Delivery Authority.

Following the meetings of the two Houses' Commissions in February, the Sponsor Body provided the Delivery Authority with new instructions in the form of a Task Brief which embodies the relevant decisions of the Commissions. The Task Brief addressed: stopping or completing activities that were no longer relevant; continuing activities that would be relevant for any future programme of works; and continuing necessary corporate functions.

The Delivery Authority continues to undertake or has commenced other work including essential surveys and gathering of information about the condition of the Palace.

Work is continuing, at the direction of the Commissions, on preparing for changes to the Restoration and Renewal Programme. As noted in the Commissions' joint statement of 18 March 2022, an independent panel of experts has been convened at the request of the Commissions to provide advice on changes to the sponsorship function and assurance on a new approach to the works. The panel's work will inform the Commissions' deliberations and the recommendations which they will propose to the two Houses on a revised mandate for the works and changes to the sponsorship function. This is currently planned to take place before the summer recess. Any changes will ultimately be a matter for the two Houses.

An R&R transition programme which brings together officials from the two Houses, the Sponsor Body and the Delivery Authority has been established to support the Commissions in their work.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### ■ Developing Countries: Food Supply

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[1231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she (a) has had and (b) plans to have with the WTO on food security in developing countries.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

Food insecurity in developing countries caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a critical global issue. The UK-led action at the World Trade Organization (WTO) committed members to ensuring open and predictable trade and the continued free flow of food. This action has now been endorsed by fifty-four other members. We have placed priority on guaranteeing that the World Food Programme is unhindered by export restrictions, allowing it to best use its funding. We aim to build on this at the WTO's 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference in June, urging Members to create a more sustainable, efficient and resilient global food system.

**JUSTICE****■ Fraud: Remand in Custody**

**Steve Reed:** [2487]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of defendants in fraud cases held on remand in each year since 2017.

**Steve Reed:** [2489]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of defendants in cases involving drug offences that are held on remand in each police force area in each year since 2019.

**Steve Reed:** [2491]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of defendants in cases involving burglary that are held on remand in each police force area in each year since 2019.

**James Cartlidge:**

The Ministry of Justice has published information on defendants' remand status in the 'Remands: Magistrates' Court' and 'Remands: Crown Court' data tools, up to December 2020. Available at:

- [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1063882/remands-magistrates-court-tool-2020-revised.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1063882/remands-magistrates-court-tool-2020-revised.xlsx)
- [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1063884/remands-crown-court-tool-2020-revised.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1063884/remands-crown-court-tool-2020-revised.xlsx)

\*To avoid double counting defendants dealt with at Crown Court, in the remands magistrates court tool, deselect outcomes '06: Sent to Crown Court for trial' and '07: Committed to Crown Court for sentencing' in the 'Outcome' filter.

## ■ Fraud: Reoffenders

**Steve Reed:** [\[2488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of subsequent offences committed by defendants on bail while awaiting trial for fraud in each police force area in each year since 2019.

**Steve Reed:** [\[2490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of subsequent offences committed by defendants on bail while awaiting trial for drug offences in each police force area in each year since 2019.

**James Cartlidge:**

This data requires linking Police National Computer data with courts data as well as a manual search, and would therefore be of disproportionate costs.

## ■ Prisoners: Learning Disability

**Tom Hunt:** [\[1348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what cost-benefit analysis his Department has conducted on screening all prisoners for learning disabilities.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Screening for Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD) is delivered in prisons by contractors. The number of assessments carried out increased during the pandemic with more learners being supported.

As part of the MoJ's Action Plan response to the Justice inspectorate's review of Neurodiversity in the Criminal Justice System, the Cross Government Neurodiversity Working Group will consider current screening tool use, including assessing practicality, affordability and value for money. To help improve support for neurodivergent people, a new role of lead for neurodiversity is also being introduced in the Accelerator prisons with the view to expanding the role across the estate.

We have recently commissioned external research to evaluate current provision and are awaiting the findings. Our response to the recommendations from the recently published HMIP/OFSTED report, 'Prison education: a review of reading education in prisons' will include a review of all initial assessments taking place within custody.

## LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

### ■ British Nationals Abroad: Hong Kong

**Robert Jenrick:** [\[2498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department will take steps to ensure that Government funding of Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise groups assisting with the integration of British National (Overseas)



arrivals is not allocated to any organisation which has endorsed the National Security Law in Hong Kong.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) assesses the appropriateness and suitability of all potential grant funding recipients, and their ability to deliver the support required as part of HMG's BN(O) Welcome Programme. This Programme reflects the UK's historic and moral commitment to the people of Hong Kong who chose to retain their ties to the UK by taking up BN(O) status at the point of Hong Kong's handover to China in 1997.

In deciding whether to make a grant award to any organisation through the Hong Kong BN(O) Welcome Programme, a robust due diligence process is undertaken.

■ **Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission**

**Adam Afriye:**

[\[682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what progress the Government is making on the implementation of the recommendations of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission.

**Stuart Andrew:**

Government has taken steps to embed beauty, design and placemaking in the planning system in response to the recommendations of the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission. This includes revisions to national planning policy and guidance. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill also requires locally developed design codes, which set clear rules about what development must look like. The Office for Place will support communities in turning their visions of beautiful design into a reality.

■ **Community Relations: Platinum Jubilee 2022**

**Tom Hunt:**

[\[1342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee on levels of community engagement.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

A national programme of events and celebration is planned around the momentous occasion of Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. While London provides the backdrop to celebrations including the Trooping of the Colour, the Service of Thanksgiving at St. Paul's Cathedral, the Platinum Party at the Palace, and the Platinum Jubilee Pageant, community activity is planned right across the United Kingdom. Events include street parties, the lighting of beacons and pageants, with communities coming together to enjoy a weekend of celebrations.

My department are working closely with colleagues in DCMS to map community engagement and activity across the United Kingdom. To date there are over 200,000 local celebration events planned, including 70,000 big Jubilee lunches organised by

local communities, with 4,000 events promoted on the Platinum Jubilee event map <https://platinumjubilee.gov.uk/events/>. We continue to communicate with local councils to encourage their continued involvement and support of the upcoming celebrations.

## ■ **Conveyancing: Fees and Charges**

**Zarah Sultana:**

**[2328]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department plans to regulate the payment of referral fees to estate agents for referring customers to particular conveyancing services and the passing on of the cost of those fees to customers.

**Eddie Hughes:**

The Government is clear that fees charged by conveyancers, estate agents and other property professionals should be determined by the market. However, where agents receive a referral fee for recommending services to their clients, these fees must be fully disclosed to clients before they make any decision to purchase. In February 2019, the National Trading Standards Estate and Letting Agents Team (NTSELAT) published guidance for estate agents which makes it clear they must disclose referral fees. We asked NTSELAT to monitor compliance and in February 2020 they reported that the majority of agents do disclose these fees. NTSELAT will continue to monitor compliance, and we will continue to keep the case for legislation under review.

## ■ **Elections: Proof of Identity**

**Emma Hardy:**

**[1299]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether voter identification issued by a local authority will be valid to permit the holder to vote in a different Local Authority area if they change residence.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Voter Cards issued by local authorities will be accepted as identification at any polling station in Great Britain.

**Emma Hardy:**

**[1300]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what is the minimum period of time between the date Local Authority issued voter ID becomes available and the date of an election where voter ID will be required.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Elections Act does not set out a minimum required period of time that Voter Cards must be available ahead of an election in which they are to be used. However, the Government will ensure that Voter Cards are made available sufficiently far in advance that electors can apply for them in a timely way - everyone who is eligible to vote will continue to have the opportunity to do so.

**Emma Hardy:** [\[1301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department has taken to help enable local authorities to issue valid voter identification to electors with no fixed address.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

We are currently working with charities and civil service society organisations across the UK to ensure the voter identification works for all voters, and all groups are aware of the new requirements. As for registration as an elector, an elector will not require a fixed address to apply for a Voter Card and will be able to apply for and collect their Card in person. Attestation will be possible when applying for a Voter Card, should an elector be unable to provide the necessary documents.

**■ First Time Buyers****Lisa Nandy:** [\[2467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to support first time buyers onto the housing ladder.

**Stuart Andrew:**

We committed in the Levelling Up White Paper to supporting more first-time buyers onto the housing ladder. Since 2010, over 774,000 households have been helped to purchase a home through Government-backed schemes including Help to Buy and Right to Buy. We support first-time buyers through a number of ways, including the First Homes scheme which was launched on 4 June 2021, providing homes discounted by at least 30% for first-time buyers, prioritised for local people and key workers.

**■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme: Proof of Identity****Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[1119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Homes for Ukraine scheme, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of adding (a) birth certificates and (b) other forms of identification to the list of acceptable documents for the purposes of proof of identity for sponsors.

**Eddie Hughes:**

Sponsors are subject to identification checks and we have published the list of acceptable documents at: [www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-sponsor-guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-sponsor-guidance). These documents require a photo identification for the purposes of identity and security checks.

## ■ Housing: Planning Permission

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[2552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, at what stage in the planning process the tenure of new housing is agreed; and whether the tenure of new residential housing can be agreed after outline planning has been granted.

**Stuart Andrew:**

Local planning authorities should use their local plans to set out the expected level of tenure mix for affordable housing developments in their area. The type and tenure of residential dwellings for new development should be submitted as part of the planning application process in line with national and locally-set policies. This includes for applications for outline planning permission. Applicants are however encouraged to engage with the local planning authority at pre-application stage to identify and agree the appropriate housing mix for development to best reflect the local need.

## ■ Housing: Sales

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[1359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to take steps to help buyers with modest deposits and a mortgage offer reasonably compete with investors and cash buyers that may offer significantly more than the asking price in bidding contests for residential properties.

**Stuart Andrew:**

As set out in our Levelling Up White Paper, this Government is committed to giving everyone the opportunity to flourish. We will ensure home ownership is within the reach of many more people.

The Government is committed to increase first-time buyer numbers in all regions, and will do so by looking at all of the factors that influence ownership levels, including housing supply and the availability of low deposit mortgages. We will also explore further options to limit the competition first-time buyers face. This means looking at all of the options available to government to limit the factors which are pricing out local people, seeking to learn from international comparators.

This Government runs a range of schemes to help people into home ownership such as First Homes, mortgage guarantee scheme, Help to Buy: Equity Loan, Shared Ownership and Lifetime ISA.

## ■ Housing: Water

**Jane Hunt:**

[\[1385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of requiring all new build domestic properties to be fitted with rainwater harvesting tanks.

**Stuart Andrew:**

Following DEFRA's consultation 'measures to reduce personal water consumption', Government made a commitment to develop a roadmap towards greater water efficiency in new developments and retrofits, including the exploration of revised building regulations and how the development of new technologies can contribute to meeting these standards. We will ensure that the underlying legislation can, where appropriate, accommodate any potential future expansion of rainwater harvesting, water re-use and storage options. The full written ministerial statement by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs can be found here: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-07-01/hcws140>

**Leasehold****Catherine West:****[1261]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Act 2022, from what date leaseholders will be allowed to extend their lease or buy their freehold.

**Eddie Hughes:**

Under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 (as amended) and the Leasehold Reform Housing and Urban Development Act 1993, leaseholders have statutory rights to extend their lease and/or buy their freehold. The Government remains committed to transforming the experience of leaseholders by making it easier and cheaper for them to extend their lease and/or buy their freehold.

We announced last year that the length of a statutory lease extension will increase to 990 years, from 90 years (for flats) and 50 years (for houses). Leaseholders will be able to extend their lease with zero ground rent on payment of a premium. We will also reform the process of valuation that leaseholders must follow to calculate the cost of extending their lease and/or buying their freehold. Our reforms will result in substantial savings for some leaseholders, particularly those with fewer than 80 years left on their lease.

The Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Act 2022, which comes into force on 30 June 2022, will make homeownership fairer and more transparent for thousands of future leaseholders, by preventing landlords under new residential long leases from requiring a leaseholder to pay a financial ground rent. This is the first part of major two-part legislation to implement leasehold and commonhold reforms in this Parliament.

**Local Government: Debt Collection****Justin Madders:****[799]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the guidance issued by his

Department in August 2021 entitled Council tax collection: best practice guidance for local authorities, to other debt collection services local authorities carry out.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government keeps all guidance under review. Councils will wish to ensure that their collection and enforcement processes follow best practice, are proportionate, and enable the most effective way of recovering outstanding debt.

■ **Local Plans: Energy**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[2554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring Local Plans to make provision for local energy generation.

**Stuart Andrew:**

The Government has made clear in national planning policy that strategic policies in Local Plans should make sufficient provision for energy infrastructure (including heat). In particular, the planning system should support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure and plans should provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, and identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy systems.

The Government's recent 'British Energy Security Strategy' sets out a series of changes to the planning system to support the delivery of renewable energy infrastructure. This included a commitment to cut the time it takes for offshore wind projects to get planning and regulatory consents. For onshore wind, we will consult this year on developing local partnerships for supportive communities who wish to host new onshore wind infrastructure in return for benefits, including lower energy bills. We will also consult on amending planning rules to strengthen policy in favour of solar development, while ensuring communities continue to have a say and environmental protections remain in place. As part of this we will gather evidence on the use and suitability of the existing permitted development rights which allow for the installation of solar equipment.

■ **Multiple Occupation: Licensing**

**Justin Madders:**

[\[803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of legislation on the licencing of houses of multiple occupation.

**Eddie Hughes:**

All local authorities are required to license Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in which five or more people from two or more households share facilities. Through additional licensing, local authorities also have the power to require HMOs to be licensed where there are three or more unrelated people sharing facilities.

Although there has been no formal assessment of legislation on licensing HMOs, the Government has undertaken an assessment of selective licensing which found that, when implemented well and part of a coordinated enforcement strategy, selective licensing is an effective tool for tackling the issues it is focused on address.

## ■ **Park Homes: Fees and Charges**

**Sir Gavin Williamson:** [\[747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department plans to introduce legislation to change the park homes pitch fee review inflationary index to the Consumer Prices Index during this session.

**Eddie Hughes:**

The Government remains committed to improving protections for park home residents and this includes changing the pitch fee review inflationary index from the Retail Prices Index (RPI) to the Consumer Prices Index (CPI). We will introduce the required legislation when the parliamentary timetable allows.

## ■ **Planning**

**Sir Gavin Williamson:** [\[748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department will amend the Duty to co-operate to state that a council's contribution to meeting another council's employment need, or other development needs, affects an authority's contribution to housing need or vice versa.

**Stuart Andrew:**

Through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill we are abolishing the Duty to Cooperate. The Duty has not achieved the level of co-operation that was intended and has become something of a bureaucratic exercise which, as a rigid legal test, has resulted in around 20 local plans failing at examination.

Instead, we will introduce a more flexible policy based requirement for local planning authorities to work together on local plans, through an updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The details of the new NPPF will be developed as the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill progresses through Parliament and will be consulted upon.

## ■ **Refugees: Ukraine**

**Mr Clive Betts:** [\[2351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what exact questions his Department asked local authorities in relation to additional homelessness pressures arising from Ukrainian individuals and households entering the country through either the Family Scheme visa or Homes for Ukraine sponsorship routes; and when he will publish the data that local authorities have provided in relation to those questions.



**Eddie Hughes:**

We will publish data and associated questions in due course.

**■ Second Homes: Council Tax****Rachael Maskell:**[\[2551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department plans to (a) make all second homes eligible for increases in Council Tax or (b) introduce a cap on the number of days a second home must be occupied before becoming eligible.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill includes powers to enable billing authorities to apply a discretionary council tax premium of up to 100% on second homes. The decision on whether to apply a premium, and the level, will be a matter for each billing authority. The Bill does not contain any cap in relation to the number of days a second home must be occupied before becoming liable for a council tax second homes premium.

**■ Social Rented Housing: Construction****Lisa Nandy:**[\[2468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to increase the number of social homes being built each year.

**Stuart Andrew:**

The provision of affordable housing is a key element of the Government's plan to end the housing crisis, tackle homelessness and provide aspiring homeowners with a step onto the housing ladder.

Our £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) will provide up to 180,000 new homes across the country, should economic conditions allow.

Around half the homes will be for affordable and social rent and we will deliver more than double the amount of social rent compared to the previous programme, with around 32,000 social rent homes due to be delivered.

**■ Temporary Accommodation****Navendu Mishra:**[\[995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what additional steps he plans to take to support local authorities in reducing the number of families living in temporary accommodation.

**Eddie Hughes:**

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.



For 2022/2023, local authorities have been allocated £316 million through the Homelessness Prevention Grant. This funding was provided to local authorities in April and will allow local authorities to offer financial support for people and families to find a new home, to work with landlords to prevent evictions, or to provide temporary accommodation to ensure families have a roof over their head. It includes £5.8 million funding to cover the cost of extending priority need to those who are made homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse, following the landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The funding continues to support local authorities to fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act so that more people get help sooner to prevent homelessness.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### ■ **Abortion: Northern Ireland**

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[2409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps he plans to take to ensure fully-funded and commissioned abortion services are made available to women in Northern Ireland as soon as possible following the Northern Ireland Assembly election; and what his planned timetable is for taking those steps.

**Brandon Lewis:**

Today I have laid Regulations to ensure abortion services are commissioned for women and girls in Northern Ireland. I have made a Written Statement in Parliament to set out the details of those regulations.

These regulations mean that the Northern Ireland Department of Health will have no further barriers to commission and fund these services, and if it does not do so as directed, the Government will then move to intervene further.

### ■ **Genito-urinary Medicine: Northern Ireland**

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[2410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Health Secretary on matters relating to the sexual and reproductive healthcare workforce in Northern Ireland.

**Brandon Lewis:**

My Ministerial team, my officials and I have had a number of discussions with the Northern Ireland Minister of Health and his department on these matters.

This week we have again discussed the matter of providing abortion services in Northern Ireland in advance of laying Regulations to ensure these services are provided.

The Written Statement I have made in Parliament today sets out the details of those Regulations and makes clear the intent of the Government to intervene further if the

Northern Ireland Department of Health does not commission and fund abortion services as directed.

#### ■ **Local Government: Elections**

**Stephen Farry:**

**[1011]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether candidates in future local government elections in Northern Ireland have to have their home addresses published.

**Conor Burns:**

Candidates in future local government elections in Northern Ireland will not be required to have their home addresses published.

The Local Elections (Northern Ireland) Amendment Order 2020 amended the law in June of that year. Now, candidates for local elections in Northern Ireland who do not want their home address to be made public can instead request the publication of the local government area they reside in.

## TRANSPORT

#### ■ **Bus Services: Staffordshire**

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

**[750]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what additional support his Department has provided to Staffordshire County Council to help run continued rural bus services.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Government has provided over £2bn of support for local transport networks to date through emergency and recovery grants to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic.

The Government has announced a further £150m in funding for local transport providers to continue supporting the sector following the Covid-19 pandemic from April until October 2022. A condition of this new funding is that both Local Transport Authorities and operators must work together to ensure that effective and financially sustainable networks which cater for the needs of the local public are implemented once recovery funding ends. As part of this, £355,014 has been allocated to Staffordshire County Council to support local bus services, in addition to the funding provided to bus operators directly.

The Department has also provided a Rural Mobility Fund (RMF) worth £20 million to trial more demand responsive services and have awarded funding to 17 pilot projects. Staffordshire County Council was awarded £1,038,091 to pilot demand responsive transport services in the Staffordshire Moorlands.

## ■ DP World and P&O Ferries: Contracts

**Angela Rayner:**

[R] [\[2501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Answer of 26 April 2022 to Question 157377 on DP World and P&O Ferries: Contracts, how many such contracts have been (a) identified, (b) reviewed and (c) disclosed to date.

**Robert Courts:**

Our review indicates that P&O Ferries and DP World are not currently providing any direct services to HM Government. We will provide a further update on this in due course.

## ■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Standards

**Justin Madders:**

[\[1192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Answer of 22 April 2022 to Question 154083 on Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Standards, if he will publish the data used to conclude that (a) there are no delays in successful online applications, (b) the backlog of vehicles paper applications has been eliminated and (c) straightforward vocational driving licence applications and renewals are being processed within five working days with no backlog.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)'s online services are the quickest and easiest way to make an application. The average time taken to process successful online applications between April 2021 and March 2022 was two working days.

All vehicles-related paper applications are now being processed within normal turnaround times.

The DVLA focused extra resource on vocational driving licence applications and cleared more than 55,000 applications in a matter of weeks at the height of the driver shortage. Routine applications for vocational driving licences are being processed within normal turnaround times of five working days. Applications where a medical condition must be investigated will take longer.

## ■ Electric Scooters

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[1212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to include provisions permitting the full use of e-scooters including identification of vehicles in the Transport Bill announced in the Queen's Speech 2022.

**Trudy Harrison:**

It is the Department's intention that the Transport Bill will create a low speed, zero emission vehicle category that is independent from the cycle and motor vehicle categories. New powers, to be set out in the Bill, would subsequently allow the Government to create regulations that will legalise e-scooters, but under new rules.

These rules will include robust technical requirements and, most likely, a set of requirements for users.

The Bill will also propose new powers for local transport authorities to shape and manage rental operations, for pedal cycles, e-cycles, and e-scooters. The intention is to create a safer, clearer, and more adaptable framework for micromobility in the long term. The Government will consult on any new regulations before they are introduced.

E-scooter trials are currently live in 30 areas across England and will continue to run until 30 November 2022. Privately-owned e-scooters remain illegal to use on the road, cycle lanes or pavements, and enforcement of this is a matter for the police.

## ■ Great British Railways

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[900121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress his Department has made on establishing a headquarters for Great British Railways.

**Wendy Morton:**

The shortlist of towns and cities for the Great British Railways headquarters will be announced shortly – after which a public vote will be held to help determine the winner.

## ■ Motorcycles: Driving Instruction

**Sir Mike Penning:** [\[1123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether there has been an increase or decrease in the number of crashes during the motorcycle rider test since the introduction of the new testing regime in April 2009.

**Sir Mike Penning:** [\[1125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if there has been an (a) increase or (b) decrease in the time and cost to the user to complete the motorcycle test since the introduction of the new testing regime in April 2009.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) holds data on the number of accidents and near misses during the motorcycle test for four years. Therefore, it is not possible to determine if there has been an increase or decrease in the number of crashes during the motorcycle rider test since the introduction of the new testing regime in April 2009.

The DVSA is not aware of any analysis regarding the time and costs to the user to complete the motorcycle test since the introduction of the new testing regime in April 2009.

**Sir Mike Penning:** [\[1124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if there has been an (a) increase or (b) decrease in the number of individuals achieving a full motorcycle licence since the introduction of the new testing regime in April 2009.

**Trudy Harrison:**

In 2009 40,365 individuals were entitled to drive a motorcycle. As of 2021 (the most recent year for which full data is held) 39,349 individuals held the same entitlement.

**Public Transport****Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[900113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to introduce schemes for the funding of demand responsive transport in suburban areas.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Our Rural Mobility Fund supports suburban demand responsive transport pilots. Bus Service Improvement Plan funding will further support such schemes.

**Railways: Procurement****Paul Maynard:** [\[900122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail on rail procurement.

**Wendy Morton:**

The Williams Shapps Plan for rail will ensure we get the best from public and private sectors. New Passenger Services Contracts will reinvigorate the competitive market and Great British Railways will be able to work more effectively with private sector suppliers and partners across the sector.

**Railways: Suffolk****Tom Hunt:** [\[1350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what cost benefit analysis his Department has made of upgrading Haughley Junction.

**Wendy Morton:**

My Department commissioned Network Rail to undertake analysis on upgrades to Haughley Junction. This work concluded in 2020 and confirmed that both options to deliver an upgrade to Haughley Junction represent "Poor" Value for Money.

**Shrewsbury-Wolverhampton Railway Line****Daniel Kawczynski:** [\[2432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether improvements in railway track speed between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton will be delivered within the 2019 Parliament.

**Wendy Morton:**

Midlands Connect is developing proposals for line speed improvements between Birmingham and Shrewsbury. When completed, the outputs of this work will be presented in a strategic outline business case (SOBC), which I hope to receive this summer. The SOBC will provide an assessment of delivery timescales, costs, and benefits of the scheme, and the Department will make a formal assessment of the proposals upon receipt of the business case.

**Travel: Concessions****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[2625]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions has he had with the Department for Work and Pensions on ensuring those eligible are made aware of the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount card.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount card arises from a bi-lateral arrangement between the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Discussions about awareness are therefore a matter for DWP and RDG. However, Job seekers who are eligible can apply at a Jobcentre and will be notified by their Work Coach if they are eligible.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[2626]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate has he made of the number of journeys taken using the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card in the 12 months.

**Wendy Morton:**

The Department does not hold this information as rail ticket sales data is managed by the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) on behalf of train operators. The RDG can be contacted at [info@raildeliverygroup.com](mailto:info@raildeliverygroup.com)

**TREASURY****Charging Points: VAT****Zarah Sultana:****[2301]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) potential impact of the higher rate of VAT charged on public electric vehicle charging compared with home charging on the uptake of electric vehicles and (b) potential distributional impact of that differential on households by income bracket.

**Lucy Frazer:**

In order to keep costs down for families, the supply of electricity for domestic use, including charging an electric vehicle (EV) at home, attracts the 5 per cent reduced rate of VAT. However, electricity supplied at EV charging points in public places is subject to the 20 per cent standard rate of VAT.

The Government has not specifically introduced a reduced rate for charging EVs at home. However, the practical challenges of differentiating between the electricity used at home for general domestic purposes and electricity used to charge EVs currently mean that the reduced rate is effectively being applied to EV charging at home.

Harmonising the rate of VAT on electricity for public and domestic charging points for electric vehicles would require the Government to expand the existing VAT relief on electricity for domestic use (that is also used to charge EVs at home) to electricity for use at public EV charge points, and this would come at a cost.

VAT makes a significant contribution towards the public finances, raising around £130 billion in 2019-20, and helps fund the Government's priorities including the NHS, schools, and defence. Any loss in tax revenue would have to be balanced by a reduction in public spending, increased borrowing, or increased taxation elsewhere.

The Government is committed to supporting the transition to zero emission vehicles to help the UK meet its net-zero obligations. The Government has committed £2.5 billion since 2020 to support the transition to zero emission vehicles, which funds targeted vehicle grants and the rollout of charging infrastructure.

There are currently no plans to change the VAT treatment of electricity supplied at public EV charge points. However, the Government keeps all taxes under review, and carefully considers behavioural effects and distributional impacts when making decisions on tax policy.

## ■ Child Benefit

**Martyn Day:**

[\[869\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Answer of 26 April 2022 to Question 154192 on Child Benefit, if his department will make an assessment of the potential merits of indexing the High Income Child Benefit Charge threshold in line with inflation.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The Government introduced the High Income Child Benefit Charge (HICBC) to ensure that support for families is targeted at those who need it most. It applies to anyone with an individual adjusted net income over £50,000 who gets, or whose partner gets, Child Benefit. The charge increases gradually for those with incomes between £50,000 and £60,000

The Government is committed to managing the public finances in a disciplined and responsible way by targeting support where it is most needed.

The threshold of £50,000 only affects a minority of those who get Child Benefit with comparatively high incomes. The Government has decided that the current threshold for HICBC remains the best option. As with all elements of tax policy, the threshold is kept under review as part of the Government's annual Budget process.

## ■ Cryptocurrencies

**Tulip Siddiq:** [\[1254\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of UK adults who have money held on crypto exchanges.

**Tulip Siddiq:** [\[1256\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the average value of the money held by UK adults on crypto exchanges.

**Tulip Siddiq:** [\[1257\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the average value of the money held by UK adults on crypto exchanges who give their reason for buying cryptocurrencies as a gamble that could make or lose money.

**John Glen:**

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) published consumer research in June 2021, which offered insight into the cryptoassets market in the UK. The FCA found that 4.4% of UK adults currently hold cryptocurrency, or approximately 2.3 million consumers. The FCA also found that the median value of holdings of crypto owners was £300, and 47% of crypto owners (who chose to declare their holdings) had £260 or less in crypto.

Additionally, the FCA explored consumers' reasons for buying cryptocurrencies and found that 38% of crypto users bought their cryptocurrencies "as a gamble to make or lose money". This reasoning was down 9 percentage points on 2020, where 47% of users bought their cryptocurrencies "as a gamble".

The Cryptoasset Taskforce – HM Treasury, the Bank of England, the FCA and the Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) – continues to monitor ongoing development in cryptoasset markets, and is taking forward a number of regulatory initiatives to manage risks and support innovation.

## ■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

**Emma Hardy:** [\[1304\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the disparity in the rates of VAT on electricity for public and domestic charging points for electric vehicles; and whether he plans to harmonise those rates.

**Lucy Frazer:**

In order to keep costs down for families, the supply of electricity for domestic use, including charging an electric vehicle (EV) at home, attracts the 5 per cent reduced rate of VAT. However, electricity supplied at EV charging points in public places is subject to the 20 per cent standard rate of VAT.

The Government has not specifically introduced a reduced rate for charging EVs at home. However, the practical challenges of differentiating between the electricity used at home for general domestic purposes, and electricity used to charge EVs



currently mean that the reduced rate is effectively being applied to EV charging at home.

Harmonising the rate of VAT on electricity for public and domestic charging points for electric vehicles would require the Government to expand the existing VAT relief on electricity for domestic use (that is also used to charge EVs at home) to electricity for use at public EV charge points and this would come at a cost.

VAT makes a significant contribution towards the public finances, raising around £130 billion in 2019-20, and helps fund the Government's priorities including the NHS, schools, and defence. Any loss in tax revenue would have to be balanced by a reduction in public spending, increased borrowing, or increased taxation elsewhere.

Although there are no current plans to change the VAT treatment of electricity supplied at public EV charge points, the Government is committed to supporting the transition to zero emission vehicles to help the UK meet its net-zero obligations. The Government has committed £2.5 billion since 2020 to support the transition to zero emission vehicles, which funds targeted vehicle grants and the rollout of charging infrastructure.

## ■ Energy: Housing

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[718\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to introduce an energy saving stamp duty incentive as part of the residential property conveyancing process.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The Government does not have any plans to reform Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT).

SDLT is charged on the purchase of property or land in England and Northern Ireland where the value is over £125,000. First-time buyers do not pay any SDLT on purchases below £300,000. Introducing incentives based on energy consumption would add significant complexity to the operation of the current system.

## ■ Fuels: VAT

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[2314\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of using a proportion of VAT accruing to the Exchequer from the rise in fuel prices to help low income households with the cost of living.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Increases in VAT per litre of fuel from rising prices are likely to be largely offset by reductions in VAT on other items if households have less to spend on these items, given higher fuel expenditure and a fixed budget. Therefore, this would not lead to a significant increase in overall VAT receipts. The Office for Budget Responsibility now forecasts lower VAT receipts for this year, 2022-23, than they did in Autumn 2021.

The Government understands how the rising cost of living is making life harder for people. These are global challenges. However, as set out in the Spring Statement 2022, the Government is providing support worth over £22 billion in 2022-23 to help families with these pressures.

## ■ Heating Oil: Rural Areas

**Alicia Kearns:**

**[987]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department (a) provides and (b) plans to provide support for rural households and businesses that rely on oil to heat their premises.

**Helen Whately:**

The Government recognises the challenges many are facing with pressures on household budgets, due to unprecedented global commodity volatility related to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Consumers of heating oil will be eligible for the £200 Energy Bills Support Scheme from Autumn, as long as they are also domestic electricity customers. Since April, households in council bands A-D have also already begun receiving a £150 rebate.

Financial support remains available for heating customers with energy bills, if eligible, through the Warm Home Discount, Winter Fuel Payment and Cold Weather Payment Schemes.

## ■ Inflation

**John Redwood:**

**[2334]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the reasons for which the rate of inflation is above the Government's target of two per cent.

**John Glen:**

As the global economy recovers from COVID-19, many economies are experiencing high inflation. Rising global energy and commodity prices, along with disruptions to global supply chains caused by a mismatch between elevated global demand for goods and bottlenecks in supply as a result of the pandemic, have combined to push up inflation. Additionally, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has added to inflationary pressures and created economic uncertainty. It has increased the price and volatility of energy and some other commodities and has added to disruption in global supply chains.

The government's commitment to price stability remains absolute. The Bank of England is responsible for controlling inflation – since the Bank became responsible for controlling inflation it has averaged close to the 2% target.

We are providing significant support where we can and stand ready to take further action. We're saving the average worker £330 a year through reducing National Insurance Contributions, changing Universal Credit to save over a million families

around £1,000 a year, and providing millions of families with £350 each this year to help their energy bills.

## ■ Monetary Policy

**John Redwood:** [\[2335\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Governor of the Bank of England on quantitative easing.

**John Glen:**

Monetary policy is the responsibility of the independent Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Bank of England and this includes decisions on Bank Rate and quantitative easing. The separation of fiscal and monetary policy is a key feature of the UK's economic framework, and essential for the effective delivery of monetary policy, so the Government does not comment on the conduct or effectiveness of monetary policy.

The Chancellor and the Governor of the Bank of England meet regularly to discuss economic developments and the outlook for the economy. The Government continually monitors such developments to consider their impact on businesses and households.

## ■ Public Sector: Fraud

**Abena Opong-Asare:** [\[1375\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when the managing public money guidance on fraud was last updated.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

The Managing Public Money Guidance was last updated on 4 March 2022. The latest edition of *Managing Public Money* (section 4.9.5) now requires that for any new major area of spend, departments shall assess the risk of and impact from fraud at the outset when the spending is being proposed. Departments must also complete a full fraud assessment and keep it up to date. This should all be done in conjunction with counter-fraud experts. Accompanying changes to the *Green Book* (section A5.27), published on 30 March 2022, set out how fraud risks and counter-fraud measures should be taken into account in the business case process.

## ■ Sequestration of Assets: Russia

**Dame Margaret Hodge:** [\[2341\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total value of assets frozen under the UK's Russian sanctions regime is since Russia's renewed invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

**John Glen:**

Relevant firms are legally obliged to report to the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI) if they hold frozen assets of a designated person or entity

they suspect to be on the list of asset freeze targets. OFSI is currently receiving a high volume of reporting about assets being frozen relating to sanctions imposed since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This information is being collated and assured. Fuller details will be released in due course and will mark a substantial increase on previous assets reported as frozen under Russia sanctions.

## ■ **Small Businesses: Business Rates**

**Adam Afriyie:** [\[686\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he is taking steps to reduce the burden of business rates on small and medium businesses.

**Lucy Frazer:**

With the conclusion of the Business Rates Review at Autumn Budget 2021, the Government has delivered meaningful reform and cuts worth £7 billion to business over the next five years. This includes a multiplier freeze in 2022-23 which will support all ratepayers, large and small, and a new temporary relief for retail, hospitality, and leisure businesses worth almost £1.7 billion in 2022-23. In addition, over a third of properties (700,000) already pay no business rates as a result of 100 per cent relief through Small Business Rates Relief, with an additional 121,000 in the taper.

## ■ **VAT: Fines**

**Clive Lewis:** [\[890\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many penalties have been issued by HMRC in respect of late payment of VAT in financial years (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2020-21.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The number of Default Surcharge penalties issued in respect of both late return submissions and of late payment of VAT in the 2020-21 financial year was 279,430 and was 610,170 in the 2021-22 financial year.

## ■ **Voluntary Work: Car Allowances**

**Navendu Mishra:** [\[2690\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to review the Approved Mileage Payment Allowance that can be claimed by volunteer drivers.

**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.

Organisations are not required to use the AMAPs. Instead, they can agree to reimburse the actual cost incurred, where volunteers 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 volunteers' 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.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Greater Manchester

**Jeff Smith:**

[\[838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential impact on hybrid working by staff of the consolidation of her Department's office at Manchester Chorlton Graeme House.

**Mims Davies:**

The adoption of hybrid working practices has been carefully and fully considered. The introduction of hybrid working arrangements by the Department for back of house functions means that staff will only need to work on average 40% of their working week in the new location. DWP aims to utilise its hybrid working policy to help facilitate more inclusive workplaces, which are capable of adapting to the needs of the employees and the Department.

### ■ Household Support Fund

**Gill Furniss:**

[\[2600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to prevent councils running out of funding for the Household Support Fund before the end of September 2022.

**David Rutley:**

In England, £421 million is being provided to extend the Household Support Fund from 1 April to 30 September inclusive which will continue to help people who are struggling to afford energy and water bills, food, and other essentials.

Local Authorities have been issued with the fund guidance and the accompanying grant determination for the extended funding. Local Authorities have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the scope set out. It is for Local Authorities, using their local ties and knowledge, to design local schemes that best meet the needs of local people.

The Household Support Fund extension is just one part of a wider package. We recognise the pressures on the costs of living and we are doing what we can to help, including spending £22 billion across the next financial year to support people.

The government is continuing to monitor developments and the consequences for the cost of living and will be ready to take further steps if needed to support households.

## ■ Independent Case Examiner

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints have been received by the Independent Case Examiner in each year since financial year 2010-11.

**Guy Opperman:**

The table below shows the total number of complaints (a) received and (b) accepted for examination by the Independent Case Examiner's office in each financial year since 2010/11. Before a decision is taken on whether a complaint can be accepted each case is checked to ensure that it has exhausted the DWP's or the relevant Provider's complaints process.

YEAR:	COMPLAINTS RECEIVED:	ACCEPTED FOR EXAMINATION
2010/2011	3389	1348
2011/2012	2681	1181
2012/2013	3318	1002
2013/2014	3233	1126
2014/2015	3320	1154
2015/2016	2654	1104
2016/2017	2957	1137
2017/2018	5885	2784
2018/2019	4824	1299
2019/2020	3863	1145
2020/2021	4225	1010
2021/2022	4916	1709

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average length of time is from receipt of a complaint about (a) her Department and (b) the Child Maintenance Service to the Independent Case Examiner to the commencement of any investigation.

**Guy Opperman:**

When the Independent Case Examiner's (ICE) Office accept a complaint for investigation, they will initially try to broker a solution between the complainant and the relevant department or supplier, without having to request evidence to inform an investigation – this is known as “resolution”. If it's not possible to resolve the complaint, the evidence will be requested and the case will await allocation to an

Investigator. The cases that reach ICE are the most complex and usually require investigation. Complainants are kept updated about the timings involved with their case and the vast majority are satisfied with the service they receive.

During the 2021/2022 reporting year, the average length of time taken from receipt of a complaint to allocation to an Investigator was 55 weeks for DWP complaints and 60 weeks for Child Maintenance Service complaints.

## ■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Training

**Gill Furniss:** [\[2599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing people claiming legacy benefits to complete a Skills Bootcamp in HGV driving that lasts longer than eight weeks.

**Mims Davies:**

Through Train and Progress, DWP seeks to assess the merits of extending the time Universal Credit (UC) claimants can participate in full-time employment-focussed skills training, and programmes such as skills bootcamps, up to 16 weeks and will be monitoring the impact of extending the time before considering whether to broaden to include those on legacy benefits.

By targeting this temporary expansion to our labour market offer at those eligible for UC, we can deliver a significant impact due to the higher ratio of UC claimants compared to those in receipt of legacy benefits. At present all other benefit claimants, can access longer periods of part-time skills training to improve their prospects of work, including Skills Bootcamps when delivery content is more flexible.

## ■ Local Housing Allowance

**Hywel Williams:** [\[2376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of increasing the Local Housing Allowance in line with the increase in the cost of rents.

**Hywel Williams:** [\[2380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to undertake an assessment of the accuracy of the mechanism and metrics used to calculate (a) the rate at which Local Housing Allowance is set and allocated in Wales and (b) broad rental market area boundaries in Wales.

**David Rutley:**

No recent assessment has been made.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates determine the maximum housing support available to claimants in the private rented sector. They are not intended to cover all rents in all areas.

In April 2020 investment in LHA rates was boosted by nearly £1 billion, providing 1.5 million claimants with an average £600 more housing support in 2020/21 than they would otherwise have received. Rates have been maintained at their increased 2020 levels so that claimants continue to benefit from the significant increase.

The Secretary of State will review the rates annually in the usual way.

For those who require additional support with housing costs, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are available. Since 2011 we have provided nearly £1.5 billion in funding for DHPs.

LHA rates vary by geographical regions called broad rental market areas. The boundaries of the broad rental market areas in Wales are determined and kept under review by Rent Officers Wales. If they decide that a boundary should change, they can submit a review to the Secretary of State for consideration.

**Hywel Williams:**

[\[2377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in (a) Wales, (b) Scotland and (c) England who are only eligible for the Shared Accommodation Local Housing Allowance rate reside in one-bedroom homes.

**David Rutley:**

As of November 2021, the information requested is available for people in receipt of Housing Benefit, as follows:

	NUMBER OF PEOPLE ENTITLED TO SAR LIVING IN A 1-BEDROOM PROPERTY
Wales	571
Scotland	525
England	12,322

The information requested is not readily available for people in receipt of Universal Credit Housing Element.

#### ■ Local Housing Allowance: Wales

**Hywel Williams:**

[\[2378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much her Department has spent on housing payments to individuals in receipt of Universal Credit in Wales in each of the last five years.

**David Rutley:**

The information requested on Universal Credit Housing Element (UCHE) expenditure in Wales is not readily available and to provide it would incur a disproportionate cost.



UCHE expenditure is available at the GB level for 2019/20 and 2020/21, on rows 8 and 60 of the housing benefits sheet of the benefit expenditure and caseload tables for Autumn Budget 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-expenditure-and-caseload-tables-2021>

**Hywel Williams:**

**[2379]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the average difference between the rent being paid by individuals in receipt of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and the LHA rate in each local authority in Wales in the most recent period for which data is available.

**David Rutley:**

As of November 2021, the average monthly difference between the rent being paid by individuals in receipt of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and the LHA rate in each Welsh local authority is as below:

LOCAL AUTHORITY	AVERAGE MONTHLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RENT AND LHA RATE
Blaenau Gwent	£75
Bridgend	£59
Caerphilly	£69
Cardiff	£12
Carmarthenshire	£58
Ceredigion	£50
Conwy	£74
Denbighshire	£67
Flintshire	£48
Gwynedd	£70
Isle of Anglesey	£49
Merthyr Tydfil	£65
Monmouthshire	£91
Neath Port Talbot	£68
Newport	£49
Pembrokeshire	£75

LOCAL AUTHORITY	AVERAGE MONTHLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RENT AND LHA RATE
Powys	£81
Rhondda Cynon Taf	£64
Swansea	£30
Torfaen	£59
Vale of Glamorgan	£78
Wrexham	£45

Average difference figures include both households where the rent paid by individuals is lower than the LHA and households where the rent paid by individuals is higher than the LHA. Positive values relate to where monthly rent is higher than the monthly LHA rate on average in a local authority.

#### ■ Universal Credit

**Darren Jones:** [\[2620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason there is a three month relevant period that claimants have to wait to receive their full entitlement when eligible for Universal Credit with limited capability for work and work-related activity.

**Darren Jones:** [\[2621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of the three month relevant period on eligible universal credit claimants' financial wellbeing.

**David Rutley:**

No assessment has been made.

Where a claimant is determined to have limited capability for work and work-related activity (LCWRA), an additional amount of Universal Credit may be awarded. However, before the additional amount is payable, the claimant must serve the 'relevant' period, a 3-month term used to establish that they have a long-term health condition. This replicates the 13-week assessment period applied to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claims. This period starts on the day the Department first receives medical evidence or a self-certificate from the claimant.

The reason that a 3 month period applies to most claimants is one of equity. It would not be fair to pay some claimants earlier than others because of circumstances beyond their control. There are exceptions for people who are terminally ill to ensure that they quickly receive the support they need as they have a short time to live or people who have previously claimed Universal Credit and have already served the

relevant period and are returning to the benefit and whose circumstances meet certain specified criteria.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### DEFENCE

#### ■ Ajax Update

**Minister for Defence Procurement (Jeremy Quin):**

[\[HCWS42\]](#)

As part of my commitment to keep Parliament informed on the programme, I wish to provide a further update on the Ajax equipment project being delivered as part of the Armoured Cavalry Programme.

##### 1. Programmatic Issues

Work continues on the noise and vibration issues.

The independent Millbrook trials have now concluded. The initial findings informed the consideration by the safety panel on the next step of conducting User Validation Trials.

The aim of the User Validation Trials is to help establish the effectiveness of the modifications to address the noise and vibration problems and thereby deliver a safe system of work under which we could conduct Reliability Growth Trials on the modified vehicles.

Following agreement by the Safety Panel, User Validation Trials by Army personnel resumed at the Armoured Trials Development Unit on 12 May, supported by the independent Millbrook trials team. Data was successfully collected during the trials for analysis. In particular, as a result of the trials, an issue has been raised on the effectiveness of the internal communications system which requires additional analysis.

The Safety Panel have set cautious parameters within which the user validation trials are to be conducted. This included the temporary use of Crewgard headsets to allow the modifications proposed by General Dynamics to be trialled. Hearing checks were conducted on all personnel before and after the trials took place. These checks identified hearing anomalies in some personnel (including personnel not involved in the trials who were part of the "control" sample). We intent to resume trials once these anomalies are understood.

User trials are required to allow Millbrook to continue to gather additional data to provide an independent assessment on the effectiveness of the modifications proposed by General Dynamics. We will then analyse the data, alongside feedback from the Army crews involved. This analysis will help define a safe system of work for the Reliability Growth trials on the modified vehicles.

These Reliability Growth Trials are planned to commence later this year. As with any armoured vehicle procurement, the aim of the Reliability Growth Trials is to test the vehicle more thoroughly over an extended period. This will identify any issues beyond noise and vibration that need to be addressed before we can be confident that the vehicle meets the Army's contractual requirements. Identifying and resolving a range of such issues is a normal part of the acquisition process for all military equipment.

Once we are satisfied that there are long-term solutions to the noise and vibration problems, we will need to agree with General Dynamics a realistic schedule to Initial Operating Capability and Full Operating Capability. We will not accept a vehicle that is not fit for purpose and we are continuing to take all steps necessary to secure our contractual and commercial rights under the contract with General Dynamics.

## 2. Update on Personnel

It remains the case that of the 310 people identified as working with Ajax, thirteen individuals have had long term restrictions on noise exposure recommended, potentially requiring a limitation in their military duties. The majority of these had pre-existing hearing issues prior to working on Ajax; some did not. A further five individuals remain under specialist outpatient care for hearing and other ENT issues. In addition, it remains the case that four individuals who worked on Ajax have been discharged on health grounds, in some cases for reasons wholly unrelated to hearing loss.

Assessments continue for both hand-transmitted and whole-body vibration. To date, fewer than five individuals have been identified with conditions which could be aggravated by vibration; these individuals have been recommended for a limitation in their military duties whilst they undergo further investigation and treatment. It is not possible to determine clinically whether Ajax exposure has caused or aggravated the clinical conditions of any of these individuals. I am withholding a more precise breakdown because, given the small number of service personnel involved, individuals could be identified resulting in a potential breach in medical confidentiality.

## 3. The Sheldon Review

Following Parliamentary clearance of the associated contingent liability, I am pleased to announce that we have now formally appointed Clive Sheldon QC. The review will have full access to all relevant MOD papers and personnel. I encourage all those who wish to provide evidence or other input to the review to contact the independent review team at [Ajax-Review@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Ajax-Review@mod.gov.uk). Copies of the Terms of Reference of the Review are available in the Library of the House. I will update Parliament in due course on the likely duration of the Review once Mr Sheldon has had the opportunity to consider the issue in detail.

## 4. Conclusion

The focus for the MOD and General Dynamics remains on developing and delivering long-term solutions for noise and vibration and vehicles that comply with General Dynamics contractual obligations. We want Ajax to succeed and to deliver what the British Army requires. We have a robust firm price contract for the delivery of 589 vehicles at a cost of £5.5 billion. We will not accept a vehicle that is not fit for purpose.

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE****■ Commonwealth Chair-In-Office Report Addendum 2020-2022**

**Minister for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (Vicky Ford):** [\[HCWS37\]](#)

My noble Friend the Minister for South and Central Asia, North Africa, United Nations and the Commonwealth (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon), has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

The UK has been Commonwealth Chair in Office (CiO) since hosting the 25<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in April 2018, during which Heads committed to a range of ambitious actions to build a fairer, prosperous, more sustainable and more secure Commonwealth. In September 2020, we published a comprehensive report detailing our work with Commonwealth member states and partners to deliver against the 2018 Commonwealth summit commitments, entitled *UK Commonwealth Chair-In-Office Report 2018-20*: this document was deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

CHOGM is normally convened every two years and the 26<sup>th</sup> CHOGM was due to be held in Kigali, Rwanda, in June 2020. Due to the pandemic, it has been postponed twice and the UK's tenure as CiO subsequently extended. Having now served four years as CiO, the UK will pass on the baton to Rwanda as CHOGM host this June. Given these developments, I am pleased today to give notice to the House that a further short report entitled *UK Commonwealth Chair-in-Office Report Addendum 2020-2022* has been deposited in the Libraries of the House.

The report sets out the UK's continued delivery and achievements against Heads' commitments under the CHOGM18 themes. It highlights specific action taken on health security given the critical need to adapt and respond to the pandemic, which included the UK supporting the delivery of over 1.4 billion vaccine doses to 52 Commonwealth countries.

The UK has prioritised the strengthening and renewal of the Commonwealth and remains the largest single donor to the Commonwealth intergovernmental organisations and their programmes. It has worked to boost the voice of the Commonwealth on the world stage: in October 2020, the first Commonwealth statement in the UN Human Rights Council was delivered on behalf of all member states by the UK's International Ambassador for Human Rights, Rita French.

As Chair-in-Office, the UK has aimed to build a fairer Commonwealth for all its citizens, highlighting member states' collective commitment to the shared values of human rights and the rule of law, as enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter. Through the UK's continued funding of dedicated Human Rights Advisers at the Commonwealth Small States Office (CSSO), we have helped to strengthen the capacity of small and developing Commonwealth member countries to participate more actively across a range of human rights fora.

The Commonwealth has an important role to play in supporting global growth, creating employment, and reaffirming commitment to a rules-based, free, open and fair multilateral

trading system. In this regard, the UK has been an unwavering advocate for intra-Commonwealth trade and has worked to remove trade barriers and deepen economic partnerships. For example, the UK-funded She Trades Commonwealth programme has helped over 3,500 women-owned businesses become more competitive and generate over £32 million in sales.

At CHOGM18, Heads recognised the unprecedented impacts of climate change across the world, and launched the Commonwealth Blue Charter to respond to the existential threat posed by the deteriorating health of the ocean. The UK has been a consistent champion of the Blue Charter over the last four years and co-funded the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CFAH), which has mobilised over US\$38 million to support some of the most climatically vulnerable Commonwealth countries.

Heads pledged to build a more secure future for all citizens at CHOGM18. Backed by over £15 million of programme funding, the UK has worked with all Commonwealth countries to strengthen their cyber security in support of an open, democratic, peaceful and secure cyber space.

The UK looks forward to the gathering of the Commonwealth family in June, falling in between the celebrations of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee and the Birmingham Commonwealth Games. We remain steadfastly committed to our partnership with this unique association of 54 equal and independent member states, which continues to deliver robust benefits to Commonwealth citizens across the globe.

**Attachments:**

1. Addendum Report 2020-2022 [FCDO0106 Commonwealth Chair in Office Addendum 2020-2022.pdf]

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Health Update

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Patient Safety and Primary Care) (Maria Caulfield):** **[HCWS41]**

Following earlier statements by Department of Health and Social Care Ministers, I would like to inform the House that the Independent Inquiry into the issues raised by the David Fuller case has today published a progress update on its work to date. This can be found at: <https://fuller.independent-inquiry.uk/announcements/>

The progress update sets out the transition from a local, independent investigation initiated by the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust to the current Independent Inquiry that the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced in November of last year. It describes how the work already undertaken as part of the independent investigation is feeding into the inquiry; as well as the important common themes that emerged from families / other interested parties which gave rise to amendments to the inquiry's Terms of Reference. The Independent Inquiry published its final Terms of Reference on 23 February 2022.

Although the local investigation was constrained from taking evidence while the criminal prosecution of David Fuller was underway, Sir Jonathan Michael does set out some urgent, high-level themes and areas of concern arising from the investigation at the time in his progress update:

- Responsibilities between NHS Trusts and contractors / subcontractors.
- Security and access.
- Policies and procedures versus practice.
- Oversight of regulated activities.
- Management of areas and services not covered by regulation.

These themes had been shared with the Trust in August 2021 and subsequently with NHS England and NHS Improvement. The Trust has been putting its own steps in place regarding its mortuary practices ahead of the substantive, initial report of the Inquiry. NHS England and NHS Improvement has continued to work with Trusts to provide assurances against current guidance from the Human Tissue Authority (HTA), and on the additional measures that have been taken to improve the effectiveness of security in place for all their mortuaries and post-mortem activities.

The progress update makes clear that the first phase of the Independent Inquiry is firmly underway and describes the rapid progress that it has so far achieved. Also, from the inquiry's engagement with witnesses so far, it has experienced a high degree of co-operation and expects this to continue. Both are testament to the hard work of Sir Jonathan and his team.

The progress update also sets out the next steps, including a revised timing for the initial report on matters relating to Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust. Due to the volume of evidence that is emerging, the initial report will now be available later this year. This will be followed by a final report next year, looking at the broader national picture and the wider lessons for the NHS and for other settings. Whilst there is real urgency in understanding how Fuller was able to carry out his shocking and unlawful actions, and why these went unnoticed, the Inquiry must be allowed the time it needs to fully consider all of the relevant evidence and assemble its findings. The Inquiry continues to liaise with Kent Police to ensure that if it identifies possible criminal conduct, this is referred swiftly for further investigation, in line with its Terms of Reference.

The HTA was asked by the Secretary of State to provide advice on its regulatory framework following the conclusion of the murder trial of David Fuller and the public revelation of his sexual offending against bodies in a hospital mortuary at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust.

The HTA advice, received in December 2021, along with a short progress update, has been published today. Both can be found at <https://www.hta.gov.uk/news/december-2021-advice-published>

The HTA has focused on three areas since December 2021; preparation for the Inquiry, working with stakeholders on licensed mortuary security, and starting the revision of HTA



guidance for licensed mortuaries in the post-mortem sector, with implementation planned later this year.

Further details will be available on GOV.UK via the following link which will 'go live' from noon today.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-fuller-inquiry-update-to-the-secretary-of-state-19-may-2022>

## JUSTICE

### ■ Government response to consultation on modernising lasting powers of attorney

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Tom Pursglove):**

**[HCWS40]**

Today I am launching the government response to the consultation on modernising lasting powers of attorney.

A lasting power of attorney (LPA) is a legal agreement that helps people plan for their future. It lets someone (the 'donor') choose people they trust ('attorneys') to support them and make decisions for them if they lose the mental capacity to make their own decisions in the future.

The LPA was introduced by the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) in 2007 to improve safeguards from the old enduring power of attorney. The MCA also created the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG), an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice. OPG is responsible for registering LPAs so they can be used and investigating concerns about an attorney's use of the LPA.

LPAs are reliant on an out-dated paper system, which increasingly doesn't meet the needs of society. In our day to day lives we expect more and more services to be available digitally, more so with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic which has changed the way many people think and act. Modernisation provides us with the opportunity to improve safeguards against fraud, abuse and undue pressure by using technological advancements to strengthen the overall security of the LPA service.

The introduction of a digital channel is necessary to find the right balance between increasing protection against abuse and ease of use for people legitimately creating LPAs. Automation of OPG's processes will allow the OPG to carry out identification checks to protect against fraud. Reducing the resources needed for administrative tasks could allow an increase in those involved in supporting donors and investigating abuse.

It was for this reason that the MOJ launched its consultation last summer; to increase safeguards, improve access and achieve sustainability for the OPG. The consultation closed on 13 October 2021 and received 313 responses. It has allowed us to identify some of the key changes needed to address the aims of modernising LPAs which are covered in more detail in the government response published today. While it is clear to me that digitisation is needed, it is important that a paper channel will remain to ensure access for all.

Publication of the government response is a significant step forward on the journey to reform the LPA service for the public. Today, I therefore lay in parliament this command paper that sets out the views of the stakeholders that engaged in our consultation and how the government proposes to move forward to implement changes to the LPA service. These changes will make the service safer, easier to access and more efficient to administer.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### ■ Northern Ireland Update

**Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis):**

[\[HCWS39\]](#)

Section 9 of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation) Act 2019, places me under a legal duty to ensure that women and girls in Northern Ireland can access abortion services. I am determined to ensure that women and girls in Northern Ireland can access abortion services in the same way as those living in the rest of the United Kingdom.

On 22 July 2021, I gave a direction to the Northern Ireland Department of Health, and to the Health and Social Care Board, to commission and make abortion services available by 31 March 2022. The Department of Health has not met that deadline, and it is now clear that no progress will be made towards the provision of these services.

It has always been my preference that, as a devolved matter, the Department of Health delivers these services. However, with over two years having passed since the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2020 established a framework, women and girls are still unable to access high-quality abortion and post-abortion care in Northern Ireland. This is entirely unacceptable.

Today, I am therefore laying regulations that:

- remove the need for Executive Committee approval before services can be commissioned and funded by the Department of Health. The Regulations will do this by providing that directions under the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021, which require action to be taken to implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Report), must be complied with irrespective of whether the matter has been discussed or agreed by the Executive Committee; and
- confer on a Secretary of State the power to do anything that a Northern Ireland Minister or department could do for the purpose of ensuring that the recommendations in paragraphs 85 and 86 of the CEDAW report are implemented. For the purpose of determining what a Northern Ireland Minister or department could do, any need for Executive Committee approval will be disregarded. Whilst the regulations will also provide a Secretary of State with the power to provide financial assistance for the same purpose, as a devolved matter it remains the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive to fund abortion services in Northern Ireland.

This means that the Department of Health will have no further barriers to commission and fund services. I am steadfast in my belief that the Department of Health should drive forward the commissioning of abortion services without further delay in Northern Ireland.

If the Department of Health does not commission and fund abortion services as directed, I will intervene further. To ensure I have all the information required in those circumstances, a small team that I am establishing in the Northern Ireland Office will work alongside the Department of Health and take this forward.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Fighting Fraud in the Welfare System

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Welfare Delivery (David Rutley):**

[\[HCWS38\]](#)

Fraud is an ever-present challenge in both the private and public sector.

Fraud committed against the welfare system – whether by individuals or criminal gangs – is not a victimless crime. It is felt throughout society, upon the services people rely on and by honest, hard-working taxpayers who expect to see public money spent on the purpose for which it was intended, rather than going into the hands of fraudsters.

Our fundamental approach has always been to prevent fraud from entering the system in the first place, to detect and root out fraud when it does, and to deter would-be fraudsters through a robust penalty system, including recovering the debt owed. These principles were bringing fraud down before the pandemic.

During the early months of the pandemic, we took a decision to implement temporary easements to ensure we could prioritise payments to those who needed help during a difficult time. It is regrettable that some unscrupulous people sought to exploit these extraordinary circumstances for their own illegitimate gain.

Later today, I will publish a paper on Fighting Fraud in the Welfare System which sets out our plan to address the challenge of fraud, to stay ahead of evolving threats, and to reduce the levels of fraud and error in the welfare system.

This plan sets out how we are investing £613m over the next three years in our frontline counter-fraud professionals and in enhanced data analytics. This funds 1,400 more staff in our counter-fraud teams, a new 2,000-strong team dedicated to reviewing existing Universal Credit claims and an enhanced data analytics package to develop new ways to prevent and detect fraud. We estimate this will stop £2.1bn of loss in fraud and error over the next three years.

When parliamentary time allows, we will bring forward new powers to investigate potential fraud and punish fraudsters. We will:

- Bring the department in line with counter-fraud functions elsewhere in government, by creating powers to enable our officers to undertake arrests, and to search and seize evidence.

- Bolster our penalty system – creating a new type of civil penalty to ensure that those who commit fraud face punishment.
- Create new powers that will require organisations, such as banks, to securely share data on a larger scale to find and prevent fraud.
- Establish new powers to improve the department’s access to information from a wider range of organisations and to assist counter fraud and compliance activity into all payments made by the department, modernising our ability to drive fraud out of the system.

Technological advances give fraudsters new opportunities to find ways to attack. To make sure we stay ahead of the fraudsters, we need to bring together the full force of government and the expertise of the private sector. We are creating a new Fraud Prevention Advisory Group to bring together government and external experts to identify and develop innovative ways to crack down on fraudsters, including through more flexible and proactive use of data. We will work hand-in-hand with the new Public Sector Fraud Authority to ensure all of government steps up its efforts to reduce fraud and error and bring fraudsters to justice.

This plan will help us to defend the welfare system against those who seek to take advantage of it. It will allow us to dig deeper in rooting fraud out wherever it occurs in the welfare system, to catch and punish fraudsters and to protect taxpayers’ money.