



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 25 May 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:33 P.M., 25 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

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Northern Ireland Protocol: Legal Opinion

Emily Thornberry:

[\[5629\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, pursuant to the Answer of 20 May 2022 to Question 2413, on Northern Ireland Protocol: Legal Opinion, whether she has asked the Prime Minister to initiate an investigation into how the fact and content of her advice on the Northern Ireland Protocol came to be reported in the media on 11 May 2022; and whether that reporting constituted a breach of paragraph 2.13 of the Ministerial Code.

Alex Chalk:

It would not be appropriate to comment on this media speculation. It is a longstanding convention, accepted by governments of all parties, not to disclose whether the Law Officers have given legal advice or the contents of any advice. This convention protects the Law Officers' ability to give full and frank legal advice on some of the most contentious and difficult issues the Government will be considering.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Breakthrough Energy

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[3571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress he has made on the £400m partnership between his Department and the Breakthrough Energy Catalyst that was announced in October 2021.

Greg Hands:

Since my rt. hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced the partnership with Breakthrough Energy Catalyst (BEC), progress has been made in formalising the relationship and driving value by sharing information on funding opportunities and signposting project opportunities. The Government has launched a number of funding and market development programmes in the four technology areas covered by the partnership. BEC has launched a UK request for proposals for emerging climate technology projects and is now undertaking its first round of evaluations.

■ Business

Matt Vickers:

[\[3775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that UK businesses benefit from the UK leaving the EU.

Paul Scully:

This Government is committed to growing the UK's economy by making the most of our Brexit freedoms and lightening the regulatory burden to boost UK businesses. The Brexit Freedoms Bill will enable law inherited from the EU to be changed more easily to suit the UK and the Government intends to prioritise areas where reform can deliver the greatest economic gain, aiming to cut £1 billion of business costs from retained EU red tape.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will reform our public procurement regime so that more small and medium-sized businesses benefit and is committed to delivering regulatory reforms proposed by Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform within this parliament.

Business: Investment**Matt Vickers:**[\[3774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent progress his Department has made on securing business investment in the UK.

Paul Scully:

In April, we launched the £1.4bn Global Britain Investment Fund, which provides grant support to encourage internationally mobile companies to invest in the UK. This will ensure highly productive firms providing high skilled, high paying jobs invest in the UK bringing prosperity and economic growth.

Carbon Capture and Storage**Richard Thomson:**[\[3752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department has made on providing clarity and certainty on the Phase-2 carbon capture, usage and storage (CCUS) sequencing timeline for the (a) Scottish and (b) other clusters to support the UK's ambition to deliver its target of four CCUS clusters within the 2030s.

Greg Hands:

The Government remains committed to supporting four CCUS clusters to deployment by 2030. On 1 November 2021 the Government [published](#) a Track-2 update which highlights the increased ambition of capturing and storing 20-30 Mtpa by 2030, including 10 Mtpa assigned for Track-2 clusters:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cluster-sequencing-for-carbon-capture-usage-and-storage-ccus-deployment-phase-1-expressions-of-interest/1-november-2021-update-carbon-capture-usage-and-storage-ccus-track-2>

The Government regularly engages with the Acorn Cluster in their position as Track-1 reserve cluster, and will continue to engage with industry and other clusters during the development of the Track-2 process.

■ Carbon Emissions: Technology

Matt Vickers: [\[3766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support new low carbon technologies.

Greg Hands:

The Government articulated its plans for increasing low carbon power generation in the British Energy Security Strategy. The Strategy spans renewables, nuclear and hydrogen and will help drive up to £100 billion of investment by 2030. The Strategy set an ambition for new nuclear power of up to 24GW by 2050, with a 'Great British Nuclear Vehicle' established to develop a pipeline of projects. On renewables, the Government is accelerating annual Contracts for Difference auctions from 2023 to support deployment. For offshore wind, the Strategy sets a new 50GW by 2030 ambition, alongside plans to reduce consent time for projects.

■ Carers: Leave

Justin Madders: [\[3649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to introduce carer's leave.

Paul Scully:

The Government remains committed to supporting unpaid carers in work. Legislation to deliver our commitment to introduce one week of leave for unpaid carers will be brought forward when Parliamentary time allows.

■ Conditions of Employment

Justin Madders: [\[3630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has plans to bring forward an employment bill in the 2022-23 parliamentary Session.

Paul Scully:

The Queen's Speech set out a packed and ambitious legislative programme that includes a comprehensive set of bills which will enable us to deliver on priorities like growing the economy, which will in turn help address living costs and get people into good jobs.

Justin Madders: [\[3631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 25 January 2022 to Question 108541 on Conditions of Employment, which Government departments he has been in regular dialogue with regarding reforms to the employment framework.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to bringing forward reforms to our employment framework as we build a high skilled, high productivity, high wage economy that

delivers on its ambition to make the UK the best place in the world to work and grow a business.

It is important we consult widely on proposals for change and ensure stakeholders have the opportunity to share their views.

For example, we recently published a Government response to a consultation regarding reforms to the use of exclusivity clauses in employment contracts:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/measures-to-extend-the-ban-on-exclusivity-clauses-in-contracts-of-employment>.

We carefully consider all consultation responses, which help inform decisions around how we take forward measures.

As reform of the employment framework is a complex cross-cutting topic, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has regular dialogue with other Government Departments with an interest.

Justin Madders:

[3632]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps he has taken to ensure that workers' rights are protected.

Paul Scully:

Protecting and enhancing workers' rights remains a priority for this government. Over the past year, we have proven our commitment to supporting workers across the UK, including raising the national living wage in April 2022 to its highest rate yet, to help with the cost of living.

We are proud there are now more employees on the payroll than ever before, and we will continue to build a high skilled, high productivity, high wage economy that delivers on our ambition to make the UK the best place in the world to work.

We remain committed to making progress and on 9 May we announced our intention to bring forward legislation which will widen the ban on exclusivity clauses, which restrict staff from working for multiple employers, to contracts where the guaranteed weekly income is equivalent to or below the Lower Earnings Limit of £123 a week.

We also announced our commitment to publishing employment status guidance to help clarify the existing status boundaries, making it easier for individuals and businesses to understand which employment rights apply to them, enhancing worker protections whilst maintaining flexibility and ensuring a level playing field within the labour market.

Justin Madders:

[3648]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish a response to his Department's consultation entitled Good work plan: proposals to support families.

Paul Scully:

In 2019, the Government consulted on high-level options and principles for reforming the parental leave and pay system to make it easier for parents to share care of their children in the first year of their lives. We are currently considering the responses to the consultation and will respond in due course.

Matt Vickers:[\[3773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to enhance workers' rights.

Paul Scully:

We are proud there are now more employees on the payroll than ever before, and we will continue to build a high skilled, high productivity, high wage economy that delivers on our ambition to make the UK the best place in the world to work.

Over the past year, we have proven our commitment to supporting workers across the UK, including raising the national living wage in April 2022 to its highest rate yet, to help with the cost of living.

We remain committed to making progress and on 9 May we announced our intention to bring forward legislation which will widen the ban on exclusivity clauses, which restrict staff from working for multiple employers, to contracts where the guaranteed weekly income is equivalent to or below the Lower Earnings Limit of £123 a week.

■ Construction**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[3704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to ensure that consumer protections under Part 3 of the Consumer Rights Act, which establishes a 14 day right to cancel, apply to contracts for an extension with a double glazing company in the same manner as they would apply to a building company.

Paul Scully:

The Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013 provide a 14 day right to cancel in respect of certain categories of contract between a consumer and a trader where the contract is entered into away from business premises (e.g. online or by phone). The Regulations generally apply in respect of extensions to existing buildings but not to the construction of new buildings or the sale of immovable property.

Further information on this can be found at:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/getting-home-improvements-done/cancelling-building-or-decorating-work/>.

■ Diesel Fuel**Owen Thompson:**[\[3678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the current (a) availability and (b) stability of diesel supplies.

Greg Hands:

The UK remains well-supplied for diesel from a diverse range of sources. UK demand for diesel is met by a combination of domestic production and imports. In 2021 UK production could have met over half of our demand for diesel. Imports in the same year came from a diverse range of reliable suppliers beyond Russia including the Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden.

The Department monitors the fuel supply market to remain aware of current supply levels and publishes weekly national average forecourt stock levels. There is no shortage of diesel in the UK.

Director of Labour Market Enforcement**Imran Hussain:**[\[3626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will bring umbrella companies under the remit of the Director for Labour Market Enforcement.

Paul Scully:

The role of the Director of Labour Market Enforcement (DLME) is to set strategic direction for the three main labour market enforcement bodies and oversee an annual assessment of the scale and nature of non-compliance.

The Government recently ran a Call for Evidence on the umbrella company market to ensure it has a detailed and up to date understanding of the market and how it is continuing to evolve. The call for evidence closed on 22 February 2022 and the Government will use the information it has gathered to inform future policy development and will publish a summary of responses in due course.

Disability: Energy**Rachael Maskell:**[\[2546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the level of energy use required by some disabled people to keep warm or run specialised equipment; and whether he plans to take steps to support those people in the context of the increase in energy costs.

Greg Hands:

The Government understands that some households with a disability or medical condition will have higher heating costs than average. Certain specialised NHS England services do provide rebates on energy costs for patients using medical equipment at home, such as home oxygen concentrators or adult home dialysis. These arrangements are unique to the contracts or service specifications of these conditions. Clinical Commissioning Groups are best placed to support their local populace.

The Government is aware of the impact that high global wholesale energy prices are having on consumers and has put in place additional support worth £9.1bn on top of existing measures to support vulnerable households.

■ Electricity: Consumers**Patrick Grady:** [5667]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answers of 25 April to Question 156512 and to Question 156513 and with reference to (a) the trend of growth in domestic meter points and (b) the proposal to recover payments from meter points rather than individual accounts or households, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that energy companies do not ultimately profit from the repayment of the £200 loan under the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

Greg Hands:

The Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) will work within the existing energy system, regulated by Ofgem.

The Government recently closed a technical consultation on the Scheme and will publish a response in due course.

■ Employment: Bullying**Justin Madders:** [3639]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps he has taken to tackle bullying in the workplace.

Justin Madders: [3640]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has plans to bring forward measures to tackle bullying in the workplace.

Paul Scully:

We have published guidance that sets out the steps that employees can take if they are experiencing bullying or harassment at work, which is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/workplace-bullying-and-harassment>.

Acas provides free and impartial advice for employers and employees, and has also published useful guidance on how to deal with bullying in the workplace that we encourage individuals and employers to consider when dealing with such matters.

This is available at: <https://www.acas.org.uk/if-youre-treated-unfairly-at-work/being-bullied>.

■ Employment: Women's Rights**Justin Madders:** [3642]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to protect women's rights in the workplace.

Paul Scully:

The Government remains committed to bringing forward measures to further improve women's rights in the workplace as soon as parliamentary time allows. These measures include:

- extending redundancy protections for women after they return from maternity leave;
- introducing a new duty on employers to take steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, as well as explicit protections against workplace harassment by third parties;
- introducing neonatal leave and pay; and
- introducing a new right to one week of unpaid carer's leave.

The Government has also recently consulted on measures to reform the right to request flexible working and will publish a response to that in due course.

■ **Energy Bills Rebate: Park Homes**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[5326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether domestic energy customers living in park homes will qualify for the £200 discount on energy bills in autumn 2022 in the event that the supply is delivered through the park home site owner; and if he will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 24 May 2022]: The Government knows that there will be different considerations for consumers depending on their circumstances and the way in which they pay their energy bills, including park homes residents.

Households without a domestic supply contract are not eligible for this Scheme, but the Government is exploring options for other ways in which they might receive similar support.

The Government is currently analysing responses to the consultation '*Technical Consultation - Energy Bills Support Scheme. Managing the impact of the energy price shock on consumer bills*' and will publish its response later in the summer.

■ **Energy: Billing**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[3792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Contracts for Difference Allocation Round 4 on energy bills.

Greg Hands:

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon on 24th May 2022 to Question [2457](#).

■ Flexible Working**Imran Hussain:** [\[3617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to impose a legal duty on employers to consider which flexible working arrangements are available for each role within their organisation.

Paul Scully:

Employees in Great Britain have a statutory right to request a flexible working arrangement from their employer. Under this framework, employers already have a legal duty to consider whether such requests can be accommodated within their organisation.

■ Housing: Insulation**Afzal Khan:** [\[1328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help insulate houses in (a) Manchester, Gorton constituency, (b) Manchester and (c) the UK.

Greg Hands:

The Government is supporting a number of schemes to insulate homes and introducing a zero-rate of VAT for five years on measures including insulation and low-carbon heating.

The (£786m) Local Authority Delivery, Home Upgrade Grant (£1.1bn) and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (£1bn), bring the Government's investment for decarbonising buildings across this parliament to £6.6 billion.

1,586 homes in Manchester, including 77 in Gorton, have signed up under Phases 1 and 2 of the Local Authority Delivery schemes up to February 2022.

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority is delivering a project under Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (Wave 1) to treat 1,286 homes.

■ Insolvency Service: Brighton**Caroline Lucas:** [\[5641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the proposal to close the Insolvency Service office in Brighton, where interviews previously carried out at the Brighton office will take place instead.

Paul Scully:

Following the planned closure of the Brighton Office in June 2025, interviews will be held in either a local interview facility or at one of the Insolvency Service's 11 Regional Centres. Alternatively, interviews will be conducted remotely using telephone and online channels, this is already established practice where it works for both the individual and the Insolvency Service.

Caroline Lucas: [5642]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what equality impact assessment has been carried out of the proposed closure of the Insolvency Service office in Brighton; and if he will place a copy of its findings in the Library.

Paul Scully:

An overarching Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for all offices, including Brighton, affected by the plan to restructure the Insolvency Service's estate to eleven regional offices. A copy of this will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

■ Insolvency Service: Closures

Johnny Mercer: [6826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of facilitating (a) public consultation and (b) parliamentary scrutiny prior to closing (i) Plymouth and (ii) other Insolvency Service offices; and whether he has made an assessment of the practicalities of requiring staff to relocate in the context of subsequent long commuting times.

Paul Scully:

There has been engagement with a number of stakeholders to date and this will continue as the Insolvency Service transitions from 21 offices to 11 regional centres over the next three years.

Individual office business cases and impact assessments will be monitored as the project progresses. The Insolvency Service is in discussion with affected employees on a range of options, including flexible working and help with increased travel costs, to support a move to their nearest regional centre location

■ Limited Liability

Claire Hanna: [5694]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many limited partnerships have been established in (a) England, (b) Scotland and (c) Wales since 2017.

Paul Scully:

The official statistics on companies and the total size of the register are made publicly available online by Companies House. The most recent data can be found [here](#), and shows that between 2016/17 to 2020/21 inclusive, 9,620 limited partnerships were established in Scotland. The statistics for England and Wales are combined; 4,334 limited partnerships were established in England and Wales in this same period.

■ Limited Liability: Northern Ireland

Claire Hanna: [\[5691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to help reform regulation and practice on Northern Ireland limited partnerships; and if he make a statement.

Paul Scully:

The Government outlined its proposals for limited partnership reform in December 2018 in response to a consultation (link [here](#)). Although this is a devolved matter for Northern Ireland, the approach has traditionally been for Northern Ireland to follow the United Kingdom's legislative practice. The proposals across the United Kingdom include tightening registration requirements, requiring limited partnerships to demonstrate a firmer connection to the United Kingdom, increasing transparency requirements, and enabling the Registrar to strike from the register limited partnerships which are dissolved, or which are no longer carrying on business. The Government will legislate these reforms when Parliamentary time allows.

Claire Hanna: [\[5692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department made an assessment of the potential implications for Northern Ireland limited partnerships when the Scottish Partnerships (Register of People with Significant Control) Regulations were introduced in 2017.

Paul Scully:

Scottish limited partnerships are unique, as they have their own legal personality, unlike limited partnerships in Northern Ireland, England and Wales. The Scottish Partnerships (Register of People with Significant Control) Regulations should therefore not have had any significant impact on demand for Northern Ireland limited partnerships.

Claire Hanna: [\[5693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many Northern Ireland Limited partnerships have been registered in Northern Ireland in each year since 2017.

Paul Scully:

The official statistics on companies and the total size of the register are made publicly available online by Companies House. The most recent data can be found [here](#), and shows that 73 limited partnerships were registered in Northern Ireland in 2016/17, 349 in 2017/18, 63 in 2018/19, 40 in 2019/20 and 32 in 2020/21.

■ Manufacturing Industries: Government Assistance

Matt Vickers: [\[3770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support the manufacturing sector in the UK.

Lee Rowley:

Manufacturing is a bedrock of our country's resilience and there is significant work underway to strengthen our industrial base, including substantial funding for projects in important sub-sectors such as aerospace, automotive and life sciences.

Furthermore, we have committed over £150 million of taxpayer subsidy for Made Smarter, the national industrial digitalisation programme to help UK manufacturers to capitalise on new digital technologies.

Later this year we will launch the UK's new manufacturing investment prospectus so we can promote the UK as the destination of choice for investment in manufacturing and help the sector make the most of what support is already available.

■ Minerals

Alexander Stafford: [\[4737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department plans to publish the Critical Minerals Strategy.

Alexander Stafford: [\[4738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what funding (a) his Department, (b) the Government and (c) other UK entities provide for domestic critical mineral exploration in the UK.

Lee Rowley:

The Critical Minerals Strategy is expected to be published this year and will review how the existing funding landscape and other policies support the sector.

Existing funds such as the Automotive Transformation Fund, National Security Strategic Investment Fund, UK Infrastructure Bank, UK Export Finance and R&D via the National Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Research are available to support investments at various points along the critical minerals value chain in specific sectors. For example, Cornish Lithium has received support via the Getting Building Fund (2020) and Automotive Transformation Fund (2021) and British Lithium has received grant funding from Innovate UK (2020) and the Sustainable Innovation Fund (2021).

■ Minerals: Exploration

Alexander Stafford: [\[5513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help encourage (a) domestic critical minerals exploration and (b) mining finance in the UK.

Alexander Stafford: [\[5514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help ensure the competitiveness of the UK's critical minerals legislative framework compared with that of competitor countries.

Alexander Stafford: [\[5515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to take steps to assist domestic critical minerals exploration through grants as its predecessor, the Department of Trade and Industry, did via the MEIGA and MRP programmes.

Alexander Stafford: [\[5516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact grants awarded by other countries to assist domestic critical minerals exploration on that sector in those countries.

Lee Rowley:

The Government will publish a UK Critical Minerals Strategy in 2022, setting out our approach to securing technology-critical minerals and metals. This will take into account the types of support offered by other nations and input from the Critical Minerals Expert Committee.

Funds such as the Automotive Transformation Fund, National Security Strategic Investment Fund, UK Infrastructure Bank, UK Export Finance, and R&D via the National Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Research are available to support investments at various points along the critical minerals value chain in specific sectors. For example, Cornish Lithium has received support via the Getting Building Fund (2020) and Automotive Transformation Fund (2021) and British Lithium has received grant funding from Innovate UK (2020) and the Sustainable Innovation Fund (2021).

■ Miscarriage: Bereavement Leave

Justin Madders: [\[3644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has plans to introduce a right to bereavement leave following the miscarriage of a baby before 24 weeks of pregnancy.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises that the loss of a child at any age is tragic and deeply upsetting. In April 2020 we legislated to give parents who lose a child under the age of 18 years a right to take up to two weeks off work in the 56 weeks following the death of their child. This right extends to parents of babies stillborn after 24 completed weeks of pregnancy.

Miscarriage is a very personal experience and some of those affected may want to stay at home, whilst others may prefer to continue to work or alternatively may need time off later. The Government believes that individuals are best placed to understand their own specific needs, and good employers will respond to requests made by their employees in a sensitive way.

■ Modern Working Practices Review

Justin Madders:

[\[3635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to implement the outstanding recommendations of the Taylor Review.

Paul Scully:

We have made significant progress in implementing the recommendations of the Taylor Review, including closing the loophole which saw agency works employed on cheaper rates than permanent workers; quadrupling the maximum fine for employers who treat their workers badly; and giving all workers the right to receive a statement of their rights from day one.

The Government is committed to building on this record to deliver a high skilled, high productivity, high wage economy that delivers on our ambition to make the UK the best place in the world to work.

■ Nuclear Power

Matt Vickers:

[\[3767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to deliver new and advanced nuclear power in the UK.

Greg Hands:

The Government intends to take one project to Final Investment Decision (FID) this Parliament and two projects in the next Parliament, subject to value for money, approvals and technology readiness/maturity.

The Government will set up a new flagship body - 'Great British Nuclear' - to develop a resilient pipeline of projects. The Government appointed Simon Bowen to lead and help drive forward government proposals for a new Great British Nuclear vehicle.

On the 13th of May 2022, the Government launched the £120million Future Nuclear Enabling Fund, which will provide targeted support to address barriers to entry to the nuclear market, with a Request for Information.

■ Offshore Industry: Carbon Emissions

Dan Carden:

[\[5675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 18 May 2022 to Question 418, on Offshore Industry: Carbon Emissions, what assessment the Government has made of the Jackdaw project's compatibility with targets for the oil and gas sector set out in the North Sea Transition Deal and the UK's carbon budgets and net zero target.

Greg Hands:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 18 May 2022 to Question [418](#).

■ Offshore Industry: Government Assistance

Matt Vickers: [\[3769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support the UK's oil and gas sector.

Greg Hands:

The North Sea Transition Deal sets out how the Government is working with the offshore oil and gas industry in partnership to achieve a managed energy transition, which leaves no-one behind.

In April, the Government published the British Energy Security Strategy, setting out plans to support the North Sea as a foundation of our energy security, This includes plans for the North Sea Transition Authority to launch another licensing round in the autumn, taking into account the forthcoming climate compatibility checkpoint and the need for energy security; as well as Gas and Oil New Project Regulatory Accelerators.

■ Parental Leave

Justin Madders: [\[3643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to introduce paid leave for parents with children who require neonatal care.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises that parents of babies receiving neonatal care need extra support during some of the most difficult days of their lives.

The Government is committed to introducing Neonatal Leave and Pay to meet this need and will bring forward legislation when Parliamentary time allows.

Justin Madders: [\[3646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the length of (a) Statutory Maternity Leave and (b) Statutory Paternity Leave.

Paul Scully:

The UK's Maternity Leave entitlement is one of the most generous in the world, with employed women entitled to 52 weeks of maternity leave, of which 39 are paid.

Our Paternity Leave entitlement enables eligible employed fathers to take two weeks of paid leave within the first eight weeks following the birth or adoption placement. Eligible employed fathers also have other entitlements to balance work with childcare, including paid annual leave, unpaid parental leave and the right to request flexible working.

Shared Parental Leave allows eligible parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay in the first year.

In 2019, the Government consulted on high-level options for reforming parental leave and pay. We are currently considering responses to the consultation and will respond in due course.

■ **Pregnancy: Redundancy**

Justin Madders: [\[3641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has plans to extend redundancy protections for pregnant women.

Justin Madders: [\[3645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has plans to strengthen employment protections for pregnant women.

Paul Scully:

The Maternity and Parental Leave etc. Regulations 1999 currently give women on maternity leave priority over other employees who are also at risk of redundancy. Employers have an obligation to offer women on maternity leave a suitable alternative vacancy where one is available.

The Government has committed to extending this protection from redundancy so that it will start at the point the employee informs the employer that she is pregnant and will continue for a period after she has returned to work.

We will introduce these measures when Parliamentary time allows.

■ **Re-employment**

Imran Hussain: [\[3619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department plans to introduce its proposed statutory code on fire and rehire.

Imran Hussain: [\[3620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with trade unions on the proposed statutory code of practice on fire and rehire practices.

Imran Hussain: [\[3621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with employers on the proposed statutory code of practice on fire and rehire practices.

Paul Scully:

The Government remains committed to bringing forward a new statutory code on the practice of dismissal and re-engagement (fire and rehire).

Work is underway and BEIS Officials have already met with key stakeholders to discuss the drafting of the statutory code.

We will publish a draft for consultation in due course and bring the code into force when Parliamentary time allows.

■ Self-employed

Justin Madders: [\[3633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps he has taken to strengthen protections for the self-employed.

Paul Scully:

An individual's entitlement to employment rights at work is determined by their employment status, employee, worker or self-employed.

Self-employed individuals should expect to have the most flexibility and control over how and when they work. It is a category for those who run and manage their own business. Generally, self-employed individuals have no statutory employment rights but are entitled to some health and safety protections/obligations as well as anti-discrimination rights when they are contracted by a customer or client.

The UK labour market is performing strongly with high employment and low unemployment and the Government's three-tiered employment status framework strikes the right balance between the flexibility our economy needs and worker protections.

■ Solar Power

Alicia Kearns: [\[3756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the policy paper entitled British energy security strategy, published in April 2022, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that large solar developments are located on previously developed or lower value land and not on graded agricultural land.

Greg Hands:

The Government recognises the need to preserve the UK's arable farmland. Planning guidance prioritises effective land use and encourages siting large solar projects on previously developed land. Where solar project proposals involve greenfield land, lower quality land should be used where possible, and projects need to justify using better quality land classifications.

The Government will consult on changing planning rules for ground-mounted solar to strengthen policy in favour of development, while ensuring communities continue to have a say and environmental protections remain in place.

■ Unfair Dismissal

Justin Madders: [\[3634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps he has taken to ensure that workers are protected against unfair dismissal.

Paul Scully:

There are laws in place to ensure that any dismissal process should be fair and reasonable with appropriate equalities considerations. Employees who believe that they have been unfairly dismissed should seek advice from Acas. Employees with the necessary qualifying service who believe that they have been unfairly dismissed can complain to an employment tribunal who will consider the case.

Unfair Dismissal: Pregnancy**Justin Madders:**[\[3647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the number of (a) pregnant women and (b) new mothers who have been unfairly dismissed in each of the last three years.

Paul Scully:

Employment Tribunal (ET) statistics report the number of complaints received under the 'Suffer a detriment and/or dismissal on grounds of pregnancy, child birth or maternity' jurisdiction for each year back to 2013 and is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2021>

This data represents all complaints that were received by the ET. Note this jurisdiction captures complainants who reported they suffered a detriment but not necessarily a dismissal, it is not possible to separate these cases due to the way the data is recorded.

Vacancies: Advertising**Imran Hussain:**[\[3618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to impose a legal duty on employers to state in job advertisements whether flexible working arrangements are available.

Paul Scully:

The Government's proposals for flexible working were set set out in our consultation, which was published in September 2021.

Wind Power: Seas and Oceans**Matt Vickers:**[\[3768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support the generation of offshore wind in the UK.

Greg Hands:

The British Energy Security Strategy increased the ambition for offshore wind to up to 50GW by 2030 and outlined the Government's commitment to accelerating deployment, reducing the consenting time for wind farms from up to four years to one year.

Generation of offshore wind is supported through the Contracts for Difference (CfD) scheme. The Fourth CfD Allocation Round is underway, and the Fifth Round will open in March 2023 – the first in a series of annual CfD auctions.

The Government has also announced up to £320 million to support offshore wind ports and factories.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office: Staff

Angela Rayner: [\[5660\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many officials in his Department are employed to work on human resources.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

In the Cabinet Office, those working on HR are found in Cabinet Office People and Places and in Civil Service Human Resources (CSHR).

Cabinet Office People and Places employs 119.4 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff. The team provides expert HR services and operations that mean the Cabinet Office can attract and retain a diverse workforce that meet the future skills and capability required, develop our people at all levels and build our inclusive culture. Much of what the team does is ongoing professional HR advice, policy, assurance and controls, employee relations and case management, workforce management and controls, learning and talent management, HR operations. People and Places includes estates, locations programme and health & safety staff.

CSHR employs 519 FTE who support ministers, departments, functions and professions to deliver the Civil Service workforce and skills agendas. We must have the best people leading and working in government, with both specialist and generalist knowledge and skills, and we must attract the best people, as set out in the Declaration on Government Reform. The Government Skills and Curriculum Unit works to ensure that these skills and capabilities are developed further, which sits alongside targeted work on external recruitment and secondments to ensure that we are bringing the best people into the Civil Service. CSHR also sets standards for HR professionalism in government and supports all Civil Service employers with employee policy, guidance, data and central expertise, including on pay and reward.

■ Cabinet: Public Opinion

Angela Rayner: [\[5664\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Answer of 25 April 2022 to Question 156487, whether his Department holds information on its expenditure on (a) research and (b) insight services in 2021.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

The Department records information about Research and Development on its accounting system. In 2021, based on the value of invoices recorded, the Department spent £16.539m.

This category covers a broad range of services including qualitative and quantitative analysis, early discovery projects, reports on a range of policy and delivery issues and insight. It is not possible to split out spend separately on research or insight services from the overall total. This would require a manual review of expenditure, and as some contracts will cover multiple types of research this could only be provided at disproportionate costs.

Death**Rachael Maskell:**[\[3669\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people have had (a) poverty, (b) hypothermia and (c) hunger recognised as a contributing factor to their death through either (i) physical and (ii) mental health in the latest period for which that data is available.

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 17 May is attached.

Attachments:

1. [UKSA response \[UKSA_Response_to_3669\(1\)\(1\)\].pdf](#)

COP26**Cabinet Office: Staff****Angela Rayner:**[\[5661\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, how many officials in his Department are working on COP26.

Alok Sharma:

There are around 120 civil servants currently working in the COP26 unit in the Cabinet Office. They are continuing to support the UK's COP Presidency, which runs until November 2022, and secure the legacy of the Glasgow Climate Pact.

Climate Change: Finance**Ruth Jones:**[\[2646\]](#)

To ask the President for COP26, whether he plans to advance the work of the Glasgow Dialogue Pact to support the creation of a loss and damage finance fund by COP27; and if he will take steps to advance efforts to mobilise finance from wealthy nations towards that fund.

Alok Sharma:

The Glasgow Climate Pact (GCP) put in place a new Glasgow Dialogue that will discuss the arrangements for the funding of activities to avert, minimise and address loss and damage, but it did not agree to the creation of a loss and damage finance fund by COP27. The first dialogue will take place in June 2022, and further dialogues will take place every year to 2024. The GCP also noted existing funding for climate, disaster reduction and response is relevant to loss and damage.

We continue to encourage donors to increase the attention given to loss and damage which was reiterated at the Ministerial meeting including over 40 governments, hosted by Denmark on 12th and 13th May and co-chaired by the UK and Egypt.

DEFENCE**■ Armed Forces: Coronavirus**

David Linden: [\[5674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many members of the armed forces have faced (a) consequential penalties, (b) minor administrative action and (c) other forms of warnings or counselling as a result of breaching covid-19 regulations.

Leo Docherty:

The information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ Armed Forces: Discharges

James Gray: [\[3460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces personnel were dishonourably discharged between 1980 and 2000 because of their sexual orientation.

James Gray: [\[3461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what penalties were imposed on armed forces personnel who were dishonourably discharged because of their sexual orientation between 1980 and 2000.

James Gray: [\[3462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether recompense has been made to those who lost their pensions, medals and status as a result of being dishonourably discharged due to their sexual orientation during 1980-2000.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence and the Office for Veterans' Affairs within the Cabinet Office are jointly commissioning an independent review to better understand the impacts and implications of the pre 2000 ban on homosexuals serving in the Armed Forces. The review underlines Defence's unwavering commitment to understanding how best to support its veteran and LGBT+ community. Defence recognises and accepts that

its historic policies were unacceptable and that its LGBT+ veteran community suffered as a consequence.

The scope of those dishonourably discharged due to their sexual orientation is currently unknown and a cross-departmental programme of work is underway to better understand the size of the affected cohort. Defence expects the review will provide further context and insights into the lived experience of our veteran community and allow us to take effective and genuine steps towards a more inclusive future for all.

Work is currently underway to appoint an independent review chair and the independent review is expected to commence in the near future following their appointment. The independent review chair and the terms of reference for the review will be announced in due course. The independent review team can be contacted via email: Lgbtveteransreview@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Defence is proactively working with the Home Office to enable more veterans to apply for a disregard of service convictions relating to sexuality. We have also introduced policy allowing veterans to apply for restoration of medals forfeited upon dismissal based on sexuality. To date, seven applications have been received and one veteran has had their medals restored. The other cases remain under review in light of the recent Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. Every case has required careful consideration of the circumstances and reference to contemporary records – some from several decades ago. We invite any personnel who were discharged from service due to their sexuality, to apply to have their forfeited medals restored by visiting: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/military-awards-commemorations>

We take the wellbeing of all those who have served extremely seriously and are determined that the Armed Forces Covenant is upheld, meaning those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly and all veterans, irrespective of when they served and how they left the Services are entitled to access the provisions of the Covenant. Former service personnel can access specialist medical care from the NHS, and every part of the UK now has a dedicated mental health service for veterans. Veterans can also call the Defence-funded 24-hour helpline, the Veterans' Gateway, in times of need: <https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk> (0808 802 1212)

■ Armed Forces: Employment

Jamie Stone:

[4660]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the potential cost savings of reducing the armed forces by up to 10,000 personnel by 2025.

James Heappey:

Whilst the Regular Army reorganises to its new structure of 73,000, naturally this will result in workforce cost savings. The reduction of the Army to 73,000 by 2025 has

been estimated to present £3.9 billion in savings over the 10 years following the financial year 2021-22.

The Department is delivering record investment in the Army, providing £41.3 billion in support of existing platforms and new equipment.

■ Armed Forces: Recruitment

John Healey: [\[4475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 18 May 2022 to Question 1482 on Armed Forces: Recruitment, how many formal complaints about the Defence Recruitment System have been received by his Department in each year since 2017.

Leo Docherty:

Since the Defence Recruiting System was launched in 2017, 34 formal complaints have been received relating to access and use of the candidate portal.

CALENDAR YEAR	NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS
2017	0
2018	18
2019	5
2020	9
2021	0
2022 (as of 19 May)	2

■ Defence Equipment

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[5363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 16 May 2022 to Question 637 on Defence equipment, what the inaccuracies are in the Public Accounts Committee report.

Mr Ben Wallace:

As indicated in the answer provided to the right hon. Member on 16 May 2022 to Question 637, the Department is in the process of raising its concerns directly with the Public Accounts Committee.

Attachments:

1. [Defence Equipment \[UIN637.docx\]](#)

■ EU Defence Policy

Jamie Stone: [\[5673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the EU's Action Plan on Military Mobility.

James Heappey:

As a non-EU country, the UK is not subject to the EU's Action Plan on Military Mobility but works closely with European partners on military mobility issues through NATO and the Northern Group. Moving military personnel and assets across Europe quickly and efficiently remains important, and the UK supports broader efforts that are coherent with NATO's and the Northern Group's.

■ Gulf War Syndrome

Stephanie Peacock: [\[5472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the conclusions of the paper by Robert W. Haley et al. entitled Evaluation of a gene-environment interaction of PON1 and low-level nerve agent exposure with Gulf War illness, published on 11 May 2022.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[5473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what data his Department holds on the number of British Armed Forces personnel exposed to sarin gas during the Gulf War.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[5474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what data his Department holds on the number of UK Armed Forces veterans with symptoms of Gulf War Illness.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[5475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what support is available for people suffering from Gulf War Illness.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[5476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what data his Department (a) holds and (b) plans to collect on the (i) causes of and (ii) treatments for Gulf War Illness.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[5477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of an inquiry into Gulf War Illness.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) continues to monitor and welcome any new research on Gulf War issues that is published around the world. New research will be considered carefully, and a determination made to assesses if our current policies and compensation arrangements remain appropriate. The majority of information held by the MOD concerning the 1990/91 Gulf conflict, now being some thirty years ago, has long since been transferred to the National Archives:

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20050328202002/http://www.mod.uk/issues/gulfwar/index.html>

What data MOD does still hold is primarily limited to War Pensions data on veterans' symptoms/conditions and veterans who were awarded compensation for those conditions. Help and support is available for any veteran who requests it through a variety of sources, including the Veterans Welfare Service, the Veterans Gateway, and Veterans UK. Gulf War veterans who believe they have suffered ill health due to service have the right to apply for no-fault compensation under the War Pensions Scheme. War Pensions are payable in respect of illness or injury as a result of service in the Armed Forces before 6 April 2005, with the benefit of reasonable doubt always given to the claimant. Decisions are medically certified and follow consideration of available service and medical evidence, contemporary medical understanding of the causes of claimed disorders, and the relevant standard of proof. The decisions carry full rights of appeal to an independent Tribunal. All Gulf veterans who are ill receive appropriate medical care from the NHS and will receive priority treatment, subject to clinical need, in England, Scotland, and Wales if their condition is as a result of their military service.

Contemporary medical and scientific understanding from the mid-1990s onwards has identified no distinct disease process or pathology underlying Gulf symptoms and illness. In line with the Medical Research Council (MRC) review of 2003, which recommended no further research on possible causation of Gulf illness, the MOD has no plans to institute further research into Gulf conflict related illnesses nor to hold an inquiry. The UK Government's strategy on research topics and studies into the health of Gulf War veterans has been informed and overseen by independent scientific experts nominated by the MRC, taking account of published peer-reviewed international literature and international studies.

■ Ministry of Defence: Data Protection

John Healey:

[5344]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many data breaches of MOD and supply chain systems, have resulted in the stolen data being found for sale on the dark web.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence takes cyber security, including that of its supply chains, very seriously. The Department is aware of one incident in the period 1 January 2016 - 20 May 2022 where information obtained from a breach in a MOD supply chain system was subsequently found to be for sale on the dark web. For security reasons we do not comment on specific details of cyber-attacks, as to do so could provide useful information for our adversaries.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ ICT: Older People**

Rachael Maskell: [\[5442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she will develop a strategy to increase digital inclusion for older people.

Rachael Maskell: [\[5443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she (a) is taking and (b) plans to take enable older people to (i) engage with IT and (ii) learn how to use it.

Rachael Maskell: [\[5444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a loaning scheme to give older people laptops, tablets or phones to enable familiarisation and to trial usage of IT devices.

Rachael Maskell: [\[5445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make it her policy to support an e-cycle scheme in order that high quality IT equipment can be repurposed to be used by older people.

Rachael Maskell: [\[5446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with IT companies on commissioning an app to help older people to use electronic devices and access basic services online.

Rachael Maskell: [\[5447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to increase access to online services for those who have limited access to technology.

Rachael Maskell: [\[5448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of enabling people in receipt of pension credit to receive free broadband.

Rachael Maskell: [\[5449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of enabling people on pension credit to loan a laptop or tablet from their library.

Rachael Maskell: [\[5450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to ensure that all older people have access to free training on how to use a laptop or tablet.

Chris Philp:

The Government is focused on building a world-leading digital economy that works for everyone. DCMS is responsible for coordinating HMG digital inclusion policy, and aims to ensure that as many people as possible, no matter their age, have a base level of digital skills, as well as internet access.

The cross-cutting nature of digital inclusion means that relevant policies and levers sit across multiple government departments. Rather than setting out a standalone strategy for digital inclusion, DCMS works with the rest of government to ensure departments take digitally excluded people into consideration when delivering public services.

To improve access to digital skills, the government has introduced a digital entitlement for adults with no or low digital skills. This allows older people wishing to acquire essential digital skills to gain specified digital qualifications, up to level 1, free of charge. Essential Digital Skills Qualifications (EDSQs), introduced alongside the digital entitlement, are based on new national standards which set out the digital skills people need to get on in life and work. We also support the provision of essential digital skills training in community settings through the Adult Education Budget.

Public libraries play an important role in tackling digital exclusion. Around 2,900 public libraries in England provide a trusted network of accessible locations with staff, volunteers, free wifi, public PCs, and assisted digital access to a wide range of digital services. Volunteers and library staff have been trained in digital skills so that they can provide library users with support in using digital applications and services.

Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, it falls to local authorities to deliver a comprehensive and efficient library provision that meets local needs. It is not for the department to require the precise provision of library services. The provision of portable devices to lend is something library services are increasingly delivering. We know that at least a quarter of library services in England already provide portable electronic devices for loan, generally targeted at those more likely to be digitally disadvantaged.

Help is available for low income households to access broadband, mobile and landline services. A range of low-cost social tariffs are available to those on Universal Credit, and a number specifically include individuals on Pension Credit. These tariffs are available to eligible households in 99% of the UK. Ofcom, the independent regulator, has a statutory duty to review the affordability of telecommunication services, and we continue to work closely with Ofcom to monitor the market.

We understand that some older people are also hesitant to access online services because they fear that they may become victims of fraud, or that it is an unsafe environment for their personal data. For this reason, we are taking a number of steps to improve the safety and trustworthiness of the online space, including:

- Increasing online safety by introducing the Online Safety Bill to Parliament, which sets new rules for firms which host user-generated content, and focuses on protecting people from online scams.

- Enabling the widespread use of secure and accessible digital identity solutions that meet the needs of all those who wish to use them, by setting standards, establishing governance, removing legislative blockers, and engaging with industry and civil society groups.

There are currently no plans to introduce an e-cycle scheme for IT equipment, or commission an app for older people. We are aware that for older people with disabilities, poor design of apps or websites can be a significant barrier to online access. The Central Digital and Data Office monitors compliance with the regulations for the accessibility of public sector websites. Charities such as Age UK and AbilityNet play an important role in assisting people with access to technology and the internet.

■ Internet: Self-harm and Suicide

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[5349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take the steps to restrict online content that promotes suicide and self-harm to (a) children under 18, and (b) people of all ages, through the provisions of the Online Safety Bill.

Chris Philp:

The Online Safety Bill will offer strong protections for users of all ages from content promoting suicide and self-harm. Encouraging or assisting the suicide of another person is named as a priority offence in the Bill. All services in scope of the bill will need to take proportionate steps to prevent users from being exposed to this content.

The strongest protections in the Bill are for children, and providers of services which are likely to be accessed by children will need to protect them from harmful suicide and self-harm content, even if it is not illegal. Category 1 services (high risk, high reach services) will also need to set out in terms and conditions their policies for addressing harmful content to adults.

Search services play a key role in enabling users to encounter harmful content, such as content promoting self-harm and suicide. These services also have duties under the Bill to minimise all users' exposure to illegal content, and minimise children's exposure to harmful content in search results.

■ Mobile Phones: Data Protection

Chi Onwurah:

[\[5655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to help protect consumers from the sale of mobile tracking data (a) within the UK and (b) abroad.

Julia Lopez:

Organisations seeking to use cookies and similar technologies that track information about people accessing online services have to comply with the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 (PECR), the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). Subject

to relevant exemptions, any use of cookies and similar technologies requires the provision of clear and comprehensive information as well as the consent of the user or subscriber.

The legislation does not expressly prohibit or permit the selling and sharing of people's data, but regulates the circumstances in which data sharing can take place. The ICO has published a statutory Code of Practice on data sharing which contains practical guidance for organisations on how to share data fairly and lawfully, and how to meet their accountability obligations. The Code is available [here](#).

The ICO has a number of powers to tackle the unlawful processing of personal data, including the power to serve enforcement notices requiring organisations to stop the processing or to erase the data, and the power to serve civil monetary penalties. The ICO can also investigate and prosecute criminal offences under the DPA. Those guilty of such offences can be subject to unlimited fines in the courts.

EDUCATION

■ Academies

Stephen Morgan:

[\[5485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his Department's policy is on what exceptional circumstances a school with a Good or Outstanding Ofsted rating under control of a multi-academy trust could request to the regulator to move to the control of a different multi-academy trust.

Mr Robin Walker:

As set out in the Schools White Paper, the department will be consulting on the exceptional circumstances in which a good school could request that the regulator agrees to the school moving to a stronger trust.

■ Children: Social Services

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[3516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of when Ofsted's most recent assessment of Tameside Children's Services will be published.

Will Quince:

A full inspection of Tameside's local authority children's services was last completed in May 2019. The report was published on 1 July 2019 with a rating 'requires improvement to be good'.

For local authorities judged 'requires improvement', like Tameside, up to two focused visits will be completed in between full inspections. Tameside has recently had a focused visit and the report is expected to be published on 6 June 2022.

Andrew Gwynne:

[3517]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of appointing (a) an independent Children's Trust and (b) Commissioners to manage Tameside Children's Services.

Will Quince:

The safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people remains a priority. The decision to intervene in a local authority is not taken lightly, and it is important to base that decision on robust evidence of failure. The department acts quickly and decisively to intervene in local authorities found to be failing in their delivery of children's social care and judged inadequate by Ofsted.

In line with the department's intervention policy set out in 'Putting Children First', whenever Ofsted finds children's social care services to be inadequate, an adviser is provided to diagnose problems and support the council on their improvement journey. The government would expect most of those councils to improve with support and challenge from experts.

A commissioner is usually appointed, when council failure is systemic or has become persistent, to determine whether the council has the capacity and capability to improve children's social care services in a reasonable timeframe. If not, services will be removed from council control for a period of time and transferred to a different organisation (usually a Trust) in order to secure sustainable improvement.

Tameside Children's Services are currently rated as 'requires improvement'. The department's improvement programme seeks to identify and work collaboratively with local authorities who require targeted support to help them improve the services they provide to vulnerable children. The government has increased the amount of funded sector-led improvement activity that can be delivered from 2021 by expanding our cohort of strong performing local authorities to work as sector-led improvement partners.

'Putting Children First' is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/putting-children-first-our-vision-for-childrens-social-care>.

Andrew Gwynne:

[3518]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will meet the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish to discuss Ofsted's finding of serious failings at Tameside Children's Services.

Will Quince:

I would be happy to meet the hon. Member to discuss Ofsted's findings once the report has been published.

Alexander Stafford:

[3797]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that service providers are held accountable if they do not meet their legal duties in respect of support to disabled children and their families.

Will Quince:

Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are a priority and where a local area is deemed to be underperforming, either by way of inspection or concerns raised, the department does not hesitate to intervene, including in cases of systemic and/or persistent failure. For example, we may issue a formal improvement notice or use powers under Section 497A of the Education Act 1996 to issue a statutory direction directing the Council to take any further actions we deem necessary, which may include requiring the responsible local authority to work with a SEND commissioner.

The department continues to work with Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission on the development of a new area SEND inspection framework. It is important that this is in line with the policy direction of the SEND and AP green paper but also ensures that we are able to support and hold local areas to account prior to the full implementation of any new reforms. Inspection has a key role in the continuing improvement of SEND services, both by identifying good practice and by highlighting areas of weakness where improvement is needed. It remains the department's priority that local areas provide the right services at the right time for children and young people with SEND.

Where families wish to seek redress or otherwise resolve disagreements about education, health and care needs assessments or plans, they have the option to do so via disagreement resolution, mediation, or by registering an appeal with the first-tier tribunal (SEND). The department is currently consulting on proposals to strengthen this system in the SEND and AP green paper.

Alexander Stafford:

[3798]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure every disabled child, young person, and their families receive the social care support they need.

Will Quince:

The department's £18 million supported internship scheme will help more people into sustained paid employment. The department is also making better respite care available for those who care for children with special educational needs and disabilities, with councils invited to bid for an extra £30 million for the next three years to set up more than 10,000 additional short break and respite placements for vulnerable children.

Local authorities have access to £54.1 billion core spending power in the 2022/23 financial year to deliver their services, including for children and young people, this is £3.7 billion more than in the 2021/22 financial year.

As part of this, the government has boosted the social care grant, increasing it by £636 million, and so bringing it to a total of around £2.35 billion in the 2022/23 financial year. Local authorities will have access to a one-off Services Grant in the 2022/23 financial year which is worth over £800 million and can be used for all services, including children's social care.

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care is due to set out its final recommendations this spring, and the department will consider those relevant to early help to inform any next steps.

■ Educational Institutions: Coronavirus

Charlotte Nichols:

[4707]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has provided to (a) schools, (b) colleges and (c) universities that want to make stocks of lateral flow covid-19 tests available to students and invigilators during the assessment and exams period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Robin Walker:

Public health advice continues to be that testing in education and childcare providers is no longer needed. Most infectious diseases in education and childcare settings can be managed by following the advice in UK Health Security Agency's (UKHSA) updated health protection in education and childcare settings guidance. Students and staff should follow UKHSA's advice for those who have symptoms.

As individuals are now mixing in an otherwise open society, regular testing within school and colleges is no longer as effective as it once was. Instead, the most effective protection against severe disease from COVID-19 for everyone, including those at higher risk from COVID-19, is to get vaccinated.

Although education providers may still have some unused test kits in stock, they should not continue to hand these out to staff or students or dispose of them (unless they have reached their expiry date).

The department are currently working with UKHSA to explore the options for removal of testing resources no longer required and repurpose or redeploy them as much as possible based on clinical need prioritisation.

In the meantime, settings should retain any surplus stock and may wish to note this in their contingency plans. The department has published emergency planning and response guidance for education and childcare settings here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings>.

■ Faith Schools: Admissions

Andrew Rosindell:

[3504]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has conducted a further assessment of the effectiveness of the continued existence of the 50 per cent rule

for schools following the 2016 Government consultation, Schools that Work for Everyone, which recommended the removal of the rule.

Mr Robin Walker:

The government strongly supports schools with a religious character and recognises that they are often high performing and popular with parents. We recognise that some groups, including the Catholic Church, feel unable to participate in the free schools programme because of the 50% cap on faith admissions.

The department is committed to ensuring that, once all schools are in academy trusts, all providers of schools with a religious character maintain their ability to open new schools.

The 50% cap will remain under review and the department is open to discussion with groups who provide schools with a religious character, including the Catholic Church.

■ **Food Technology**

Lee Anderson:

[\[3733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to improve the quality of education on (a) cooking and (b) budgeting.

Mr Robin Walker:

Cooking and nutrition is a discrete strand of the national curriculum for design and technology which was introduced as part of the 2014 design and technology curriculum and is compulsory for pupils from 5 to 14 years old. The curriculum aims to teach children how to cook, with an emphasis on savoury dishes, and how to apply the principles of healthy eating and nutrition. It recognises that cooking is an important life skill that will help children to feed themselves, and others, healthy and affordable food. Alongside this, a food preparation and nutrition GCSE was introduced in September 2016 which requires pupils to understand and apply the principles of food science, nutrition and healthy eating when preparing and cooking food. Furthermore, the Levelling Up White Paper confirmed the department's focus on school food quality and food education.

On budgeting, this is covered under financial education which is part of the maths and the citizenship curricula, demonstrating the importance that the government places on this topic. The maths curriculum provides content that develops pupils' knowledge and financial capability to make important decisions about mortgages and loan repayments. Financial literacy is also a statutory part of the citizenship curriculum for 11 to 16 year olds and pupils are taught the functions and uses of money. In both subjects, pupils are taught about topics that support personal budgeting, money management and understanding financial risk. The department wants to support schools to deliver good quality financial education and we work regularly with stakeholders to support them to do so.

■ Foster Care: Babies

Rachael Maskell: [\[3673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to increase the number of mother and baby fostering placements.

Rachael Maskell: [\[3674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will introduce a programme that (a) encourages and (b) trains families to provide mother and baby fostering placements.

Will Quince:

Local authorities have a duty to ensure they have sufficient placements to meet the needs of the looked after children in their area, this includes parent and child foster placements.

The department continues to prioritise supporting local authorities and foster carers to provide stable and loving foster homes. The department is investing in helping local authorities provide additional foster care places, including trialling different ways to plan and commission placements and developing a social media toolkit to help local authorities with no and low-cost recruitment activity.

The Fostering Services (England) Regulation 2011, and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, clearly set out the expectation that support and training is made available to foster carers to assist them in meeting the specific needs of the children they are caring for or are expected to care for. This would include ensuring that foster carers have the knowledge and skills required to support looked after children in a parent and child foster placement. The department also funds Fosterline and Fosterline Plus, an independent, confidential, and impartial service offering advice on fostering issues to any current and prospective foster carers.

■ Free School Meals: Asylum

Rachael Maskell: [\[3658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to introduce free school meals for children who have parents or carers seeking asylum in the UK.

Will Quince:

Under this government, eligibility for free school meals has been extended several times and to more groups of children than any other government over the past half a century.

Under the benefits-based criteria, 1.7 million of the most disadvantaged pupils are eligible for and claim a free school meal. This includes children of families in receipt of support under Section VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

In addition to this, free school meal eligibility was extended to children from all families subject to no recourse to public funds on April 19, 2022, building on the temporary extension to some groups that had been in place since 2020. Throughout this entire period, children from a subset of failed asylum seekers supported under

Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 have and continue to be eligible for free school meals.

■ **Housing: Insulation**

Mr Andrew Mitchell: [\[3481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Government is taking steps to align relevant apprenticeships with the schedule of public works on insulating housing.

Alex Burghart:

This is a matter for the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. I have asked its Chief Executive, Jennifer Coupland, to write to my hon. Friend, the Member for Sutton Coldfield, and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses when it is available.

■ **Mother and Baby Units**

Rachael Maskell: [\[3671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to ensure that women who have been in mother and baby placements are provided with the necessary support to enable their baby to remain with them once they have left.

Will Quince:

Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare.

Only as a last resort, after other steps have failed, can local authorities apply to the courts for a decision to be made about removing a child from his or her family, for the child's safety, where the child is suffering, or is at risk of suffering, significant harm.

Early help services also play an important role in promoting safe, stable and resilient families. The government is investing around £300 million to transform 'Start for Life' and family services in 75 local authorities across England and £695 million in the Supporting Families Programme to help support vulnerable children and their families.

Rachael Maskell: [\[3672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that every local authority has a mother and baby unit to help women develop good parenting skills where they present with need for a placement.

Will Quince:

The Department of Health and Social Care has responsibility for mother and baby units.

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 is clear that local authorities have a duty to provide services to children in need in their area. Where appropriate, this could include support for mothers who need help looking after their babies.

On 2 April 2022, the government announced the 75 local authorities eligible for a share of £302 million to create new Family Hubs in their areas. This includes £100 million to roll out bespoke parent-infant relationship and perinatal mental health support and £50 million for parenting programmes.

■ Primary Education: Inspections

Stephen Morgan: [\[5486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of primary schools previously judged Outstanding by Ofsted rating who retain that status when re-inspected under the control of a (a) local authority and (b) multi-academy trust over the last ten years.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department has not made such an assessment as between June 2012 and November 2020 schools judged to be Outstanding by Ofsted at their most recent inspection were exempt from further routine inspections. During this period, re-inspections of outstanding primary schools only took place if there were significant concerns and those schools would have been unrepresentative of primary schools in general.

■ Schools: Bullying

Sarah Owen: [\[3744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to tackle anti-Sikh bullying in schools.

Mr Robin Walker:

The government has sent a clear message that bullying should never be tolerated, and the department is committed to supporting schools to tackle it.

The department is providing over £2 million of funding, between 10 August 2021 and 31 March 2023, to five anti-bullying organisations to support schools to tackle bullying. This includes projects targeting bullying of groups who share protected characteristics, including race and faith and belief, such as those who are victims of hate related bullying.

All schools should set clear, reasonable and proportionate expectations of pupil behaviour in line with the department's guidance on behaviour and discipline in schools. It is for individual schools to develop their own best practice for managing behaviour in their school.

We are also making sure that all children in England will learn about respectful relationships, in person and online, as part of mandatory relationships, sex and health education. This includes content on the different types of bullying, the impact it has, the responsibility of bystanders, and how to get help.

The department continues to publish information, guidance and support for teachers and school leaders on how to challenge radical views, including racist and

discriminatory beliefs, on Educate Against Hate . We also provide advice for schools, which outlines schools' responsibilities. This advice makes clear that schools should make appropriate provision for a bullied child's social, emotional and mental health needs.

■ Schools: Energy

Andrew Rosindell:

[3505]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has made to help schools with rising energy prices in Havering.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department recognises that schools will be facing financial pressures in the coming months, particularly due to the increase in energy prices. We are looking carefully at how this will impact schools and considering what additional support could be offered.

The department is contacting all schools in England, asking them to complete a survey, to get basic data on their current and future energy tariffs. We hope to better understand how they have been affected by recent energy price increases, and to inform considerations of additional support that could be offered. The survey is open until 2 June 2022, and all schools are encouraged to respond, and can be accessed via the following link: <https://bit.ly/DfEEnergysurvey>.

Cost increases should be considered in the wider context of funding for schools. The government is delivering a £4 billion cash increase in the core schools budget next year, taking total funding to £53.8 billion. This includes an additional £1.2 billion for schools in the new schools supplementary grant for the 2022/23 financial year. Overall, this represents a 7% cash terms per pupil boost, which will help schools meet the pressures we know they are facing, particularly around energy costs.

Through the Dedicated Schools Grant and the indicative figures for the Schools Supplementary Grant for mainstream schools combined, funding in Havering is forecast to see an extra £14.3 million for schools in 2022/23, taking total funding for 2022/23 in Havering to over £211.7 million. This is an average increase of 5.7% per pupil (this per pupil funding increase excludes growth funding, which is additional funding, provided for schools seeing significant increases in pupil numbers).

All schools can access a range of school resource management (SRM) tools to help them get the best value from their resources, save on regular purchases, and reduce non-teaching costs. The department's SRM tools include recommended deals for energy costs and ancillary services relating to energy. The Get Help Buying for Schools service will be able to offer support to schools in switching and entering new contracts. Guidance will be updated on a regular basis to inform schools of the market and commercial position, with practical advice on exiting existing and entering new contracts. This guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/buying-for-schools>.

The department understands that every school's circumstances are different, and where schools are in serious financial difficulty, they should contact their local authority or the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

■ Special Educational Needs: Finance

Dan Jarvis: [\[5658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on allocating additional funding to local authorities to increase SEND provision in schools.

Dan Jarvis: [\[5659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the provision of funding for SEND in schools in (a) Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and (b) Richmondshire District Council.

Will Quince:

The total core schools budget is increasing to £56.8 billion by the 2024/25 financial year. This represents a £7 billion cash increase, compared with the 2021/22 financial year, and will benefit those pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in mainstream schools.

Within this, for those pupils with more complex needs, the department has increased high needs funding in the 2022-23 financial year by £1 billion to a total of £9.1 billion.

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council will attract an increase of 16% per head of their 2-18 population this year, compared to the previous financial year's allocation, bringing their total high needs funding allocation in 2022/23 to £36.3 million.

Richmondshire District Council falls within North Yorkshire County Council, which will attract an increase of 15% per head of their 2-18 population this year, compared to the previous financial year's allocation, bringing their total high needs funding allocation in the 2022/23 financial year to £71.3 million.

■ Special Educational Needs: Greater London

Sir David Evennett: [\[3477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what representations his Department has received from educational organisations in Greater London on the effectiveness of SEND funding in the last 12 months.

Will Quince:

The department receives many representations on the effectiveness of the funding for provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, from all parts of England, including Greater London. These include communications from parents, schools, and other providers, and from local authorities and other organisations.

This government continues to deliver year on year, real terms per pupil increases to the core schools budget with a £7 billion cash increase in funding by the 2024/25 financial year, compared with the 2021/22 financial year, taking total funding to £56.8 billion by 2024-25. As a result, we were able to announce last December that high needs funding for children and young people with complex needs is increasing in this financial year 2022-23 by £1 billion to a total of £9.1 billion. This unprecedented year-on-year increase of 13% comes on top of the £1.5 billion increase over the last two years and will continue to support local authorities and schools with the increasing costs they are facing.

■ Teachers: Training

Jim Shannon:

[\[3591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the ambition of the SEND Review to make schools more inclusive for children with SEND, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure that teachers are adequately trained to teach children with SEND.

Will Quince:

All teachers are teachers of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The department is committed to ensuring that all pupils can reach their potential and receive excellent support from their teachers. The Schools White Paper and SEND and AP Green Paper are aligned on this expectation.

To support all teachers to meet these standards, the department is implementing a series of high-quality teacher training reforms. This begins with initial teacher training (ITT) and continues into early career teaching, through to the reformed suite of leadership and specialist National Professional Qualifications.

The revised ITT and Core Content Framework (CCF) and the early career framework (ECF), which all newly qualified teachers benefit from, have been designed around how to support all pupils to succeed and seeks to widen access for all. This includes those pupils identified within the four areas of need set out in the SEND code of practice, and children in need of help and protection as identified in the Children in Need Review. All trainees who achieve qualified teacher status must demonstrate that they can adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils, including those with SEND.

Consideration of SEND underpins both the CCF and the ECF, which were both produced with the support of sector experts.

Once teachers qualify and are employed in schools, headteachers use their professional judgement to identify any further training, including specific specialisms, for individual staff that is relevant to them, the school, and its pupils.

In February 2022, the department announced more than £45 million of funding for continued targeted support for families and parents of children with SEND and SEND services. This includes funding that will directly support schools and colleges to work with pupils with SEND, for example through training on specific needs like autism.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[3799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that all teachers are well trained to teach children with SEND in the classroom, in the context of SEND training not being mandatory for mainstream teachers.

Will Quince:

All teachers are teachers of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and the department is committed to ensuring that all pupils can reach their potential and receive excellent support from their teachers. To support all teachers to meet these standards, the government are implementing a 'golden thread' of high-quality teacher training reforms which begins with initial teacher training and continues into early career teaching, through to the reformed suite of leadership and specialist National Professional Qualifications, ensures that teachers have the skills to support all pupils to succeed, including those with SEND.

The revised initial teacher training core content framework, which all new entrants to the profession benefit from, has been designed around how to support all pupils to succeed, including those pupils identified within the four areas of need, set out in the SEND Code of Practice. All trainees who achieve qualified teacher status must demonstrate that they can adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils, including those with SEND.

The early career framework (ECF) has been designed around how to support all pupils to succeed and seeks to widen access for all. This includes those pupils identified within the four areas of need set out in the SEND code of practice, and children in need of help and protection as identified in the Children in Need Review.

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In February 2022, we announced more than £45 million of funding for continued targeted support for families and parents of children with SEND and SEND services. This includes funding that will directly support schools and colleges to work with pupils with SEND, for example through training on specific needs like autism.

■ Youth Custody: Mental Illness

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason children and young people who present as causing serious risk to themselves or others are placed in police cells.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the police on ensuring that children and young people who are at risk to themselves and others are placed in specialist units.

Mr Robin Walker:

Children may be placed in police cells for several reasons, on which we do not hold data. However, the police, children's social care, legal advisers, Crown Prosecution Service, and the youth justice system should work together to ensure that the time a child spends in police cells is reduced to the minimum.

Police custody is governed by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Codes of Practice, which makes it clear that children and young people are a protected group with specific vulnerabilities. The local authority has a duty (discharged by its youth justice services) to provide all under 18-year-olds with an appropriate adult. In addition to protection under domestic law, their treatment in detention is governed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child, which the UK has signed and ratified.

The department's statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) sets out a framework for the three local safeguarding partners (including the police) to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and meet their needs. This guidance is clear that children who are offenders (or alleged offenders) are entitled to the same safeguarding as other children and due regard should be always given to their welfare. The full guidance can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

The fact that a child has been taken into police custody may indicate a wider safeguarding risk in their life which requires input from other agencies. The police's Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme, funded by the Home Office, identifies, and shares best practice across forces in responding to incidents involving vulnerable children.

The ideal situation is to prevent children coming into the justice system. Turnaround is a new £60m youth early intervention programme led by the Ministry of Justice. Building on the success of the Government's Supporting Families programme, Turnaround will provide funding for youth justice teams to intervene earlier, working with children to address their needs and build on their strengths and help them access support to turn their lives around.

Where accommodating a child or young person in a specialist unit is appropriate, this should be actioned as soon as possible. Legislation introduced in 2017 banned the use of police cells as a place of safety for children in mental health crisis under the Mental Health Act 1983.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Air Pollution****Afzal Khan:****[1326]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the World Health Organisation air quality guideline limits for PM2.5, what assessment his

Department made of the merits of the guidelines when calculating the UK's air pollution targets.

Jo Churchill:

We have recently launched a consultation on new ambitious PM_{2.5} targets that are stretching, achievable and specific to our national circumstances. The WHO air quality guidelines are intended to inform the setting of air quality standards and are not ready-made targets for adoption. They were considered as part of the evidence process. The evidence supporting the proposed targets can be found at:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/natural-environment-policy/consultation-on-environmental-targets/>

■ **Animal Products: Imports**

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[3522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to ban the import of hunting trophies, as set out in the Department's Action Plan for Animal Welfare, in the absence of an Animals Abroad Bill in the Queen's Speech; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 17 May 2022 to the hon. Member for Twickenham, [PQ 1557](#).

Caroline Lucas:

[\[3558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's 2021 Animal Welfare Action Plan, if he will take legislative steps to implement (a) a ban on the advertising and offering for sale in the UK of specific, unacceptable practices abroad and (b) the other legislative commitments set out in the section of the Animal Welfare Action Plan entitled International trade and advocacy; for what reasons a bill containing those policies was not contained in the Queen's Speech 2022; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 17 May 2022 to the hon. Member for Rotherham, [PQ 1511](#).

■ **Avian Influenza: Disease Control**

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[3546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department requires local councils to take before those bodies (a) close council land and (b) ban certain activities on council land on the basis of public health.

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[3547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what risk assessment process his Department requires local councils to follow before the closure of council land following an outbreak avian flu.

Shabana Mahmood: [3548]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what processes his Department has in place to ensure that local councils regularly monitor and report outbreaks of avian flu.

Shabana Mahmood: [3549]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether decisions on closing council-owned land following an outbreak of avian flu are the responsibility of local authorities and his Department.

Shabana Mahmood: [3550]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many local councils have decided to close or limit access to council owned land due to an outbreak of avian flu in the last (a) three, (b) six and (c) 12 months.

Jo Churchill:

Defra's approach to avian influenza disease control is set out in the [Notifiable Avian Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain](#). All avian influenza disease control and prevention measures are kept under regular review as part of the government's work to monitor and manage the risks of avian influenza, and all decisions regarding these measures are based on [risk assessments](#) containing the latest scientific and ornithological evidence and veterinary advice.

Under the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone that has been in force across Great Britain since 3 November 2022, access to areas where poultry and other captive birds are kept must be restricted to only essential personnel. In addition, access to premises where notifiable avian influenza has been confirmed is restricted. Access to infected premises would only be permitted following a veterinary risk assessment and under licence from the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). Outside of these restrictions, there is no legal requirement for local authorities to limit access to public areas or close rights of way, and the countryside remains open for business.

However, where findings of avian influenza in wild birds have occurred in public areas, local authorities may take a precautionary approach to protect the health and welfare of birds and to limit the risk of infection being transferred on footwear etc to other bird keeping areas by restricting access to areas where wild birds frequently congregate. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has said that avian influenza is primarily a disease of birds and the risk to the general public's health is very low. Local authorities will work closely with public health protection teams to take appropriate precautions to protect human health where required. Any decisions taken to restrict access to areas to protect public health are made on the basis of risk assessments undertaken by the UKHSA supported by evidence of the local and national animal health situation.

No premises where notifiable avian influenza has been confirmed during the 2021-2022 outbreak have been located on local authority owned land. Defra does not

collect data on the number of other areas where access has been restricted by local authorities.

Avian influenza is a notifiable animal disease. Failure to report suspicion of avian influenza in poultry or other captive birds is an offence. Avian influenza controls are enforced by local authorities, normally within the Trading Standards or Environmental Health Service teams. Defra, the devolved administrations and APHA work closely and meet regularly with local authority representatives and the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers both at a national level and through the cross-agency local resilience forums to help ensure effective implementation of the avian influenza outbreak prevention and control measures.

■ **Chesterfield Canal: Tunnels**

Alexander Stafford: [\[3785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of replacing the Chesterfield Canal's Norwood tunnel, which used to run under the M1.

Alexander Stafford: [\[3787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of Dr Geraint Coles' proposals to reinstate the Chesterfield Canal's route under the M1.

Rebecca Pow:

The Department has not made any such assessments. Responsibility for canals in England and Wales, including their operation, development or restoration rests with the bodies that own them and for which they are the navigation authority. The Canal and River Trust (C&RT) owns the eastern section of the Chesterfield Canal from the M1 motorway at Norwood to the River Trent, while to the west of the M1 motorway from Norwood the canal is owned by local authorities. The C&RT works closely with the Chesterfield Canal Trust and supports their canal regeneration plans.

■ **Dogs: Electronic Training Aids**

Greg Smith: [\[3747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the number of academics that his Department commissioned to research the training of dogs with e-collars who had previously campaigned for an e-collar ban by (a) writing to the Department (b) signing a petition.

Victoria Prentis:

The concerns that e-collars can cause harm have been made by a number of trainers and behaviourists, the animal welfare sector and dog keeping organisations. In light of these concerns Defra commissioned a research study.

The Government is satisfied that the processes for tendering and considering bids, relating to the research on e-collars in 2007, were conducted in accordance with the

rules on government procurement exercises. The Government is also satisfied that the resultant peer-reviewed Defra-commissioned research carried out between 2007 and 2010 is robust.

Data from the research was published separately in two different reputable scientific journals, which required additional independent peer review exercises involving scrutiny from experts in the same field prior to publication. This gives the Government further confidence that the results are robust.

■ Dredging: Waste Disposal

Kate Osborne:

[5690]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans the Government has to provide support to businesses affected by potential changes in CEFAS Action Levels for Sea Disposal of Dredged Sediment.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra is reviewing information provided by stakeholders in response to proposals for changes to Action Levels for sea disposal of dredged sediment and no decision has yet been made. Officials will continue to engage with stakeholders to ensure we fully understand the impacts of the proposals on businesses. Before implementing any proposed changes, an impact assessment will be completed.

■ Livestock: Dogs

Crispin Blunt:

[4449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of alternatives to e-collars for dogs on reducing the instances of dogs attacking livestock.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government takes the issue of livestock worrying very seriously, recognising the distress this can cause farmers and animals, as well as the financial implications. New measures to crack down on livestock worrying in England and Wales are to be brought in through the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill, which was introduced in Parliament on 8 June 2021. The new measures will enhance enforcement mechanisms available to the police and expand the scope of livestock species and locations covered by the law.

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

Following a consultation in 2018, and as set out in our Action Plan for Animal Welfare, the Government decided to ban electric shock collars controlled by hand-held devices in England under new legislation which should be introduced this year, given their scope to harm cats and dogs.

The proposed ban on the use of these electric shock collars was developed after considering a broad range of factors, including the impact of a ban. When considered alongside the academic research, the public consultation responses, and direct engagement with the sector, the Government concluded that these electric shock collars present an unacceptable risk to the welfare of dogs and cats and that their use should not be permitted.

■ Nitrogen Dioxide

Afzal Khan:

[\[1327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the nitrogen dioxide concentration beyond what is required in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010.

Jo Churchill:

Air pollution has reduced significantly since 2010 – emissions of nitrogen oxides have fallen by 32% and are at their lowest level since records began.

Since the publication of this Government's 2017 nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) plan, we have been working closely with 61 English local authorities to develop and implement air quality measures to tackle their NO₂ exceedances. This has been underpinned by £880m of funding for implementing measures and support for individuals and businesses to upgrade to cleaner vehicles.

Additionally, as part of the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan, we will end the sale of new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, ten years earlier than planned. From 2035, all new cars and vans must be fully zero emissions at the tailpipe.

■ Packaging: Recycling

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[4636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure all food products contain clear information about recycling on their packaging; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals on a consistent labelling system on recycling.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is already taking action here. As we stated in the response to our 2021 consultation on Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging, we will introduce mandatory recyclability labelling on all product packaging. Producers will be required to label packaging to indicate whether it is recyclable or not, as part of a clear, consistent, UK-wide labelling scheme, which will come into force from next year.

■ Pollution Control**Kate Osborne:** [\[5689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing Local Action Levels for specific areas such as the River Tyne in the context of naturally occurring contaminants and unique environmental characteristics.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra is reviewing information provided by stakeholders in response to proposals for changes to Action Levels for sea disposal of dredged sediment. Defra recognise there are regional variabilities and will continue to engage with stakeholders including those from the River Tyne to ensure we fully understand the impacts of the proposals for the region. Before implementing any proposed changes, an impact assessment will be completed.

■ Water Charges: Arrears**Rachael Maskell:** [\[3664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he is taking steps to help ensure that people who fall into arrears with their water payments have support to pay their bills; and if he will make it his policy to make additional financial support available for the purposes of enabling those people to tackle their deficits.

Rebecca Pow:

All water companies offer WaterSure and social tariffs to help reduce bills for households who struggle to pay their bills in full. Water companies also offer a range of financial support measures to assist households to better manage their budgets and provide flexible payments including payment holidays, bill matching, benefit entitlement checks and money/debt advice referral arrangements. Government expects water companies to continue to actively engage with households and inform them of support measures they offer.

In addition, my officials are working with the Consumer Council for Water (CCW), Ofwat, charities and water companies to explore the recommendations from CCW's Affordability Review, to further support households who are struggling to pay their water bills.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Argentina: BRICS Summit****Fabian Hamilton:** [\[5609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the Argentine Government's decision to join the BRICS group of emerging economies.

Vicky Ford:

The issue of BRICS membership is a matter for members of that group.

The UK wants to see a prosperous and stable economy in Argentina. On 25 March, the UK voted in favour of a new IMF deal to restructure the country's debt. We believe Argentina's IMF programme provides the best vehicle for macroeconomic stability, and we expect Argentina to continue to honour its commitments as part of that agreement.

■ British International Investment**Alexander Stafford:****[4719]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to ensure that beneficiaries of British International Investment investments are not minimising their environmental impact.

Amanda Milling:

British International Investment's (BII) Policy on Responsible Investing sets out the environmental, social and business integrity requirements for investees. The policy is aligned to international best practice including the International Finance Corporation's Performance Standards and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Investees are expected to comply with the Policy. It is available here: <https://assets.cdcgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/14074359/Policy-on-Responsible-Investing.pdf>

Prior to making an investment, BII conducts a development impact assessment and undertakes environmental, social and governance (ESG) due diligence. These include consideration of the potential for positive environmental and social impacts and the identification of environmental and social risks that need to be mitigated. Compliance is monitored through regular engagement between BII's ESG I team and the investee, including on Environmental & Social Action Plans and annual monitoring reports. These requirements are captured as part of investment agreements between BII and the investee.

As sole shareholder of BII, the FCDO has oversight of BII's operations, through Quarterly and Annual Shareholder Meetings, as well as dedicated meetings on ESG standards. The FCDO regularly raises ESG issues with BII through the governance channels.

■ China: Human Rights**Catherine West:****[5670]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of whether the upcoming visit of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Xinjiang region of China will meet the Revised Terms of Reference for Country Visits by Special Procedures Mandate Holders of the UN Human Rights Council, including (a) guarantees on freedom of movement and inquiry, (b)

confidential and unsupervised access to witnesses and other persons of interest and (c) access to detention facilities.

Catherine West: [\[5671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has sought assurances from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights that her upcoming visit to the Xinjiang region of China will meet the Revised Terms of Reference for Country Visits by Special Procedures Mandate Holders of the UN Human Rights Council, including (a) guarantees on freedom of movement and inquiry, (b) confidential and unsupervised access to witnesses and other persons of interest and (c) access to detention facilities.

Amanda Milling:

We have always been clear that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights must be granted full, unfettered access to Xinjiang and allowed to conduct an accurate assessment of the facts on the ground. We have made our position clear in numerous public statements at the UN, including in our Item 4 Statement at the UN Human Rights Council in March, and through regular engagement with senior UN officials. We continue to urge China to grant the High Commissioner such access on her ongoing visit.

■ Embassies: Flags

Alexander Stafford: [\[3788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department is taking steps to ensure that all British consulates and embassies fly the Union flag prominently.

Vicky Ford:

Our British Missions overseas use one of three flags depending on the status of the mission: Diplomatic flag (Embassies), Union flag (High Commissions and Consulates in Commonwealth countries) and Consular flag (non-Commonwealth Consulates). Where it is physically possible our British Missions are advised to fly the relevant flag on a superior flag pole. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office guidance advises that the flag should be flown at the Mission on working days, during office hours. Heads of Mission have discretion to fly the flag 24/7 where this is acceptable locally, saves resources and does not pose a security risk.

Alexander Stafford: [\[3789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what guidance her Department has issued to British embassies and consulates on the flying of the Union flag.

Vicky Ford:

Our British Missions overseas use one of three flags depending on the status of the mission: Diplomatic flag (Embassies), Union flag (High Commissions and Consulates in Commonwealth countries) and Consular flag (non-Commonwealth Consulates).

Where it is physically possible our British Missions are advised to fly the relevant flag on a superior flag pole. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office guidance advises that the flag should be flown at the Mission on working days, during office hours. Heads of Mission have discretion to fly the flag 24/7 where this is acceptable locally, saves resources and does not pose a security risk.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[3790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make it her policy to require British embassies and consulates to fly the Union flag every day.

Vicky Ford:

Our British Missions overseas use one of three flags depending on the status of the mission: Diplomatic flag (Embassies), Union flag (High Commissions and Consulates in Commonwealth countries) and Consular flag (non-Commonwealth Consulates). Where it is physically possible our British Missions are advised to fly the relevant flag on a superior flag pole. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office guidance advises that the flag should be flown at the Mission on working days, during office hours. Heads of Mission have discretion to fly the flag 24/7 where this is acceptable locally, saves resources and does not pose a security risk.

■ Horn of Africa: Food Aid

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[3536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps she has taken to help ensure that the needs of people in Somaliland are fully represented in international and regional responses to the drought and food security situation in the Horn of Africa region.

Vicky Ford:

Somaliland's drought emergency is deeply concerning. The UK is providing urgently needed humanitarian assistance to those most affected across Somalia, including Somaliland, to prevent famine. On April 26 at a UN High-Level Round Table on the Horn of Africa drought, I announced an additional £25 million for famine prevention across Somalia, including Somaliland. Our humanitarian assistance is allocated on the basis of need, not geographic area. The UK supported 17 communities in Somaliland in the regions of Awdal, Sool and Sanaag by providing livelihoods support and building people's capacity to prepare for disasters. UK aid provided an early response to the current drought with cash assistance, emergency water and treatment for malnourished children. We provided £2 million to the United Nations-led Somalia Humanitarian Fund and £4 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross, both of which are providing vital assistance in Somaliland.

■ Humanitarian Aid

Kim Johnson:

[\[4715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of Oxfam and Save The Children's report entitled *Dangerous Delays 2: The Cost of Inaction*, published on 18 May 2022.

Vicky Ford:

The joint Oxfam and Save the Children report highlights the gravity of the humanitarian situation in East Africa. Following an unprecedented fourth consecutive season of failed rains, more than 15 million people in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia are experiencing extremely worrying levels of food insecurity. Due to the drought millions of people are also facing critical shortages of water with rates of displacement, school drop-outs and early marriage of young girls also on the rise. The drought has also led to the emergence of famine conditions in Somalia, while conflict continues to cause major levels of suffering throughout East Africa, driving famine conditions in Tigray in northern Ethiopia for example.

In 2022 the UK has so far provided more than £72 million to the humanitarian crises in the region. In January, to enable humanitarian agencies to take early action and to support a scale-up of drought response activities, the UK allocated £14 million to Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, with £3 million for flooding in South Sudan. Most recently on 26 April, I announced a further £25 million in aid to provide vital services to almost a million people in Somalia affected by the drought. The UK continues to play a leading role to galvanise interest and financial assistance for the drought from other donors. Our efforts helped to mobilise \$400 million for the region at a recent UN event. Our response to the drought builds on long-established resilience building programmes in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia which have benefitted tens of millions of people.

■ Israel: Embassies

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[5389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make it her policy to relocate the British Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

Amanda Milling:

The British Embassy to Israel is based in Tel Aviv and we have no plans to move it.

■ Jimmy Lai

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[6722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps she has taken to help ensure UK consulate and embassy personnel are able to visit Jimmy Lai in prison in Hong Kong.

Amanda Milling:

We remain concerned about the targeting of pro-democracy figures in Hong Kong, and are following these cases carefully. For data protection reasons I cannot share information about a person without their permission.

We continue to make clear to mainland Chinese and Hong Kong authorities our strong opposition to the National Security Law, which is being used to curtail freedoms, punish dissent and shrink the space for opposition, free press and civil society.

As a co-signatory to the Joint Declaration, we will continue to stand up for the people of Hong Kong, to call out the violation of their rights and freedoms, and to hold China to their international obligations.

■ Joseph Zen**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[6721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will take diplomatic steps to help secure the release of Cardinal Joseph Zen from prison in Hong Kong.

Amanda Milling:

The Hong Kong authorities' decision to target leading pro-democracy figures including Cardinal Zen, Margaret Ng, Hui-Po-Keung and Denise Ho under the National Security Law is unacceptable. All four have since been released on police bail; we continue to follow their cases closely.

Freedom of expression and the right to peaceful protest, which are protected in both the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law, are fundamental to Hong Kong's way of life.

We continue to make clear to mainland Chinese and Hong Kong authorities our strong opposition to the National Security Law, which is being used to curtail freedoms, punish dissent and shrink the space for opposition, free press and civil society.

■ Lake Chad Basin: Armed Conflict**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[3534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent estimate she has made of the number of people classified as (a) militants and (b) families of militants who have surrendered to the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad region in the last three months; and what engagement she has had with the Multinational Joint Task Force on the (i) criteria they are using for the classification of militants and families of militants and (ii) the tactics used for engagement and detention of those classified as militants or families of militants.

Vicky Ford:

Since August 2021, the Nigerian Defence Headquarters have recorded that more than 53,262 individuals, who are either ex-associates of Violent Extremist

Organisations (VEOs), families of ex-associates, or civilians resident in areas of VEO control, have handed themselves in to civil and military authorities in North East Nigeria and Far North Cameroon. The majority of these surrendered either to civilian authorities or to Nigerian and Cameroonian Security Forces, rather than the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). The Nigerian authorities have informed us that 2701 individuals have been assessed as potential active combatants. Those that have handed themselves over to the Nigerian authorities are being held in three camps in Borno State; Hajj Camp, Bulumkutu and Shokari Transitional Centres. We regularly engage the Borno State Government on the provision of security and services to these camps. Those that surrendered in Cameroon have either been transferred to Nigeria (Nigerian Nationals) or are being held at a centre in Meri (Cameroonian Nationals). We have also engaged the Cameroonian security services on detention conditions.

■ Latin America and USA: Diplomatic Relations

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[5610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has had discussions with her counterpart in the US government on the exclusion of (a) Cuba, (b) Venezuela and (c) Nicaragua from the Ninth Summit of the Americas in June 2022.

Vicky Ford:

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs has not discussed the US Government's exclusion of Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua from the Ninth Summit of the Americas in June 2022 with her US counterpart.

■ Mali: Military Coups

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[3535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help support (a) security coordination and (b) conflict resolution and prevention efforts across the Sahel region following the announcement by the coup authorities in Mali of their withdrawal from the G5 Sahel joint force.

Vicky Ford:

The UK is following developments across the Sahel closely, including the impacts of the recent decision by the Malian transitional authorities to withdraw from the G5 Sahel grouping and the G5 Sahel Joint Force. In close coordination with international, regional and UN partners, we continue to work towards building long-term peace and stability across the Sahel through our deployment to the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and our programmatic support for stabilisation, enhancing civil-military coordination and strengthening local conflict resolution mechanisms.

■ MI6: Environment Protection

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[5688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how an hon. Member may make a request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 for environmental sustainability reports made by MI6.

James Cleverly:

The hon. Member should visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office> where they can find detailed instructions on submitting EIRs and FOIs to the FCDO.

■ Rwanda: Press Freedom

Angela Crawley:

[\[5435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the levels of press freedom in Rwanda.

Vicky Ford:

The UK Government firmly believes that a free media and vibrant civil society are vital for a healthy and well-functioning democracy. We discuss these issues regularly with the Government of Rwanda through our High Commission in Kigali and at Ministerial level, most recently on 18 May where I met Foreign Minister Biruta.

■ Rwanda: Refugees

Angela Crawley:

[\[5433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the capacity of the Rwandan Government to successfully integrate refugees into society.

Angela Crawley:

[\[5434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of Rwanda's capacity to successfully integrate non-African refugees into society.

Vicky Ford:

Rwanda has a strong history of welcoming refugees and protecting their rights. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), commended Rwanda for their "excellent job integrating refugees" in December 2021. People relocated under the Migration and Economic Development Partnership will have all their needs looked after while their asylum claims are being considered in Rwanda. This includes safe and clean accommodation, food, healthcare and amenities. They will have full access to translators and will be able to access legal support to appeal decisions in Rwanda's courts. 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.

■ Sri Lanka: Economic Situation

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[3572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support her Department is providing to the Sri Lankan Government in response to the financial situation in that country.

Vicky Ford:

The UK Government is closely monitoring the situation in Sri Lanka including food security and livelihoods. We encourage a peaceful, democratic, and inclusive approach to resolving the current political and economic challenges. In April, the World Bank (WB) agreed to provide US Dollars 600 million in financial assistance, and we understand there are discussions to extend this support. The UK is a major donor to the WB and continues to engage with international financial institutions on Sri Lanka's economic situation.

We welcome the start of in-depth discussions with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the reforms needed to bring the economy back to a sustainable path. These negotiations are likely to take up to 6 months. Sri Lanka has requested support from the IMF, however, at present no Sri Lanka proposal has been shared with members. When one is made available, we will scrutinise it carefully against the IMF criteria alongside other IMF members. In the meantime, discussions are underway with several countries to obtain bridge financing in order to maintain flows of essential imported goods. The UK is also working closely with fellow Paris Club members to discuss potential solutions to Sri Lanka's unsustainable debt levels in the event that an IMF programme is agreed.

■ West Africa: Sanctions

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[3537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to (a) identify any potential links between individuals involved in the Wagner Group and mineral resource extraction companies in African states and (b) impose sanctions on any such companies and their official owners in the event that such a link is identified.

Vicky Ford:

The Wagner Group continues to play a destabilising role in a small number of African countries. Since my statement on 29 September 2021, I have made clear the destabilising impact of Wagner Group, the multiple human rights abuses they commit and their control of mineral resources, to the detriment of local citizens and their economy.

The Wagner Group is sanctioned under the UK's Russia sanctions regime. It would not be appropriate to speculate on potential measures, as doing so could reduce the impact of any options used in the future. We will continue to closely monitor the situation.

■ Zimbabwe: Arms Trade

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[4526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her Indonesian counterpart on the potential impact of supplying arms to Zimbabwe on (a) human rights and (b) democracy in that country.

Vicky Ford:

The Foreign Secretary last spoke with the Indonesian Foreign Minister in London on 19 April, where they together launched the UK-Indonesia Partnership Roadmap 2022 to 2024. Zimbabwe was not discussed.

The UK continues to be concerned about the challenging human rights situation in Zimbabwe, and our sanctions on Zimbabwe include an asset freeze on Zimbabwe Defence Industries and a longstanding arms embargo on exports from the UK.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Children and Young People

Rachael Maskell: [\[4616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps is he taking to tackle alcohol (a) use and (b) abuse in (i) children and (ii) young people.

Rachael Maskell: [\[4618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what public health interventions his Department provides in early education on alcohol use among children and young people.

Rachael Maskell: [\[4619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of alcohol consumption on the health of children; and what his priorities are to tackle that matter.

Maggie Throup:

In 2009, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for England assessed the impact of alcohol consumption on the health of children. The CMO's guidance stated that an alcohol-free childhood is the healthiest option or if children do drink alcohol, it should not be until at least the age of 15 years old. The Department promotes this guidance through online platforms such as NHS.UK, Talk to FRANK and GOV.UK. Local authorities promote the guidance as part of public health duties.

Education on alcohol use is also a statutory component of relationships and sex education and health education in England. Local authorities are responsible for commissioning services to prevent, mitigate and treat alcohol-related health harm based on local need, delivered through the Public Health Grant. This includes substance misuse services for children and young people.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[4622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department (a) has spent in the last 12 months and (b) plans to spend in the next 12 months on the treatment of alcohol use in children and young people; and if he will require every integrated care system to fund such treatment.

Maggie Throup:

This information is not collected in the format requested as expenditure is not recorded separately for drugs and alcohol. However, in 2020/21, local authorities' expenditure on specialist treatment for drug and alcohol misuse for children and young people from the Public Health Grant was £41,785,000.

Through the new drug strategy, drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services will receive an additional investment of £532 million over three years from 2022/23. Each local authority will assess how this investment will be allocated based on local population's health needs. Integrated care systems will have a role in ensuring that mental health and drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services are integrated and local health needs are being met.

■ **Babies and Mothers: Death**

Ms Anum Qaisar:

[\[4739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of (a) maternal and (b) perinatal deaths for women and children from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Maria Caulfield:

On 6 September 2021, NHS England published 'Equity and equality: Guidance for local maternity systems', which focuses on actions to reduce disparities in health outcomes for women and babies. Local Maternity Systems have been asked to plan interventions to improve equity for mothers and babies, which will benefit inclusion groups such as migrants and refugees. The guidance asks Local Maternity Systems to ensure equity in access, experience and health outcomes and address the leading causes of perinatal mortality and morbidity for babies from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups and those living in the most deprived areas. NHS England has provided £6.8 million to support Local Maternity Systems to implement these plans.

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities' guidance 'Language Interpreting and Translation: Migrant Health Guide' gives advice on health needs of migrant patients for healthcare practitioners. The guidance states it is the responsibility of NHS service providers to ensure interpreting and translation services are made available to patients free at the point of delivery. Healthcare employers should advise staff on the arrangements for local interpretation services.

■ **Caesarean Sections: Maternity Services**

Alicia Kearns:

[\[3755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to strengthen post-natal care for mothers who have had a caesarean section in the upcoming Women's Health Strategy.

Maria Caulfield:

Fertility, pregnancy, pregnancy loss and post-natal care will be priority areas in the forthcoming Women's Health Strategy, which will be published later this year.

■ **Care Homes: Disease Control**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to strengthen infection control between health and care settings.

Maggie Throup:

Central infection prevention and control guidance is regularly monitored and updated to strengthen infection control between health and care settings. COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction testing for patients at the time of discharge from hospital to a care home and limiting of close contact where necessary continues. Individual health and care settings are responsible for ensuring this guidance is implemented.

■ **Cervical Cancer: Screening**

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[4515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of expanding cervical screening visits to include a wider well-woman check for gynaecological cancers and other women's health conditions.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made. However, the forthcoming Women's Health Strategy will address gynaecological cancers and improving the health and wellbeing of women. The Strategy will be published later this year. In addition, officials are analysing the responses received to the call for evidence to develop the 10-Year Cancer Plan, which aims to improve outcomes for cancer patients through early diagnosis and innovative treatments.

■ **Coeliac Disease: Screening**

Jim Shannon:

[\[3588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to standardise testing for coeliac disease by encouraging local audits of blood tests against endoscopies and biopsies.

Gillian Keegan:

Patients with a blood test which suggests a possible diagnosis of coeliac disease are usually referred for gastroscopy by their general practitioner. The British Society of

Gastroenterology and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence have recommended standards for how patients with gastrointestinal symptoms are initially investigated in primary care, which includes testing for coeliac disease.

■ **Coronavirus: Immunosuppression**

Chris Green: [\[4601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many immunocompromised individuals of (a) working age and (b) all ages have been (i) hospitalised with and (ii) died of covid-19 in 2022.

Chris Green: [\[4602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS beds have been occupied by immunocompromised patients (a) who are of working age and (b) in total and who were admitted for covid-19 in 2022.

Maggie Throup:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ **Coronavirus: Research**

Olivia Blake: [\[3779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what basis the decision was made to stop funding the ZOE Study; and if he will consider recommissioning the study.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 23 May 2022]: Following the publication of 'COVID-19 Response: Living with COVID-19' on 21 February 2022, the Government will continue to monitor the virus through maintaining surveillance studies such as the Office for National Statistics' COVID-19 Infection Survey and other sources, including genomic sequencing. Moving forward we will therefore no longer be funding a number of studies, including the Zoe Study.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Feryal Clark: [\[1384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the level of covid-19 tests available on the market that have not been approved by his Department.

Maggie Throup:

Reports of non-compliance with the Medical Devices (Coronavirus Test Device Approvals) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 remain consistently low. All reports of non-compliant COVID-19 tests are reviewed by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and relevant regulatory action taken where necessary.

■ Dementia: Community Diagnostic Centres

Alex Cunningham: [\[5652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people living with dementia who have benefitted from community diagnostic centres.

Gillian Keegan:

No specific estimate has been made. 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.

■ Dementia: Diagnosis

Cat Smith: [\[3651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the (a) number of people living with undiagnosed dementia in England and (b) time it will take to diagnose those people.

Gillian Keegan:

As of April 2022, NHS Digital estimates there are 693,868 people living with dementia in England aged 65 years old and over, of whom 429,062 have a recorded dementia diagnosis.

In 2021/22, we allocated £17 million to address waiting lists for dementia services caused by the pandemic and increase the number of diagnoses. To support recovery of the dementia diagnosis rate and access to post diagnostic support in 2022/23, NHS England will provide funding to support general practitioners to pilot approaches in some areas. We will set out plans for dementia in England for the next 10 years later this year, which will include a focus on diagnosis.

Alex Cunningham: [\[5654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the equity of the dementia diagnosis process.

Dan Carden: [\[5678\]](#)

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

Gillian Keegan:

No formal assessment has been made. NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to monitor the monthly dementia diagnosis rate each month and provide analysis on trends at regional and sustainability and transformation partnership level to aid targeted recovery efforts. In 2021, factsheets were published to encourage local conversations to understand patterns and potential reasons for any trends in dementia diagnosis rates and identifying specific areas for support. In 2021/22, we also provided £17 million to clinical commissioning groups to address the needs of those waiting for diagnosis and those who have a diagnosis but are unable to access support services due to the pandemic.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have also 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 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.

Dan Carden:

[\[5676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recommendation by the Alzheimer's Society that £70 million be committed by the Government to improving dementia diagnosis rates in England; and if he will make a statement.

Gillian Keegan:

No formal assessment has been made.

In 2021/22, we provided £17 million to clinical commissioning groups to address the needs of those waiting for diagnosis and those who have a diagnosis but are unable to access support services due to the pandemic. To further support recovery of the dementia diagnosis rate and access to post diagnostic support in 2022/23, NHS England will provide funding to support general practitioners to pilot approaches in some areas. 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.

Dan Carden:

[\[5677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure people living with dementia receive a prompt diagnosis.

Edward Argar:

No formal assessment has been made.

In 2021/22, we provided £17 million to clinical commissioning groups to address the needs of those waiting for diagnosis and those who have a diagnosis but are unable to access support services due to the pandemic. To further support recovery of the dementia diagnosis rate and access to post diagnostic support in 2022/23, NHS England will provide funding to support general practitioners to pilot approaches in some areas. 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.

■ Dementia: Screening

Alex Cunningham:

[\[5653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to increase screening for dementia in England.

Gillian Keegan:

There is no nationally recommended screening programme for dementia in the United Kingdom. The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) reviewed the

available evidence and found no screening test which could identify people with dementia before the onset of symptoms. The UK NSC also found there was no evidence that current treatments for dementia are effective. The UK NSC is due to the review the evidence for screening for dementia in 2022/23.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper: [\[5372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire dated 2 March 2022 on the impact of the Health and Care Act 2022 on the powers of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, reference ZA59040.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 24 May 2022]: We replied to the hon. Member on 24 May

Robert Largan: [\[538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he will respond to the correspondence of 2 March 2022 from the hon. Member for High Peak, reference RL35231.

Robert Largan: [\[5509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Question 538 tabled on 10 May 2022 by the hon. Member for High Peak.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 24 May.

Robert Largan: [\[5511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the enquiry from the hon. Member for High Peak dated 21 March 2022, reference RL36002.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 23 May.

John Penrose: [\[6737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will resend his reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on behalf of his constituent, Mr Vernon Stevens, which has not yet arrived.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 24 May.

■ Pain: Health Services

Graham Stuart: [\[3506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure adequate support is provided to people who live with severe chronic pain.

Gillian Keegan:

The majority of routine treatment and support for people with chronic pain is provided by local primary, community and secondary care services and commissioned via clinical commissioning groups. For patients with severe and complex pain, NHS England commissions specialised care. Upon referral to specialist centres, patients can access a range of health professionals, including consultant specialists, clinical nurse specialists, psychologists and physiotherapists and receive specialised treatment.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence published guidance on chronic pain in April 2021, which includes recommendations on how chronic pain can be managed through pharmacological and non-pharmacological approaches, such as exercise programmes, acupuncture and psychological therapy.

NHS England has established a task and finish group to produce guidance on the provision of services for people living with long-term pain conditions by September 2022. The guidance is aimed at integrated care systems, to provide core principles which can be used to inform the development of local models of care for complex pain.

Graham Stuart:[\[3507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the (a) availability of pain services and (b) Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance's core offer for pain services.

Gillian Keegan:

No specific assessment has been made. The majority of routine treatment and support for people with chronic pain is provided by local primary, community and secondary care services and commissioned via clinical commissioning groups. For patients with severe and complex pain, NHS England commissions specialised care. Upon referral to specialist centres, patients can access a range of health professionals, including consultant specialists, clinical nurse specialists, psychologists and physiotherapists and receive specialised treatment.

The core offer for pain services produced by the Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance is informing guidance on the provision of high-quality services for people living with long-term pain conditions currently being produced by NHS England.

■ Pain: Medical Treatments**Graham Stuart:**[\[3508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to ensure that people with chronic pain have access to non-pharmacological interventions as outlined in the NICE guideline on chronic pain.

Gillian Keegan:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published its guideline on chronic pain in April 2021 which includes recommendations on how chronic pain

can be managed through pharmacological and non-pharmacological approaches, such as exercise programmes, acupuncture, and psychological therapy.

While NICE's guideline describes best practice and should be taken fully into account in the care and treatment of individual patients, it is not mandatory and does not override a medical practitioner's clinical judgement.

■ **St George's Hospital Tooting**

Felicity Buchan:

[\[515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ask St George's Hospital Trust and NHSI to review urgently the findings of the Lewis Review into Cardiac Surgery at St George's Hospital, in the context of the Senior Coroner Professor Wilcox of Westminster Coroner's Court having called into question the conclusions of that Report in the 38 cases which have been heard before the Court and for which the GMC has decided that there is no need for a formal investigation into the medical professionals involved.

Maria Caulfield:

There are no current plans for the Department to ask the Trust or NHS England and NHS Improvement to review the findings of the NHS Improvement Independent External Mortality Review relating to cardiac surgery at St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, published in March 2020.

Although the report was not formally sent to the medical profession's regulator, the General Medical Council, for consideration, individual surgeons were referred. Oversight of the unit was maintained by NHS England.

■ **Use of Health Data for Research and Analysis Review**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) hire people with technical data skills and knowledge for senior roles in the NHS and (b) train those in senior roles in the basics of data analysis as recommended in the Goldacre review.

Gillian Keegan:

We are currently considering the recommendations of the Goldacre review, including those relating to modernising National Health Service analytics. However, the data strategy for health and social care, which will be published in summer 2022, outlines the intention to improve the skills of the current data and analytics workforce and build a team of future analytical leaders. This will include unified competency frameworks aligned to the Government Analysis Function skills, as part of a national competency framework for data professionals in health and care. We will work with the NHS to promote analytical and data skills through the strategy alongside existing projects, such as the Digital Readiness Education Programme.

HOME OFFICE**■ Animal Experiments: Innovation**

Henry Smith: [\[3561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to World Animal Free Research Day on 27 May 2022, if she will take steps to recognise the role played by domestic organisations, such as Animal Free Research UK, in developing innovative alternatives to animal experiments; and if she will make a statement.

Damian Hinds:

The Government continues to engage with organisations that promote alternatives to the use of animals and to actively support and fund the development and dissemination of the 3Rs (replacement, reduction, and refinement).

This is achieved through funding UK Research and Innovation who both fund the National Centre for the 3Rs and research through Innovate UK, the Medical Research Council, and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council into the development of alternatives.

■ Asylum: Rwanda

Marsha De Cordova: [\[4683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the legal advice her Department has received on its policy to process asylum applicants in Rwanda.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[4684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the UK-Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership, what assurances she has received from the Government of Rwanda that migrants from protected groups will not face discrimination.

Tom Pursglove:

It is the Government's long-standing position never to publish confidential and privileged legal advice.

Rwanda's constitution includes a broad prohibition on discrimination. It is a fundamentally safe and secure country with respect for the rule of law. Rwanda will treat each relocated individual in accordance with the Refugee Convention, Rwandan immigration laws and international and Rwandan standards, including under international and Rwandan human rights law.

Angela Crawley: [\[5436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what risk assessment her Department plans to undertake of asylum seekers' vulnerabilities including (a) disabilities, (b) sexual orientation, (c) gender reassignment status, (d) mental trauma, (e) mental health and (f) physical health when determining eligibility for relocation to Rwanda.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office will continue to ensure that the welfare and dignity of all claimants forms a central platform of our decision-making processes.

An individualised assessment of each eligible person's circumstances will be undertaken prior to any decision to relocate them to Rwanda. We would not relocate someone where it would be unsafe or inappropriate to do so.

Any vulnerabilities will be taken into consideration and every individual who is eligible for removal under this policy will be able to make representations where they are concerned the country in question would not be safe for them.

■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments**Shabana Mahmood:****[3551]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many medical cannabis licences have been granted to pharmacies in (a) Birmingham, Ladywood constituency, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England in each of the last 12 months.

Shabana Mahmood:**[3552]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of applications for medical cannabis licences made by pharmacies in each of the last 12 months.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office Drugs and Firearms Licensing Unit (DFLU) issue controlled drug licences to possess, produce or supply drugs; they are company, site and activity specific. Separate licences may be issued to import or export controlled drugs. Pharmacies would ordinarily obtain their supplies of controlled drugs from licensed pharmaceutical wholesalers and, generally speaking would not require licensing by the DFLU.

This means that the data provided in response to this question will not give an insight into UK-based medicinal cannabis patients nor the pharmacies via which they receive their prescriptions. Instead, UK pharmacies would generally only require a DFLU licence where they are involved in exporting medicinal cannabis overseas, primarily to the Channel Islands and other Crown Dependencies with whom we have established licensing processes enabling the supply of controlled drugs.

Individual consignment export licences have been issued by DFLU to companies who supply Cannabis-Based Products for Medicinal use in Humans (CBPMs) to patients resident in Crown Dependencies. Some of those applications will have been made by General Pharmaceutical Council- registered 'pharmacies'.

The number of applications for CBPM licences made by pharmacies in each the last 12 months in England are as follows:

May-21	95
Jun-21	136
Jul-21	124
Aug-21	95
Sep-21	99
Oct-21	99
Nov-21	59
Dec-21	34
Jan-22	34
Feb-22	40
Mar-22	29
Apr-22	10
May-22 (to 17 May)	18

No licences were issued over this period to companies based in the West Midlands, inclusive of Birmingham Ladywood.

■ Catalytic Converters: Theft

Munira Wilson:

[\[4700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had recent discussions with the Metropolitan Police on a strategy to tackle the rising level of catalytic converter theft.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is working closely with police and motor manufacturers through the National Vehicle Crime Working Group, chaired by the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for vehicle crime, to tackle theft of catalytic converters. The Metropolitan Police Service is represented on the Working Group, and a network of vehicle crime specialists from every force in England and Wales shares information about emerging trends and how to tackle regional issues.

The Government funded the set-up of the National Infrastructure Crime Reduction Partnership (NICRP), which ensures national co-ordination of policing and law enforcement partners to tackle metal theft, including the theft of catalytic converters. The partnership shares intelligence to target offenders, and implements crime

prevention measures. The British Transport Police, through the NICRP, has conducted three national weeks of actions resulting in 92 arrests, over 2,000 site visits, over 1,000 stolen catalytic converters recovered, and the catalytic converters of over 3,000 vehicles forensically marked. This has helped to promote awareness, with over 1,000 officers trained in enforcement powers to deal with scrap metal dealers, and has seen a significant reduction in catalytic converter thefts. The Metropolitan Police Service have also co-ordinated their own operations to tackle these thefts.

■ Firearms: Licensing

Alexander Stafford: [\[4729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of proposed changes to the firearms application process on firearm-owning rural communities.

Alexander Stafford: [\[4732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that prices for compulsory medical verification for a firearms licence application are set within reasonable proximity to the price recommended by providers.

Alexander Stafford: [\[4734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many firearms licences have not been renewed since the introduction of compulsory medical verification.

Alexander Stafford: [\[4735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing a 10-year long firearms licence.

Kit Malthouse:

At present there are no changes proposed to the firearms application process. On 1 November 2021 new statutory guidance for police forces on firearms licensing was introduced which brings greater consistency and higher standards to police firearms licensing across the country.

The statutory guidance introduced a requirement for relevant medical information about firearms applicants to be provided to the police before grant or renewal of a firearm or shotgun certificate, to ensure the safety of the public and of the firearm certificate holder themselves. This strengthens the firearms licensing process and brings greater consistency to licensing across both rural and urban areas, as the provision of relevant medical information has always been a very important part of the decision by police forces to grant or renew a firearm or shotgun certificate but its provision varied across the country.

While doctors can charge a fee to provide the medical information for a firearm application, whether a fee is charged or the level or the fee is a matter between the applicant and the doctor. In relation to the charges which may be levied by doctors, applicants are able to approach their GP to supply the necessary medical

information, or they can arrange for the information to be provided by another suitably qualified GMC-registered doctor.

Information is published annually by the Home Office about firearm and shotgun certificates issued by the police. This does not include the numbers of licences which have not been renewed since the introduction of the requirement for medical information to be provided with the application.

The duration of firearm and shotgun certificates is five years. There are no plans to increase the duration of the length of these certificates at present. However, firearms licensing is kept under review and we will consider in due course whether there is a case for increasing the length of the duration of firearm and shotgun certificates following the introduction and monitoring over a reasonable period of time of the new digital firearms marker, which will improve how GP patient records are flagged to indicate to the doctor that a person is a firearm certificate holder, after the digital marker is released to GPs. It will also be important to ensure the statutory guidance for police forces is working as effectively as possible, and we will also have to have regard to the current independent reviews and Coroners' inquests in Plymouth and West Sussex and whether any relevant findings are made.

Alexander Stafford: [\[4730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of the proposed increase of the cost of firearms licenses on (a) farmers and (b) rural communities.

Alexander Stafford: [\[4731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how her Department plans to spend funds accrued from the proposed increase to the cost of firearm license renewals.

Alexander Stafford: [\[4733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of the proposed increase in firearms licenses on levels of firearm license renewals.

Alexander Stafford: [\[4736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the (a) economic contribution of the shooting and conservation industry to the UK each year, and (b) potential effect on that contribution of proposals to increase the cost of firearm renewal.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is committed to ensuring an efficient and effective firearms licensing system and to achieving full cost recovery for the police.

We have commenced a review of firearms licensing fees for police issued certificates, which were last revised in 2015. The review will be informed by the work of a Firearms Fees Working Group, chaired by the Home Office, which will carry out a detailed review of the current cost to the police of administering firearms licensing

and develop proposals for revised fees, in accordance with HM Treasury guidance. Proposals for new fees will be subject to public consultation in due course. We will prepare an impact assessment that will include consideration of the effect of new fee levels on rural communities, including on farmers and other occupations that require the use of a firearm or shotgun.

In line with HM Treasury guidance, new fees will be set at a level to recover the full cost to police forces of administering firearms licensing. Fees are collected by each police force and will offset the costs of their firearms licensing team and the work needed to support an effective licensing system.

■ Home Office: Social Clubs

Gareth Bacon:

[\[2672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 9 March 2022 to Question 132395, what information she holds on (a) FTE staff time and (b) budgets available to recognised staff groups within her Department in each of the last three years.

Rachel Maclean:

[Holding answer 24 May 2022]: There are currently 19 recognised staff groups, managed by staff across the Home Office. However, to retrieve FTE staff time and budgets available to recognised staff groups within the Department in each of the last three years can only be achieved with disproportionate effort.

■ Intelligence Services: Registration

Daisy Cooper:

[\[480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on what date she will publish draft legislation to force foreign agents to sign a register.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 17 May 2022]: The Foreign Influence Registration Scheme will be brought forward by Government amendment to the National Security Bill.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Ceramics: Import Duties

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[3763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will take steps to negotiate a reduction in the high tariffs on British-made tableware imported to the USA for use in hotels and restaurants.

Penny Mordaunt:

We know how important the US market is for the UK ceramics industry, and we will make the case for the reduction of these tariffs when an opportunity arises. This will most likely need to be in the form of free trade agreement negotiations, given World

Trade Organisation restrictions. The UK is ready to progress negotiations on a UK-US Free Trade Agreement when the US is ready to do so.

In our continued engagement with the sector and when these negotiations proceed, we will factor in the tableware industry's interests into our strategies and approach.

In the meantime, we continue to make it easier to sell iconic British tableware in other overseas markets. Thanks to our recently signed UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement and UK-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement, British tableware exporters will benefit from the removal of 5% tariffs on their products when exporting to Australia and New Zealand.

■ Imports: Russia

Charlotte Nichols: [\[512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether all products (a) made in and (b) imported from Russia are allowed to be sold in the UK.

Mike Freer:

In lockstep with our allies, the UK government has announced a range of trade sanctions against Russia since the invasion of the Ukraine. Sanctions include UK import bans on strategic products such as steel, iron and luxury goods. We have also announced tariff increases of 35 percentage points on Russian products including cereals, vodka and high-end products like caviar.

Currently, the UK is imposing import tariffs and bans on over £1bn of Russian goods.

Whilst we do not speculate on future sanctions, we continue to consider further measures to increase pressure on Putin's regime.

■ Trade Agreements: USA

Lee Anderson: [\[3734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what progress she has made on negotiating a UK-US trade deal.

Penny Mordaunt:

We have had five productive rounds of negotiations to date and agreed a significant proportion of legal text across multiple chapters.

JUSTICE

■ Aiding and Abetting: Miscarriages of Justice

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[3474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the rate of miscarriages of justice in relation to convictions under Joint Enterprise.

James Cartlidge:

No assessment has been made as the Ministry of Justice does not collate data on whether a prosecution or conviction relied on the doctrine of joint enterprise or whether an appeal in such a case resulted in a conviction being quashed or a sentence being changed. Such information may be held on court records but there are no means for this information to be collated centrally.

■ **Camp Hill Prison****Bob Seely:**[\[5680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what progress he has made on decisions on the future of the Camp Hill prison site.

Victoria Atkins:

There are no plans to reopen the Camp Hill prison site.

The prison estate is kept under careful review to ensure there is sufficient capacity. Decisions on the future size of the prison estate will reflect the current and projected prison population, including an assessment of the necessary margin to manage population fluctuations.

We are investing £3.8bn to deliver 20,000 additional, modern prison places, including up to 2,000 temporary prison places across England and Wales by the mid-2020s.

■ **Courts****Shabana Mahmood:**[\[3545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps courts must take to ensure that (a) they have the correct personal details of defendants and (b) defendants are aware of their summons.

James Cartlidge:

The general principles governing the process of communicating and providing notice of proceedings to the defendant of documents in civil legal proceedings are contained in the Civil Procedure Rules. The claimant provides the court with an address for service of the claim.

Courts are not required to ensure that they have the correct personal details of defendants or that defendants are aware of claims issued against them. The onus is on the parties to provide the correct information. Claimants must sign a statement of truth confirming that the details in their claim, including the address of the defendant, are true. Anyone who deliberately provides false information to the court may be subject to contempt of court proceedings and, if contempt is proved, the penalty is a fine or imprisonment.

■ Courts: Appeals

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[3543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps people are able to take to appeal court decisions made in their absence as a result of the court holding an incorrect home address.

James Cartlidge:

If an individual discovers that they have had a county court judgment issued against them as a result of the claim forms being sent to an incorrect home address, they can apply to the court to have the judgment cancelled. This is known as getting the judgment 'set aside'.

In order to apply to get a judgment cancelled, the individual is required to fill in an application notice (Form N244) and send it to the court. They may have to pay a court fee. They will have to go to a private hearing at the court to explain why the judgment should be cancelled.

■ Criminal Proceedings: Legal Aid Scheme

Karl Turner:

[\[R\]](#) [\[5390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many criminal legal aid firms have been added to the Legal Aid Agency's list of providers willing to accept instructions for advocacy services at different locations since 11 April 2022; and what data his Department holds on number of trials in the Crown Court that have been adjourned or postponed due to the unavailability of a defence advocate.

James Cartlidge:

At the point the Crown Court Representation Helpline was launched on 20 April, there were 19 contacts registered. The helpline does not require higher court advocates to be registered individually. Therefore, some of the registered contacts may have multiple higher court advocates available to provide advocacy services in the Crown Court. The number of registered contacts is subject to fluctuation.

The Crown Court Representation Helpline is in place to make the process of identifying higher court advocates easier for providers who may be impacted by barristers declining to accept returns in defence cases as part of national Criminal Bar Association disruptive action. Providers are not limited to instructing higher court advocates registered with the helpline. The [Public Defender Service](#) may also be able to provide advocacy support where cases have been impacted by the no returns action.

The Department publishes data on volumes and the reasons why trials do not go ahead as part of the [Criminal court statistics quarterly](#). The latest statistics cover the period October to December 2021. In line with the timetable for the publication of official statistics into the public domain we are unable to provide data for more recent months at this time.

■ Debt Collection

Shabana Mahmood: [\[3541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the process for a debt collection agency to ascertain the address of people against whom judgments have been made.

Shabana Mahmood: [\[3542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps a debt collection agency is required to take to verify the personal details, including home address, of the person they are attempting to collect debt from.

James Cartlidge:

The general principles governing the service, of documents in legal proceedings, are contained in Part 6 of the Civil Procedure Rules. A claimant must take “reasonable steps” to establish the defendant’s current address. Where the claimant is unable do so, they must consider whether there is an alternative place or method by which the claim may be served with the permission of the court. If the claimant is unable to establish either the defendant’s current address or an alternative method of service, the claim may be served on the defendant’s last known address. The premise being that individuals are responsible for updating their creditors with their new address and/or having their mail redirected.

Claimants, including debt collection agencies, in civil court proceedings must sign a statement of truth that they believe the facts stated in the claim form are true. This includes the names and addresses of the parties. Anyone who deliberately provides false information may be subject to contempt of court proceedings, and if contempt is proved the penalty is imprisonment or a fine.

The Ministry of Justice has not undertaken an assessment of the process that claimants, including debt enforcement agencies, use to ascertain the address of defendants who have had a court judgment made against them.

■ Debts: Civil Proceedings

Shabana Mahmood: [\[3544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the (a) number of people who have been found guilty in their absence in civil debt cases and (b) number and proportion of those cases in which the defendant was absent as a result of not having been aware of the summons due to the court holding an incorrect home address in the latest period for which data is available.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Justice publication “Civil Justice Statistics Quarterly” contains statistics about the number of default judgments made in the county court in England and Wales each year. A default judgment means judgment without a court hearing, where a defendant has failed to acknowledge a claim has been made against them;

or has failed to file a defence. A court hearing would only be listed if the defendant had responded to the claim and stated that they wanted to defend it.

In response to part a) of the question, the number of default judgments made in the latest period for which statistics are available is set out in the figures for 2021 below. It is not possible to say how many of these judgments relate to money claims. However, the majority of claims made to the county court are money claims.

For the reasons stated above, the figures in the table do not and cannot show the number of cases in which a money judgment is made by a court, in a case where the defendant did not appear for the hearing.

YEAR	NUMBER OF DEFAULT JUDGMENTS
2021	877,984 (provisional)

In answer to part b) it is not possible to determine what number and proportion of default judgments are as a result of the defendant not being aware of a money claim being made against them where it was sent to the wrong address. A default judgment can also arise when a defendant chooses not to respond to the money claim.

It is not possible for the courts to investigate the reasons behind why a defendant has not responded to the money claim.

■ Prison Accommodation: Females

Kate Osamor: [\[2324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when the construction of the 500 prison places for women will (a) be finished and (b) receive women prisoners.

Victoria Atkins:

We expect to complete construction in the mid 2020s. The first prisoners will enter the new facilities shortly after completion.

■ Prisoners on Remand: Females

Kate Osamor: [\[2323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many women have been held in prison on remand in each of the last three years, by (a) alleged offence type and ethnicity and (b) length of remand period and ethnicity.

Victoria Atkins:

The requested information can be found in the attached data file.

Attachments:

1. [2323 table \[2022-05-24 2323 TABLE.xlsx\]](#)

■ Prisoners: Gender Recognition

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[5685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Answer of 14 January 2022 to Question 98878, how many transwomen, who do not have a Gender Recognition Certificate, are serving a sentence for a serious violent offence against the person are held in (a) female, (b) male and (c) all prisons as of 20 May 2022.

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[5686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Answer of 14 January 2022 to Question 98878, on Prisoners: Gender Recognition, how many transwomen with a Gender Recognition Certificate held in (a) female prisons and (b) all prisons are serving a sentence for a serious violent offence against the person.

Victoria Atkins:

The Ministry of Justice and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) approach to managing transgender offenders is set out in the policy framework 'The Care and Management of Individuals who are Transgender'.

Prisoners are allocated to prisons initially according to their legal gender, which for the vast majority will be their sex recorded at birth. We are not obliged to allocate transgender prisoners according to their wishes, and their views are one of a range of factors considered when making allocation decisions. Any decisions to locate differently to an individual's legal gender, at any point during a sentence, are made on a case-by-case basis by a Complex Case Board, an expert multi-disciplinary panel chaired by a senior operational manager in HMPPS with specialist training.

As we do not have a definition of a "serious violent offence against the person", we have provided data on transgender women with any offence of violence against the person.

Data on transgender prisoners is not available for 20th May 2022. This is because transgender data comes from an annual collection exercise and is a snapshot of the transgender prison population on 31st March of each year.

The most recent data available is from 31st March 2021. On 31st March 2021, there were 146 transgender women without GRCs in prison estates across England and Wales. Of these, 41 individuals were serving their sentence for the principal offence of violence against the person in male establishments. There were no transgender women with a principal offence of violence against the person in the women's estate.

The number of transgender women with GRCs serving sentences for offences of violence against the person in either estate is fewer than 5.

■ Prisons: Education

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[2372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to allow educational materials to be sent to prisoners.

Victoria Atkins:

Prisoners can access education materials directly from prison education providers. To mitigate the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, a range of education materials were developed to be used in-cell, which has helped to ensure learning has been able to continue during the pandemic. Prisoners are also able to access resources to support Higher Education provided by organisations such as the Open University and the Prisoners' Education Trust.

Friends and family can send in books – either directly or via our published list of nine approved retailers. Governors must also consider allowing writing materials to be sent in when requested.

■ Rape Crisis Centres**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[3703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many rape crisis centres there are in England and Wales; and whether the Government plans to increase that number to 150, as recommended in the Istanbul Convention.

Victoria Atkins:

Rape and sexual violence are devastating crimes that can have life-long impacts on victims and survivors. This Government is committed to ensuring that every victim of rape and sexual assault will have access to quality support, appropriate to their needs, when they need it. This includes a commitment to increase funding for victim support services to £185 million by 2024/25 - more than quadruple the level in 2009/10.

Rape crisis and sexual abuse support centres are independent from the government. Their details are registered with the Charity Commission and Companies House. This government provides core funding across England and Wales via the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund to over 75 rape and sexual abuse support services which are run by these independent organisations.

The Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund (England and Wales) has been extended for a further year until March 2023 to ensure support services have the funding stability they need. This allows for recommissioning for the next two years (2023/24 and 2024/25). The recommissioning process will take into consideration a wide range of factors to inform future funding decisions.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Building Safety Fund: Tooting****Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[4658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Minister for Housing's oral contribution of 20 April 2022, Official Report, columns

183-4, if he will consider Fleming House for funding under the Building Safety Fund on an exceptional basis, despite its being under 11 metres tall.

Stuart Andrew:

The owner of any residential building should make sure that their building is safe in line with legal requirements. Remediation or mitigation works should be appropriate and proportionate. Low-rise buildings like Fleming House are less likely than high-rise buildings to require costly remediation to make them safe and it follows that risk assessments based on PAS 9980 principles in low-rise buildings are more likely to find that lower-cost mitigation is more appropriate and proportionate than higher-cost remediation.

The Department is therefore examining cases that have been brought to our attention in which it is proposed to carry out costly remediation works in buildings which are under 11 metres in height, with a view to challenging those who insist on transferring those costs to leaseholders if appropriate. We are aware of the Fleming House case and others like it, and will take it into account in deciding how to proceed.

■ **CCTV: Romford**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[3501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to provide sufficient CCTV coverage in Romford; and whether his Department has conducted a recent assessment of the potential merits of providing additional funding for CCTV.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Department has not conducted a recent assessment of the potential merits of providing additional funding for CCTV in Romford.

The Safer Streets Fund, which is administered by the Home Office, provides local organisations with the resources they need to tackle crime through evidence based and innovative interventions including improved CCTV.

■ **Council Tax: Debts**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent discussions he has had with local authorities on the steps being taken in the event that residents do not pay their council tax prior to the escalation of that matter through the courts.

Kemi Badenoch:

Local councils follow well established processes to collect outstanding council tax and, where appropriate and proportionate, to take enforcement action. The Department has published best practice guidance on council tax collection. This highlights the importance of clear communication, early engagement with council taxpayers and proactive engagement with the debt advice sector.

■ Council Tax: Government Assistance

Rachael Maskell: [3666]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what support is available to people who are unable to afford their council tax.

Kemi Badenoch:

Every council is required to have a local council tax support scheme to provide council tax reductions for residents in financial need. Councils can also arrange alternative payment methods, such as deferring payments to a later date. Where a household falls into problem council tax debt, the Government's Breathing Space scheme offers a pause of up to 60 days on most enforcement action fees and charges. To recognise the increased cost of living this year, the Government is also providing a £150 rebate to around 20 million households.

■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme

Mike Amesbury: [3719]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 16 May 2022 to Question 940 on Homes for Ukraine Scheme, if he will publish the plans which have been provided to local authorities.

Mike Amesbury: [3722]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 16 May 2022 to Question 945 on Homes for Ukraine Scheme, if he will publish the plans which have been provided to local authorities.

Eddie Hughes:

Guidance has now been published at: www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils.

■ Housing: Havering

Andrew Rosindell: [3498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many houses were built in (a) Romford and (b) the Borough of Havering during the last 5 years.

Stuart Andrew:

Estimates of building control reported new build dwelling completions for Havering in each of the last 5 years, are shown in Live Table 253, at the following link.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-house-building>

These cover new build dwellings only and should be regarded as a leading indicator of overall housing supply.

The department also publishes an annual release entitled 'Housing supply: net additional dwellings, England', which is the primary and most comprehensive measure of housing supply.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-net-supply-of-housing>

Andrew Rosindell:

[3499]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many Homes of Multiple Occupation there are in (a) Romford and (b) Havering; and what proportion of those have been built in the last five years.

Eddie Hughes:

According to the Local Authority Housing Statistics, there are an estimated 286 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the London Borough of Havering. The Local Authority Housing Statistics captures data at a local authority level and the Department does not gather information on the number of HMOs at a town level, nor do we gather information on the number of HMOs built. Further data from Local Authority Housing Statistics can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/local-authority-housing-statistics-data-returns-for-2020-to-2021> .

■ **Housing: Romford**

Andrew Rosindell:

[3497]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the appropriateness of the housing quota in Romford following local dissatisfaction on the number of houses being built.

Stuart Andrew:

Romford is within the London Borough of Havering. The distribution of housing and other development needs within London are matters that are delegated to the Mayor of London to address via his London Plan. The current London Plan was published in March 2021 and sets housing requirements for all planning authorities within London.

The London Plan sets out that Havering should provide 12,850 homes over the 10 years 2019/20 – 2028/29. Havering adopted its current Local Plan in November 2021 with a very similar housing requirement.

Romford is designated as an Opportunity Area within the London Plan with a requirement to accommodate at least 5000 new homes. The Havering Local Plan also recognises Romford as a Strategic Development Area and states that over 6000 homes are expected to be delivered.

■ **Housing: York**

Rachael Maskell:

[3657]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps will he take to ensure local people in York are consulted as part of the process of deciding the types of housing tenure that will apply to the houses planned for the York Central development.

Stuart Andrew:

I hope the Honourable Member for York Central will appreciate that as this is a live planning matter I cannot comment on the specifics of the case due to my quasi-judicial role in the planning system.

What I can say is that local planning authorities should use their local plans to set out the expected level of tenure mix for housing developments in their area, which underlines the importance of having an up to date plan which reflects local aspirations – and I am encouraged by the progress the council in the Honourable Member’s constituency has made recently in this regard.

We are clear that communities must be at the heart of the planning process and that is why our Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill we will introduce reforms to make the plan-making process simpler and faster for communities to engage with. We will also increase and enhance the opportunities for involvement in the planning system to ensure that development is brought forward in a way that works best for local people.

■ Islamophobia**Sarah Owen:**[\[3745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the University of Birmingham's The Dinner Table Prejudice report, published in January 2022, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the rise in Islamophobia cited in that report; and what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on tackling Islamophobia.

Kemi Badenoch:

We live in an increasingly tolerant society and prejudice towards Muslims is unacceptable. Muslims in our country should be able to practice their faith in freedom. We have some of the strongest legislation in the world to tackle hate crime and, where groups incite racial hatred or are engaged in racially or religiously motivated criminal activity, we would expect them to be prosecuted. We also have funded Tell MAMA with over £4m between 2017 and 2022 to monitor anti-Muslim hate crimes and support victims.

■ Local Plans: Tameside**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[3519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the forthcoming allocations in the Local Plan for Tameside can deviate from Greater Manchester’s Places for Everyone allocations.

Stuart Andrew:

Places for Everyone is a joint development plan document which sets out strategic policies for 9 of the 10 Greater Manchester Councils, including Tameside. Delivery of an up to date development plan is key to ensuring the infrastructure and development is in place to contribute towards our goal to Level Up Britain, to boost economic growth, and to progress opportunities for regeneration.

Each of the 9 Councils agreed the pre submission version of Places for Everyone before consultation took place in 2021. The plan was then submitted for examination by a panel of independent Inspectors in February 2022. The strategic policies and allocations proposed in Places for Everyone will be examined for their soundness as part of the examination process, including those in Tameside. If the Plan is found sound the 9 Councils will then decide whether to adopt the plan.

Places for Everyone is a strategic plan and it does not include more detailed area specific policies and allocations, these will be included in each borough's local plan, such as the emerging Tameside Local Plan, which is at an early stage of preparation with consultation expected later this year.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that in preparing a plan the authority needs to have regard to other local development plan documents. Whilst Tameside Council have indicated they will prepare their plan in conformity with Places for Everyone, legislation does not preclude the local plan from deviating from other local development plan documents, such as Places for Everyone, if there is sound evidence for doing so.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[3520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the difference in status will be between Greater Manchester's Places for Everyone and Tameside's Local Plan.

Stuart Andrew:

Both the submitted Places for Everyone Plan and an emerging Tameside Local Plan are development plan documents. If both Places for Everyone and the Tameside Local Plan are found sound and adopted they will together form the development plan for the Tameside area.

Plans gain weight in decision making as they progress through the plan making process.

Places for Everyone has been submitted for examination, but until a plan is found sound and has been adopted it has limited weight in decision making. The Tameside Local Plan is still at an early stage of preparation and there has been no consultation on a draft plan as yet.

■ Oxford-Cambridge Arc

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[3611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department will make an announcement on the future of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc project.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[3612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what criteria his Department will use to determine whether it will continue to support the Oxford-Cambridge Arc project.

Daniel Zeichner: [3613]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much and what proportion of the funding for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc project will be supplied by his Department.

Neil O'Brien:

Government recognises the Oxford-Cambridge Arc as a globally renowned hub of innovation, with businesses and universities that are leading the way in life sciences, space and green technologies

In October 2021, the Government completed a 12-week public consultation gathering views to shape a vision for the Spatial Framework. We continue to work through next steps and will provide more information in due course.

■ **Police: Havering**

Andrew Rosindell: [3502]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what data his Department holds on the proportion of Havering's budget that is spent on (a) policing and (b) Section 92 police officers.

Kemi Badenoch:

The department collects annual budget and outturn expenditure and financing data from local authorities for police services, but does not specifically collect data on Section 92 police officers. The latest revenue outturn data is publicly available on GOV.UK, through the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing-england-2020-to-2021-individual-local-authority-data-outturn>.

■ **Political Parties: Finance**

Dawn Butler: [4513]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that funding of UK political parties does not come from foreign citizens.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 23 May 2022]: UK electoral law sets out a stringent regime of donations controls that bans foreign donations. Individuals must be on the UK electoral roll to make political donations; in the case of companies, they must be UK-registered and properly carrying on business in the UK. There is only a very limited exception to this, whereby for political parties registered in Northern Ireland, permissible donors also include Irish sources provided they meet prescribed conditions. The Government is strengthening the corporate transparency regime, which will support the donations regime. The Elections Act 2022 further closes potential loopholes on foreign spending.

By contrast, the (Labour-led) Welsh Government and (SNP-led) Scottish Government have facilitated donations by foreign citizens in British politics, by extending the devolved franchise to all foreign nationals living in Wales and Scotland respectively.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Evictions**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to ensure that section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 cannot be triggered in the event that a tenant cannot afford to pay their rent.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to delivering a fairer and better quality private rented sector that works for both tenants and landlords. As announced in the Queen's Speech 2022, we are committed to introducing a Renters Reform Bill in this Parliamentary session. This will abolish Section 21 evictions to deliver a fairer deal for renters, enabling them to challenge poor practice and unfair rent increases. We will publish a White Paper shortly that will provide more details of these measures and our wider reform package.

■ **Refugees: English Language**

Caroline Ansell:

[\[4641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department will publish further guidance for public and private providers of English language learning on how they can supply their services to local authorities to support Ukrainian refugees; and if he will make a statement.

Eddie Hughes:

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is funded through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) and the Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Authorities, colleges and training providers have the flexibility to use their AEB/ESFA to meet the needs of their communities.

■ **Regional Planning and Development: Civil Servants**

Lisa Nandy:

[\[4556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many civil servants working in the Levelling Up Taskforce are based in (a) London, (b) the South East and (c) outside of London and the South East as of 18 May 2022.

Eddie Hughes:

[Holding answer 23 May 2022]: I refer the Hon Member to my answer to Question UIN 99333 on 12 January 2022. Staffing figures fluctuate over time. The Department will publish an organogram in due course.

■ Urban Areas: Romford

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[3500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that developments in Romford are in keeping with the historic market town style.

Stuart Andrew:

The National Planning Policy Framework was amended last year to ask all local councils to set design standards in design guides and codes that reflect local character and design preferences. The Framework also asks local councils to refuse permission for development that is not well designed, while giving significant weight to schemes that reflect local design policies and government guidance on design. The Government's National Design Guide and National Model Design Code provide local councils with a toolkit to help them set standards which take account of local history, culture and heritage, based on effective community engagement. The Office for Place is working with local councils and neighbourhood planning groups in every region of England to test the National Model Design Code and provide exemplars for others to follow. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill will require every local planning authority to produce a design code for its area, which will have full weight in making decisions on development, either through forming part of local plans or being prepared as a supplementary plan.

MEMBERS ESTIMATE COMMITTEE

■ Representative Money

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[5362\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the Members Estimate Committee, how much Representative Money has been made available to elected Members who have not taken the Oath in each year between 2006 and 2022.

Sir Charles Walker:

The table below details how much Representative Money has been made available to elected Members who have not taken the Oath in each year between 2006 and 2022:

Representative Money allocations, 2005/06-2021/22

Financial year	Main budget (£)	Travel budget (£)
2005/06*	35,163.00	868.00
2006/07	86,245.00	2,136.07
2007/08	90,036.00	2,230.05

2008/09	93,639.00	2,319.26
2009/10	94,482.00	2,340.13
2010/11** (1 Apr-5 May)	9,277.00	229.78
(6 May-31 Mar)	87,133.00	2,493.73
2011/12	101,004.00	2,890.59
2012/13	105,850.00	3,029.34
2013/14	109,135.00	3,123.25
2014/15	112,076.00	3,207.58
2015/16 # (1 Apr-7 May)	11,511.00	329.45
(8 May-31 Mar)	87,783.00	1,898.90
2016/17	97,556.00	2,224.32
2017/18 \$ (1 Apr-8 Jun)	18,737.00	431.41
(9 Jun-31 Mar)	130,970.00	2,901.64
2018/19	165,864.00	3,674.62
2019/20 ^ (1 Apr-11 Dec)	117,986.27	2,613.95
(12 Dec-31 Mar)	48,243.74	1,200.05
2020/21	161,296.87	4,007.68
2021/22	162,265.31	4,021.01

Notes:

* from 1 November 2005-31 March 2006

** general election year full year allocations based on 2005 and 2010

general election results would have been:

	Main budget	Travel budget
2005 results	£96,747	£2,396.30
2010 results	£96,374	£2,758.22

general election year full year allocations based on 2010 and 2015

general election results would have been:

	Main budget	Travel budget
2010 results	£113,867	£3,258.90
2015 results	£97,655	£2,112.46

\$ general election year full year allocations based on 2015 and 2017

general election results would have been:

	Main budget	Travel budget
2015 results	£99,116	£2,282.09
2017 results	£161,500	£3,578.03

^ general election year full year allocations based on 2015 and 2017

general election results would have been:

	Main budget	Travel budget
2017 results	£169,345	£3,751.79
2019 results	£159,074	£3,956.92

This information can also be found on the App3 tab in the Excel spreadsheet (44 KB) accessed from the following link: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn01663/>

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Abortion: Northern Ireland

Stella Creasy:

[\[4564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, further to his written statement of 24 March 2022, what recent assessment he has made of the Northern Ireland's Department of Health's levels of compliance with the direction to provide access to abortion for women in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Brandon Lewis:

On 24 March, I made a commitment to return to Parliament after the Assembly election to make regulations on abortion, if no progress had been made by the Northern Ireland Department of Health towards the provision of services.

Regretfully, the Department of Health failed to make progress. That is why, on 19 May, I 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 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.

SCOTLAND

■ Veterans: Mental Health

Stuart Anderson:

[\[5489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to improve the mental wellbeing of veterans.

Mr Alister Jack:

The UK Government remains fully committed to improving the mental wellbeing of veterans, which is a key part of our Veterans' Strategy. My Department works closely with the wider UK Government, the Scottish Government, the Scottish Veterans Commissioner and the Office of Veterans' Affairs on this matter.

TRANSPORT

■ Aviation: Carbon Emissions

Alexander Stafford:

[\[3793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will introduce a sub-mandate on power-to-liquid fuels to help decarbonise aviation.

Robert Courts:

Sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) will have a key role in driving down carbon emissions in the UK aviation sector and the Government is fully committed to accelerating its development. The Government recognises the long-term potential of power-to-liquid (PtL) fuels specifically, due to the feedstock availability and high greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions they can achieve. However, PtL fuel costs are significantly higher than the cost of SAF produced through any other pathway and the production of these fuels is not expected to be widespread until the late 2030s.

Last year we consulted on proposals to introduce a SAF mandate in the UK, including mechanisms to accelerate the technological and commercial development of PtL fuels specifically.. We are currently reviewing evidence provided in response to the consultation and wider resources to determine which mechanism may be most effective in reducing the cost of and stimulating investment in PtL production. We will provide further clarity in the upcoming government response to the SAF mandate consultation.

■ Electric Scooters: Pilot Schemes

Ian Byrne: [\[5695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department plans to publish its final report on e-scooter trials.

Trudy Harrison:

Findings from this evaluation will be in the final report due to be published in the future.

■ Ferries: Crew

Louise Haigh: [\[5460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the number of UK resident (a) ratings and (b) officers that were employed in the ferry sector in each year since 2015 to 19 May 2022.

Robert Courts:

The Department does not hold data on seafarers by country of residence.

■ Ferries: Minimum Wage

Louise Haigh: [\[5462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) officials in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the potential merits of additional (a) funding and (b) staffing resources for HMRC National Minimum Wage Enforcement to increase its compliance and enforcement work in the ferry sector since 17 March 2022.

Robert Courts:

On 30 March, the Secretary of State for Transport announced our nine-point plan to improve protections and welfare of Seafarers. As part of that plan we have been working with HMRC and BEIS on matters relating to the National Minimum Wage.

HMRC are responsible for the enforcement of National Minimum Wage within UK territorial waters and continue to target their enforcement activity by investigating any ferry operators, who are within scope of UK National Minimum Wage legislation, that they suspect do not pay their workers correctly. HMRC are clear that they will not stand for anyone shirking their obligation to pay at least the National Minimum Wage and, where they suspect someone isn't living up to their responsibilities, they will not hesitate to use the full range of powers available to them.

■ Ferries: Registration

Louise Haigh: [\[5461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the UK Shipping Fleet Statistics: 2021 published 6 April 2022, how many (a) roll-on roll-off and (b) load-on load-off ferries have left the UK Ship Register since 2017.

Robert Courts:

UK ship register data from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency indicates that 38 roll-on roll-off* and 62 load-on load-off (container) vessels have left the register at any point between 2017 and 2021 and were not on the register as at end Dec 2021.

*includes 3 non-seagoing ro-ro vessels such as river ferries.

Local Transport Plans: Carbon Emissions**Caroline Lucas:**[\[3556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Answer of 19 April 2022 to Question 151053, on Local Transport Plans: Carbon Emissions, whether he plans to consult on the additional guidance on quantifiable carbon reductions at the same time as he consults on the guidance for Local Transport Plans.

Trudy Harrison:

Yes, we will consult on both the Local Transport Plan and Quantifiable Carbon Reduction Guidance at the same time. The department is currently updating guidance on local transport plans. The new guidance will provide a holistic view of what the government is expecting local transport authorities to deliver including decarbonisation goals.

As per our commitment in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan (2021) to drive decarbonisation at the local level, future local transport plans will need to set out how local areas can deliver quantifiable carbon reductions in transport. We will publish technical guidance for local transport authorities on quantifying carbon alongside the new local transport plan guidance.

Caroline Lucas:[\[3557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Answer of 19 April 2022 to Question 151053, on Local Transport Plans: Carbon Emissions, whether the additional guidance on quantifiable carbon reductions will take account of non-user emissions, such as from construction, power generation and manufacturing emissions, which are generated as a result of transport use.

Trudy Harrison:

The department is currently in the process of updating guidance on local transport plans.

We plan to also publish technical guidance for local transport authorities on quantifying carbon alongside the new local transport plan guidance to help local authorities make decisions on local transport interventions from quantitative assessment of carbon impacts at a strategic planning stage.

The scope of emissions for the technical guidance on quantifying carbon is currently being considered and will be subject to public consultation this summer.

■ Parking: Pedestrian Areas**Mike Amesbury:** [\[3724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Transport Bill, what assessment his Department has made of whether local authorities require powers to tackle pavement parking; and whether he plans to include provisions on pavement parking in that bill.

Trudy Harrison:

The Department consulted on measures to address pavement parking and received over 15,000 responses. Ministers are carefully considering the options in the light of the consultation findings. We will publish the formal consultation response and announce next steps as soon as possible.

■ Rivers: York**Rachael Maskell:** [\[5439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to explore how greater use can be made of rivers for transport in places such as York.

Robert Courts:

Inland waterways have potential to a valuable part of the overall freight and passenger transport offer in the UK. There is ongoing engagement from the Department with representative sector organisations to understand the opportunities and requirements for increased use of rivers, to move both freight and people, in addition to existing grants available to encourage a shift to water-freight.

■ Shipping: Conditions of Employment**Louise Haigh:** [\[5459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Impact Assessment of the Harbours (Seafarers' Remuneration) Bill, which types of seafarer are considered to be (a) in and (b) out of scope.

Robert Courts:

The types of seafarer in and out of scope of the new rules will be defined wholly by which vessel they work on, and not by class or type of seafarer.

■ Shipping: Minimum Wage**Louise Haigh:** [\[5463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent progress has been made on the Government's integrational engagement at the International Labour Organisation on minimum wages for seafarers in the international shipping industry.

Robert Courts:

While the majority of the work of the ILO is agreed on a tripartite basis between governments and social partners, the Joint Maritime Committee (JMC) is a bipartite meeting between the social partners only.

The sub-committee of the JMC on wages met in Geneva recently and agreed to raise the International Labour Organization (ILO) minimum basic wage guidelines for an able seafarer.

Therefore before the government addresses the Office of the ILO, it is waiting for the recommendations of the Committee and of the amendments agreed to the Maritime Labour Convention by the Special Tripartite Committee to be adopted at the 346th session of the ILO Governing Body later this year and for the final reports of both Committees to be published.

■ Tree Planting: Cambridgeshire**Daniel Zeichner:**[\[3614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) survival rates and (b) total costs of trees planted during the upgrade to the A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon.

Trudy Harrison:

a) Around 800,000 trees have been planted across the mainline scheme, with an additional 140,000 trees recently planted this season which have not been included in previous figures. National Highways has undertaken a first survey to establish survival rates and re-planted all the trees which did not survive. A further survey is underway, and a report is being produced to analyse reasons for tree failures and suggestions for replanting strategy.

b) National Highways have spent circa £2m to date.

TREASURY**■ Cost of Living: Coventry****Colleen Fletcher:**[\[4594\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to reduce the impact of the rise in the cost of living on households in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

John Glen:

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, the government is providing support in the form of UK-wide measures worth over £22 billion in 2022-23 to help families with these pressures.

This includes providing millions of households in the UK with up to £350 to help with rising energy bills and helping people keep more of what they earn. The government

has also cut the Universal Credit taper rate, frozen alcohol duty and has further increased the National Living Wage to £9.50 an hour. The Spring Statement went further, with the government announcing an increase to the annual National Insurance Primary Threshold and Lower Profits Limit to £12,570 from July 2022, a cut to fuel duty, and an additional £500m for the Household Support Fund to help with the cost of essentials.

The government will continue to keep the situation under review, including monitoring the ongoing impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on our economy, and will be ready to take further steps if needed to support households.

■ Travel: Insurance

Karl Turner: [\[5391\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) insurance providers on helping to ensure that cancer patients are able to access affordable travel insurance.

John Glen:

Ensuring that everyone has access to suitable and affordable financial products and services is a priority for this Government.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) found that some consumers with pre-existing medical conditions, including cancer, faced challenges navigating the travel insurance market. To address this, from April 2021, the FCA requires all firms offering retail travel insurance to signpost consumers to a directory of specialist providers if they are declined cover, offered cover with an exclusion, or charged a significantly higher premium based on their serious pre-existing medical condition.

We continue to work closely with regulators, and stakeholders from the public, private and third sectors on this important issue.

WALES

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Mr Peter Bone: [\[900148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) the Welsh Government on tackling human trafficking in Wales.

David T C Davies:

The Nationality and Borders Act provides clarity on human trafficking victims' rights and entitlements, it goes further in supporting the victims of this horrendous crime and reduces the opportunity for the system to be abused. We will continue to engage with the Welsh Government on this, and the Modern Slavery Bill will be introduced in due course.

■ Nuclear Power: Wales**Scott Benton:****[900149]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what assessment he has made of potential opportunities for the Welsh nuclear industry under the UK Energy Security Strategy.

David T C Davies:

The British Energy Security Strategy will speed up the UK's nuclear programme and recognises the strength of Wylfa as a nuclear site. The Secretary of State for Wales and the Business Secretary recently chose the Wylfa site to announce the £120 million Future Nuclear Enabling Fund, which will unlock and accelerate new nuclear technologies.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Department for Work and Pensions: Powers****Dawn Butler:****[5613]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has plans to give powers of arrest to some officials in her Department; and if she will make a statement.

David Rutley:

As set out in both our Fighting Fraud Against the Welfare System publication, published on 19 May (link below) and the supporting Written Ministerial Statement, when parliamentary time allows, we propose to introduce legislation to take new powers of arrest which will be conferred on a team of suitably trained and experienced criminal investigators. Where appropriate we will continue to work in partnership with the Police.

This legislation would broadly align DWP powers with those already in place in both HMRC and GLAA (Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority)

[Fighting Fraud in the Welfare System - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fighting-fraud-in-the-welfare-system)

■ Disability Living Allowance: Children**Ed Davey:****[5321]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many children under three years are receiving the DLA care component under special rules in England.

Chloe Smith:

Quarterly statistics for the number and age of children in receipt of the highest rate care award of Disability Living Allowance, with a main disabling condition recorded as Terminally ill, are published on Stat-Xplore here:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>

Guidance for users is available at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ Employment

Mike Amesbury: [3720]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report by the Local Government Association entitled *Work local: unlocking talent to level up*, published on 10 May 2022, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of proposals for an integrated and devolved employment and skills service; and if she will make it her policy to implement the Work Local model in full.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is supportive of better integration of employment and skills services. The Levelling Up White Paper (LUWP), published on 2 February 2022, established three Employment and Skills Pathfinders: in Blackpool, Walsall and Barking and Dagenham. The UK Government will bring greater alignment to the delivery of employment and skills interventions in these areas. This is a joint project between DWP and the Department for Education (DfE), the Department responsible for further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills and funding in England. The Pathfinders are bringing together local delivery partners to share understanding of local employers' skills needs, support people into work, and identify progression opportunities for people in part-time work.

The LUWP also established an 'English Devolution Framework.' It takes a tiered approach to devolution and enables DWP to offer local government, a single institution or County Council with a directly elected Mayor, a role in the design and delivery of future contracted employment programmes. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is leading devolution deal negotiations with those areas identified in the LUWP.

DWP works closely with local government to understand local labour market issues and reflect these in our employment support and is committed to working with the LGA to strengthening our engagement, alongside other local government organisations.

■ Local Housing Allowance: Rhondda Cynon Taf

Beth Winter: [4711]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data her Department holds on the average disparity between rent requirement and Local Housing Allowance rates by household in Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority.

David Rutley:

As of November 2021, the average monthly shortfall between a household's monthly rent and the Local Housing Allowance rate was £102 in Rhondda Cynon Taf

■ Mental Health: Poverty

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact of poverty on mental health in the context of the rising cost of living.

David Rutley:

The link between poverty and mental health is well-established in academic research literature and the Department hasn't specifically assessed or commissioned further research on this issue. There is clear evidence about the important role that work can play in lifting people out of poverty and in improving health and wellbeing for people with health conditions, including mental health. That is why we have undertaken a range of activities to understand how best to support people with mental health conditions find and retain work, for example our Employment Advisors in Improving Access to Psychological Therapies initiative.

This year we will spend over £242bn through the welfare system, including around £64 billion on supporting disabled people and people with health conditions in Great Britain. The government has also taken action to support and help people with the cost of living worth over £22 billion in this financial year. This includes a £9.1 billion energy bill rebate package, worth up to £350 each for around 28 million households.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Chronic Illnesses

Cat Smith:

[\[2534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will remove the requirement for people with lifelong conditions to undergo repeat personal independence payment assessments.

Chloe Smith:

Entitlement to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is assessed on the basis of the needs arising from a health condition or disability, rather than the health condition or disability itself. Award rates and their durations are set on an individual basis, based on the claimant's needs and the likelihood of those needs changing. Award reviews allow for the correct rate of PIP to remain in payment, including where needs have increased as a consequence of a congenital, degenerative or progressive condition.

We announced in the Shaping Future Support: Health and Disability Green Paper that we will test a new Severe Disability Group (SDG) so that those with severe and lifelong conditions can benefit from a simplified process to access PIP, ESA and UC without needing to go through a face-to-face assessment or frequent reassessments. We will consider the test results once complete to influence thinking on the next stages of this work.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Standards

John Lamont: [\[6868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what targets his Department has set for standard waiting times for new claimants of PIP to receive their first payment.

John Lamont: [\[6869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what criteria her Department uses to assess performance standards for average clearance times for new claims made under normal rules for Personal Independence Payments.

Chloe Smith:

There is no target for the completion of a claim to PIP through to the first payment. However, we are committed to ensuring that people can access financial support through Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in a timely manner. We always aim to make an award decision as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to review all the available evidence, including that from the claimant, any supporting evidence supplied and the advice from an assessment.

■ Social Security Benefits

Dawn Butler: [\[5616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the value of benefits unclaimed by entitled claimants was in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Guy Opperman:

On 24 February 2022 the Department for Work and Pensions published the report "Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year 2019 to 2020". This provided figures on the value of some unclaimed benefits (Pension Credit and Housing Benefit (for Pensioners) in Great Britain. The full report is available online. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up--2> . Estimates are not currently available for other DWP benefits.

■ Social Security Benefits: Bank Services

Dawn Butler: [\[5614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has plans to give some officials in her Department greater access to claimants' banking data; and if she will make a statement.

David Rutley:

As set out in both our Fighting Fraud Against the Welfare System publication, published on 19 May (link below) and the supporting Written Ministerial Statement, when parliamentary time allows, we will legislate for powers to require the transfer of

data from third parties (e.g. banks) to enable the department to identify potential fraud more proactively, such as where claimants might have savings above the capital limit.

We believe this measure is necessary and proportionate to protect taxpayers' money and prevent crime. We recognise that we must balance this with people's right to privacy and we will therefore ensure the power is appropriate and no more than necessary to address the problem.

[Fighting Fraud in the Welfare System - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fighting-fraud-in-the-welfare-system)

■ Social Security Benefits: Deductions

Beth Winter:

[1364]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of reducing the maximum rate of deductions from social security payments from 25 per cent.

David Rutley:

Deductions from benefit to address priority debts have existed for over 40 years. In the past three years, DWP have reduced the normal maximum rate of deductions in Universal Credit twice - from 40% to 30% in October 2019, and a further reduction to 25% of a claimant's Standard Allowance in April 2021. These changes have enabled hundreds of thousands of claimants to retain more of their award.

The Department has to balance the amount that can be deducted with the protections that deductions offer claimants. Lowering the maximum deduction rate further would result in less essential deductions such as Child Maintenance being made. We believe that 25% of the Standard Allowance strikes the right balance of ensuring priority debts and social obligations are met whilst enabling claimants to retain more of their award to meet day-to-day needs.

■ Social Security Benefits: Overpayments

Dawn Butler:

[5615]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the amount of benefit overpayments due to fraud and error has been in each of the last five years for which figures are available, broken down by (a) official and (b) claimant error.

David Rutley:

Estimates of fraud and error levels in the benefit system in Great Britain, including over each of the last 5 financial years, have been published and can be found at:

[Fraud and error in the benefit system - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fraud-and-error-in-the-benefit-system) ?

The national statistics of fraud and error in the welfare system in Great Britain in the financial year 2021 to 2022 will be released on 26th May 2022.

■ Universal Credit

Chris Bryant: [\[4509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will reinstate the £20 a week uplift to Universal Credit in the context of 9 per cent inflation and the rising cost of living.

David Rutley:

There are no plans to reinstate the temporary increase to Universal Credit.

The government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living and these are global challenges, but the government has taken action to support and help families with a package worth over £22 billion in 2022-23. These steps help ensure that on average a person in work is £6000 better off in work than on benefits. And we stand ready to do more as the situation evolves.

■ Universal Credit: Havering

Andrew Rosindell: [\[3492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are recipients of Universal Credit in (a) Romford and (b) the Borough of Havering.

David Rutley:

The latest available statistics on the number of people who are on Universal Credit, by parliamentary constituency and by local authority, are published monthly and can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ Universal Credit: Romford

Andrew Rosindell: [\[3493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in Romford are recipients of legacy benefits; how many of those people have made applications to transition to universal credit; and what steps her Department is taking to ensure that people are made aware of the transition to universal credit.

David Rutley:

The data held for people in Romford who are on Legacy benefits is published at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>. Data surrounding Universal Credit caseload growth at national, regional and constituency level is also published at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>. Guidance for users is available at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>. We do not centrally collate the number of claimants that have made a new claim to Universal Credit for claimants who move from existing legacy benefits, to Universal Credit.

Everyone who is required to move to Universal Credit will receive a migration notice informing them that they need to make a claim for Universal Credit. Customers will need to make a claim for Universal Credit within three months

The Department is committed to raising awareness among legacy benefit claimants of the transition to Universal Credit and helping them decide whether moving sooner would be right for them. The latest data estimates that 55%¹ of legacy claimants could be better off on Universal Credit. A national multi-channel advertising campaign launched in March. It targets tax credit customers and encourages them to use an independent benefits calculator and seek independent advice to find out if they could be better off and help them decide whether to move to Universal Credit voluntarily.

Following the publication of the [Completing the Move to UC Strategy](#)¹ and supporting analysis and case studies, the Department will work with stakeholder organisations to help raise awareness about voluntary moves across their networks.

■ Way to Work Scheme

Alison McGovern:

[5651]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Department's press release entitled, New jobs mission to get 500,000 into work, dated 27 January 2022, what targets her Department has put in place for the Way to work campaign; in what way she is measuring the performance of that campaign; what the evidential basis was for proceeding with the design of that campaign; and if she will make a statement.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to the answer given to [PQ4709](#) for the number of movements into work during the Way to Work campaign as of 15 May.

On the 26 January 2022, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions launched 'Way to Work', a campaign across Great Britain to help 500,000 people into employment by the end of June 2022.

We are building on the infrastructure established through our Kickstart Scheme to work more closely with employers, to bring them into Jobcentres and move claimants into work more quickly. We are providing more time for new claimants with their Work Coach and delivering a renewed focus on moving claimants into work through more rigorously applying agreements made in claimant commitments. We are also using data to ensure that we are flexible and adaptable in our delivery. This means that we are collecting data that is relevant, effective and that allows us to monitor performance in a timely way so as to assess what is working.

Our ambition for 500,000 movements into work was developed in recognition of the 1.2 million vacancies in the wider economy (now 1.3 million vacancies), as well as the 1.6 million people searching for work within the Universal Credit caseload. It was based on historical performance in previous years over the same period covered by the Way to Work campaign (February to June) and included modelling based on enhanced delivery once Way to Work improvements have been applied.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

EDUCATION

■ Higher Education and Skills in Local Communities

The Minister of State for Higher and Further Education (Michelle Donelan):
[\[HCWS55\]](#)

Today I am announcing a national programme which will be delivered by The Open University. The Open University will partner with 10-12 further education (FE) providers in England to support the delivery of high quality level 4 and 5 courses in areas where there is currently limited provision.

As a government we are working to level up the country, and access to high quality education at level 4 and above is a vital part of this. There are too many communities who do not currently have access to local, convenient, high quality higher education (HE) and I am determined to address this.

We want people wishing to train and upskill throughout their life to have local access to a new type of HE, focused on providing the higher level skills to meet local employer needs, with shorter courses that deliver the skills they require rather than only three year degrees.

The Open University will be working in partnership with a selection of FE providers and employers at a local level to understand the skills the economy needs and ensure the education system give people those skills.

We know FE providers are at different stages and require different levels of support to take the important step into delivering good quality level 4 and 5 courses that employers want. So I have asked the Office for Students to commission a HE sector leader to provide validation and course support to help FE providers develop and deliver high quality higher technical courses that meet local skills needs.

We are delighted that the Office for Students has appointed The Open University to deliver this vital programme. The Open University will work with FE providers who need support developing and delivering courses and having them validated. They will help people in areas currently underserved by HE courses to access a high-quality course accredited by a known and recognised institution. The Government is providing up to £10m to support The Open University with the costs of setting-up and running the programme over the next 3 years.

The Open University is inviting bids now from local FE providers who are ambitious about delivering high quality level 4 and 5 courses. They will be announcing which organisations they will be supporting in the autumn, and we look forward to working with them and the Office for Students to level up opportunity.

This new programme comes alongside a £32m Higher Technical Education Skills Injection Fund for colleges and universities which will be invested in equipment and

facilities to support technical studies, and boost training opportunities with businesses in key areas such as digital, construction and health care.

I would like to use this statement to encourage education sector leaders to engage with these programmes of support. Together we can build an even better HE offer that is fit for the 21st century and delivering on the priorities of local employers and learners in every part of the country.

■ Unit for Future Skills Update

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills (Alex Burghart):

[HCWS54]

In February, it was announced in the Levelling Up White Paper that the Department for Education would be setting up a new Unit for Future Skills. The White Paper recognises that good information is necessary for the skills system to respond effectively to emerging needs. The Unit has therefore been set up to improve the quality of jobs and skills data, working across Government to make this publicly accessible.

Rich sources of information on skills and jobs already exist. However, this information is often held by various parts of government and in different or incompatible formats. Furthermore, data in the public domain is typically not presented in a way that is most useful for its intended audience, whether learners, providers, local areas, businesses, or researchers.

Today, the Unit has officially launched with its first data release. This covers the jobs, sectors and regions people work in after gaining a qualification. This is the first time we have brought together data on higher and further education to make it easier for people to see where their training can take them: for example, showing the routes young people take through high-quality technical education to get good jobs where they live. This data is an early example of what the Unit can do, and we will work with others to improve this and release more useful information.

The Unit will work extensively with a variety of stakeholders to enrich our employer-led skills system and make it more responsive to the economy's needs. The Unit covers England only, but will work with devolved administrations to share learning and insights.

Alongside the data from the Unit for Future Skills, the Skills Productivity Board has also published its remaining reports, concluding its work. The Board is an expert committee set up in 2020 to provide independent, evidence-based advice on skills and their contribution to productivity. Findings from the Board emphasise the need for sustained focus on data improvements and formed the basis of the Unit's priorities.

You will be able to follow the Unit's work and access its products through a dedicated website, which has also gone live today (<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/unit-for-future-skills/>). The Unit will continue to work with other government departments to bring together different datasets and make these widely available, including through APIs (application programming interface).

Specific priorities for the Unit over the next 6 months include:

- **Improved dashboard on career pathways** providing users with more detail on which post-16 qualifications support successful employment in specific sectors within a local area (improvements to be designed based on user feedback on dashboard released today).
- **A skills demand dashboard.** Development of a product based on newly available data from the ONS, showing what types of jobs are being advertised in which local area
- **Research projects on future skills demand forecasting and a UK specific skills taxonomy.** The latter will underpin better linking of data, enriching its potential
- **Roundtables and stakeholder workshops,** to gather feedback on the Unit's launch products and define its longer-term priorities

JUSTICE

■ Delivering justice for victims

Deputy Prime Minister, Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor (Dominic Raab): [\[HCWS53\]](#)

Today the Government is publishing a draft Victims Bill for pre-legislative scrutiny, ensuring we will deliver on our manifesto commitment to pass and implement a Victims Law.

We are also publishing a wider package of measures that put victims firmly at the heart of the criminal justice system. These are set out in the Government's response to the consultation "Delivering justice for victims - a consultation on improving victims' experiences of the justice system". The consultation launched in December 2021 and ran for eight weeks. It received over 600 responses, alongside important feedback gathered through 39 engagement events with frontline professionals and victims.

In response, we have set out a wide range of measures to send a clear signal that the justice system must deliver justice for victims. The Government is also announcing the new cross-government Victims Funding Strategy, which will drive better outcomes for victims by tackling barriers to sustainable funding and ensuring consistent commissioning.

Collectively these measures will amplify victims' voices in the criminal justice process, improve the support victims receive, and strengthen oversight of criminal justice agencies. In doing so, they will help victims to have confidence that there is the right support available and that if they report crime, the criminal justice system will treat them in the way they should rightly expect.

The draft Victims Bill will:

- Enshrine the overarching principles of the Victims' Code in primary legislation and set out key entitlements in secondary legislation, to send a clear signal about what victims can and should expect from the criminal justice system

- Introduce a joint statutory duty on PCCs, health and local authorities to collaborate when commissioning support services for victims of sexual, domestic, violence, and serious violence so that services are more holistic and better coordinated
- Introduce a statutory definition of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), accompanied by statutory guidance at a later date, to increase awareness and consistency of these roles.
- Place a duty on criminal justice agencies to collect data and keep under review their compliance with the Victims' Code and to take into account feedback from victims about their experiences. It will also introduce a duty for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to take a convening role in monitoring compliance locally so that there can be a better view of how the system treats victims. As a result, the Victims' Commissioner will no longer be responsible for reviewing the operation of the Victims' Code but will still be able to engage on compliance at a national level through their other functions.
- Provide the Justice Secretary, Home Secretary and Attorney General with the power to require criminal justice inspectorates to undertake regular joint thematic inspections on victims' issues, to ensure clearer and sharper focus on how victims are treated.
- Require the Victims' Commissioner to lay their annual report in Parliament, and require relevant agencies and departments to respond to recommendations in that report, to enhance scrutiny of the actions being taken.
- Remove the need for victims of crime to raise a complaint via an MP before it can be investigated by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, to simplify the process for victims wanting to escalate complaints against public bodies. This will be an exception for victims of crime, for whom approaching an MP to share a potentially traumatic experience is more likely to be a barrier to making a complaint and does not constitute an indication that the Government intends to remove the 'MP filter' more widely.

The accompanying measures announced within the consultation response will:

- Increase the Victim Surcharge by 20% so that offenders pay more towards vital victim support services. This change is being made via statutory instrument.
- Introduce a duty in the Victims' Code requiring the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to meet victims in certain cases before a hearing takes place, where the victim is willing to do so.
- Work with criminal justice inspectorates to enhance their oversight of victims' experiences and use ratings to improve performance, including more regular focus on victims' issues and experiences in all inspections.
- Improve agencies' communications on complaints, ensuring clear and accessible points of contact to help victims make and progress their complaints.

- Raise the profile and professional standing of ISVAs and IDVAs, through the introduction of a non-public register, a network for support providers and an annual report.
- Include information about community impact statements in the Victims' Code to promote their use in appropriate cases and amplify the voices of communities impacted by crime.
- Work with the judiciary to introduce a Victims' Code entitlement for Victim Personal Statements in the Mental Health Tribunal where the release of offenders is being considered, so that victims are able to explain the impact of the crime on them.
- Give victims the right to attend a parole hearing in full for the first time, should they wish to and subject to the circumstances of the case and agreement of the Parole Board.
- Allow victims to ask questions within submissions to the Parole Board and require that the Board takes account of these when reaching their decision, so that victims' voices are amplified in the process.

Together these measures will contribute to our plan to give victims the justice they deserve, and build back a better, stronger, fairer country.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Recognition of Ulster Scots as a national minority and funding for An Ciste Infheistíochta Gaeilge, the Irish Language Investment Fund

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis):

[\[HCWS56\]](#)

Today, the Government is recognising officially Ulster Scots as a national minority under the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and is announcing £4 million in funding for An Ciste Infheistíochta Gaeilge, the Irish Language Investment Fund. This delivers on two of the Government's commitments in the New Decade, New Approach agreement (NDNA).

NDNA placed an emphasis on respect for, and mutual understanding of, Northern Ireland's diverse national and cultural identities. The carefully balanced package of measures within it will benefit everyone in Northern Ireland.

Ulster Scots have a proud history and a distinct language, heritage and culture, and this recognition will afford them the same status as other minorities in the UK. The recognition of Ulster Scots is without prejudice as to whether they meet the definition of a 'racial group' under the Equality Act 2010, as only the courts can rule on this matter.

The Irish language forms another key part of Northern Ireland's rich tapestry of identities, languages and cultures. Through the NDNA financial package, the UK Government will make available £4 million to be provided to An Ciste Infheistíochta Gaeilge for capital grant funding to non-profit organisations promoting the Irish language.

The Government is proud to deliver on the commitments it made to the people of Northern Ireland in NDNA, and today's announcement will support that vision of greater inclusion, tolerance and openness in Northern Ireland.